

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

EMMA V. MILBURN HALL

Interviewed by Merideth Taylor

June 3, 1998

At her home in St. James

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[Begin Side 1, Tape 1 of 2]

[0:00:00]

MT: Okay. This is Merideth Taylor and I'm interviewing Mrs. Emma Hall, and we are at her home in St. James. And, it is June 3, 1998. And, I'm conducting the interview for the Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions Oral History Project.

So, we're going to start talking about what the times were like when you were a child. For example, how did you and your family live? What did you eat? You might want to start talking about, though, what you were just telling me, about your parents, in terms of your mother's past. Do you remember—how much do you remember of those early years before you were three or four? Anything?

EM: No, I don't remember anything. It was, I guess it was about—. I guess I was probably about 10 years old when I really began to realize what was happening in my life, though. And, I went to live with my aunt. She took care of us, and she sent us to school. And, my father would come every week and bring us food. And, one of my aunts that lived in Baltimore, she would come and bring clothes every, about twice a

year for us to have. So, my father, he met a lady by the name of Lilly Sewell, and then he got married. And after he got married, he finally got us all back home, one by one. I was the last one to go back home because I wanted to stay with my aunt on account of I had some cousins, and they were all girls; and, I enjoyed being with them. And in my family, I was the only girl and I had seven brothers. [emergency radio in background]

And, in the morning, when after we went back home, my stepmother named Lily, she used to have to go to the work, go to work because they lived on a farm and they was working for these people by the name of Spence Howard. And, they had a big, big home. And, she had to clean, wash and cook for them. So in the evening, that mean we had to take care of ourselves and eat peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and jelly or preserves or whatever until night. And when the night come, evening come, she would come home and she would always cook us a big dinner. And, that was the only big meal that we would have. That's during the summer. But when we went to school, we would take lunch.

My father used to raise hogs, and we mostly would take ham [chuckle], ham sandwiches and jelly or something like that. But, we survived.

MT: When was that? Was that late when she would come home? And cook that big dinner?

EH: She would come home around six o'clock, and we would eat around maybe about 7:30, quarter to 8 every night.

MT: What is your earliest memory? What's the first thing you remember?

EH: Um. [long pause] I don't know. The first thing I remember was before—. Oh.

First thing I remember, I can remember when my mother, I can remember when my mother—I didn't know what happened to her, but I do remember my aunt taking me in this bedroom. And, she was now laying down on a board, had a white sheet over her, and she pulled the sheet back and told me, "This is your mother. She's dead." And I do remember that, and I always keeps telling everybody that I do remember that. But, that's about all I remember about my mother.

MT: And you were how old then?

EH: About four. About four.

MT: What about your relationship with your brothers and sisters?

EH: We, we got along good, but they, I had my way, of course. I had to have my way, of course, because I was the only girl. And, they let me, you know, sometime they would get really bad and my father would had to come and beat them a little bit.

[giggles]

MT: How many brothers?

EH: I was seven of us. There was six brothers.

MT: Six brothers. And where were you, in terms of the oldest and youngest? Were you somewhere in the middle?

EH: Yeah. I was with—. Let me see. There was Allie. I was about the sixth—the fifth one.

MT: Now, did you say that you were split up? Or was that before?

EH: That's after my mother. Yeah, before my father remarried.

[05:48]

MT: So when you think about this generally, would you say that times were better or worse than they are now?

EH: Times were good then because I guess you wouldn't realize because you have to—. Right then, I didn't have to pay any bills. You know, now. But back then, we really, considering how we lived, we really lived good. We had enough food. You know? And we enjoyed what we ate. We wasn't, you know. We had what we had and we just made the best of it.

MT: Did you take any trips when you were a child? Did you travel around?

EH: Only place I would go, once a year to Baltimore with my father and my stepmother, would go to Baltimore. And, they would go to Baltimore to this market. It was a market in Baltimore, and they would pick up, like, big bundles of clothes and stuff, and bring back. That was after we started going to school. I remember that. And shoes. Different stuff. They would go to this market.

MT: Was it an outdoor market?

EH: It was a market. They sold vegetables and everything, but they, most especially, they would bring back would be these clothes, and his work clothes, you know. Pants for the boys and stuff. When really, most of them didn't fit after. You just get them on. You just get a big ball.

MT: So, they came all together you think? The clothes.

EH: Yeah. They came all together.

MT: Did they shop around the county, too?

EH: We only bought, the only thing I can remember my father buying us, really, would be shoes.

MT: Where would he buy the shoes?

EH: Um, in the Base, before they took over the Base, there was a store called Millicent's. Millicent's Store, and we used to go down there and, once or twice a year, and get shoes.

MT: So, that was before they took the land for the Navy?

EH: Before they took the land for the Navy.

MT: What church did you go to?

EH: Zion Methodist Church. And, we used to go to Sunday School. We had to walk from—. See, I used to live. We were down there in St. Mary's City, you know, on that house farm where they got the, um—. Gosh. What they got down there? You know what they got down there now.

MT: In the archaeology?

EH: Yes.

MT: The archaeological dig in St. Mary's City?

EH: Um. Yeah, that old big farm house. That house and it was a slave quarter.

MT: Uh huh. They moved that. You mean where they moved it to there?

EH: No. Where it was first.

MT: Oh where it was first.

EH: Where it was first. That's where we used to live.

MT: That's where you used to live?

EH: And we used to live in the slave quarter.

MT: You did?!

EH: Yeah. We sure did.

MT: And when was—. That was before you lived on the farm or after you lived on the farm?

EH: Oh, when I lived on the farm. Oh, I don't remember when I lived up a Park Hall on the farm.

MT: That was when you were really young.

EH: Yeah. That was when I was real—. That's when my mother died. See when I lived on the farm. And then after my father got married, my father was working for the, on the Brome Howard Farm. Then after my mother died, he met my, met this lady named Lily Milburn. Lily sure was, she was—. That's my stepmother. So, then we, then he, he was already working on the Brome Howard.

MT: He was on the Brome Howard Farm.

EH: So, they had this slave quarter and then they moved all the children and him and her back in the slave quarter.

MT: Okay.

EH: Yeah. So, that's where we lived. We lived there. Good gracious! I almost got, before I got married. When I got married, we were still living there.

MT: So, when was that?

EH: I guess, married, what? 50? I got married in, oh, 40—. No, 53 or something like that.

MT: Okay. And, you went to Zion Methodist?

EH: Zion Methodist Church.

MT: Okay.

EH: And we walked.

MT: You walked?

EH: We walked. Uh huh.

MT: How long did that take you?

EH: Well, we had to leave home by 9:30 and got there by eleven o'clock.

MT: Gosh!

EH: It was a group. You know how you walked in and you meet up with the next group. So, children, all of us would walk together.

MT: Then did you walk home or did you go visiting?

EH: No, we walked. We walked back home and some time, if there was enough room and some of the people that had cars, they would bring us back. But most in general, we walked back. We got back home after service about 1:30. I remember, and then we'd be so hungry.

MT: Then, what would you eat? Would you have something special?

EH: Oh yeah! Every Sunday, we would have fried chicken, potato salad and cabbage and hot biscuits, biscuits. Every Sunday. Um hum.

[11:29]

MT: That's good. That sounds great. What about—? Okay. How did your parents deal with health and illness? Do remember any special cures? Did your family have a medical doctor? What about health?

EH: When we ever got sick, had an ear—. Most problem we would have, we have a ear ache, and he would cast, the doctor, a doctor by the name of Dr. Bean, PJ Bean.

MT: Did, so if you had a problem, you went to the doctor, but you were pretty healthy?

EH: Uh hmm. [yes] All of us. That's what was saying in the beginning. Just the kind of sickness that they have now, people weren't having it. Cholesterol problem and all that. Uh hmm. [no]

MT: They were working hard.

EH: Because we ate plenty a meat, you know. I mean, just take that fat, take that fat back, fat meat and slice it, put it on a pan of water and soak it and pour the water off to get some of the salt off it. Just fry it and just eat it. It's like you would, you know, have that and pancakes and molasses. That old black molasses and egg. That was breakfast. You know, but now, you can't eat that kind of food.

MT: Was your father doing farm work all day?

EH: Um hum. Yes. He did the farm work and then he mowed around the big house, mowed the grass, and kept up with the yard. My father worked real, real hard.

MT: He got that cholesterol. What about the, do you remember any home cures? I guess, I mean, they were pretty well, but did you ever have any, like, special teas or ways to ward off getting colds or anything like that?

EH: Yeah, because we had—. In the winter, now my aunt started doing this when we were staying with her, we had a flannel cloth, a red flannel cloth that she would put stuff called mutton tallow. That was from the sheep mutton tallow on this cloth and we had to pin inside of our undershirt. And, that kept the cold in our chest.

MT: And it worked?

EH: Uh huh. You smelled like mutton tallow, too.

MT: [laughter] Kept the germs away.

EH: Kept the germs away.

MT: So, but if you had problems, you went to the doctor.

EH: Dr. Bean. Uh huh. [yes]

MT: Did he ever make house calls?

EH: On Sundays, you know, after we come from church, you know, if some of the houses be close, we used to go visiting. Visited children and played [inaudible].

MT: Did your stepmother have—she had some children after you, right?

EH: No. She didn't have any children.

MT: Your mother did, though. But we don't know—. Do you know if she went to the hospital to have her children or did she have them at home?

EH: Oh, she had—. All of us were born at home. We had a midwife named Mrs. Sophie Clayton. Clayton. You've heard of her?

MT: Actually, I don't think I have.

EH: Clayton. I guess she delivered most of, all of those, like children my age around. I know.

MT: Hmm? Okay. Well, maybe I forgot. Okay. Well, what about some of what you did as a child? You mentioned some of it, but what did you like to do the most, you know, if you had? What did you enjoy doing when you were a child?

EH: On crabbing, I used to, you know, go down to the water and crab.

MT: Did you use a boat?

EH: Boat, um hm. I used to crab every morning.

MT: Every morning?

EH: Every morning. Every morning. I mean, in the summer, when school was out.

MT: Did your family eat the crabs or did you sell some?

EH: Oh, I sold some, and that's how I bought my clothes, my clothes for school after I got, you know, going to high school.

MT: Did you do anything else you especially liked to do?

EH: And cook.

MT: And cook?

EH: Cook. Um hmm.

MT: And did you cook for your family when you were young, real young?

EH: Yeah, after I got going to high school, yeah. Maybe 15 or 16, something like that, I start, And then I washed and had, my fingers had to wash clothes on the board. I did all that on this washboard. The wash. I did all the washing.

MT: So yeah. That's my next question. What chores did you have to do? So, you did the washing.

EH: Cooking.

MT: And you did cooking.

EH: Cleaning. Um hmm.

MT: Did you brothers also have chores? Did they have different chores?

EH: They, my brothers left home one by one. You know, just, one of them went in the Job Corps. One of them went in the Army. As they got older because they were older, and they went, they just left home. Guess I had about three of them to wash for. Um hmm.

MT: Okay. So, you washed and cooked and cleaned. Have any other chores you had to do?

EH: Well, clean the chicken house out some time.

MT: Wow! Okay.

EH: Because we raised our own chickens. Had to clean that.

MT: Did you use them for eggs and for chickens?

EH: Yeah. We used the eggs and chickens. We raised our own eggs, chickens_. We had our own eggs, chickens and pork.

MT: And pork. Yeah. Okay. What about Sundays after you all came home from church, what did you do then?

EH: Well, some of the children would come and eat. By the time we ate and washed the dishes, we sat around, whatever.

MT: Talking? Did the people tell stories and things?

EH: Uh ah. [no]

MT: Relaxing?

EH: Relaxing.

[17:50]

MT: How did your parents treat you? What did they do with you that you remember best? Things you did with your parents. How did they discipline you? What were you disciplined for?

EH: They—. I didn't, I didn't really need to much. [chuckle]

MT: [laughs] You were good.

EH: Good. Yeah, I just.

MT: What about your brothers, if they got disciplined, what did they do?

EH: Just staying up late and mixing with other boys that my father didn't like for them to

be around because those boys, thought would get them in trouble and stuff like that.

MT: And would they discipline them? Would your father discipline them?

EH: Yes, he would discipline them with a board, like a baseball bat.

MT: Wow.

EH: He would really pain them.

MT: And, how, with, like a baseball bat?

EH: Baseball. Yeah, like a—. It was flat. Paddle.

MT: Paddled them. He paddled them.

EH: Paddled them good, too.

MT: But you never got paddled?

EH: No. Um hmm. I'd seen too much of that. [chuckle]

MT: Ouch. Did you do things, what, did you do things with your parents that you enjoyed doing or that you remember doing very well?

EH: Oh playing. We used to play Dominos together. That's about it.

MT: Play Dominos. Did you work together?

EH: In the garden. When we plant the garden, we all worked together. All of us had to help plant the garden. Um hmm.

MT: What about harvesting?

EH: All of us had to get it in, yeah. Um hmm.

MT: Okay. So, everybody worked together.

EH: Worked together. Um hmm.

MT: Who would be in charge when you were doing that?

EH: The way my father used to do, he would give us because, all separate things to do.

Now, you get beans and you help with the potatoes, digging the potatoes. He'd give us all different things to do and we had to do what he assigned for us to do. And, that made it very easy because nobody, everybody did their share.

MT: Okay. Did you feel that your parents prepared you well for life?

EH: Um hmm. I sure do, because he just made, just the way we lived and the way we had to, way we had to do, you know, whatever we had to do, we had to do it and we had to do it well. And if you didn't do what he says you can do, he always told us, "If you can't do nothing the right way, don't do it. It's not worth wasting your time." And, I went by that motto up to today. If anything that I can't do well and know that I'm going to do, make a mess of it or whatever, I don't touch it. You know. And, I think my brothers, really, all my brothers, really turned out to be, seemed like to me they followed that. Doing good. They did good. Um hmm.

MT: And, is your father—? Yeah, I didn't ask you this. Is your father still alive?

EH: No. He died in '73.

MT: '73. Okay.

EH: He had cancer. My father used to, on the farm, he used to have a bucket of this lime that, now they got lime spreaders and stuff where they put the stuff on the fields when they're planting. Now, he used to—had to dip his hand in it and throw it. And, the doctor kept telling him, he kept getting hoarse and hoarse, even when—. Oh, this was way back there. He used to have trouble with his trouble, but he always gargled with salt and water. And next day, he right out there doing the same things. The doctor said that's what caused that. Um hmm.

MT: And did he use lime in probably other fertilizer?

EH: Fertilizer. Um hmm. Yeah. But, I was really being very curious about why, years ago, that when there's some way that they would have something besides having those men—he had a bucket in one hand and all the way up and down the field. He walked that field all the day, and the wind be blowing and he'd come home at night and sore throat. He always did suffer from sore throat. I remember that.

MT: I'm sure there were ways. Were there, do you have any idea how many men he worked with? Did he have a lot of farm workers?

EH: He worked on that farm by his self. Yeah. That was a big farm. He worked that farm by his self.

MT: Wow!

EH: He worked real hard.

MT: Did he have people underneath him? Any? Just occasionally?

EH: Yeah. Like when—now when they bailed the hay.

MT: Bailed hay, yeah.

EH: See, they would have somebody come in and bail the hay, but the plow, he walked behind those horses. Yeah, behind those horses he walked up and down. He'd be up in the morning about 5:30 out there plowing. He worked so hard.

MT: Do you know about how old he was when he died?

EH: Seventy—. Did I say he died in '73?

MT: Yeah. '73.

EH: My father was 73 years old when he died, and strong. Oh, he was so strong. In the morning—. And they used to live right there, in a house right back there, after they left the farm. In fact, he gave us this piece of land to build on. That was their land

back then. They, when we was living on the farm, he bought this place. He bought it through tax. You know how people didn't pay the tax? And he bought this whole place. And so, when you got married, he gave us this piece. He gave us this piece of land. And now, they had a house back then. So later, after, they moved off the farm. They moved back there. And in the morning, he would have my garden right—I don't have a garden this year—right out there and in the morning, like on Sunday morning around five o'clock—why I'd been working, too. I didn't want to get up. He'd be out there and hear, "Click. Click. Click." Just chopping my garden away. Um hmm.

MT: He was a worker.

EH: He was a worker.

MT: So, he plowed with the horses?

EH: With the horses. Over at, on the Brome Howard Farm.

MT: Until he retired he used horses, you think?

EH: Well, they gave up the farm. I think, when he retired, I think they—. What's that County Commission? Over there. They bought that, they bought that Brome Howard. Yeah, yeah.

[25:40]

MT: Okay. Let's see. Describe your formal schooling. How did you get to school? You know, where did you go to school?

EH: Oh, when I first, when I first started going to school, I was living with my aunt and I was going to old Park—Park Hall School. It was a school on Route 489. It used to

sitting up on a hill. Now, it's the Holiness Church. It had built a church in that spot, and I used to go to school there. And where I lived, we used to walk. It wasn't over, maybe, wasn't quite a half a mile. We used to walk every day. And then, I, after that, you stay in there until you got six years old. Stay at Park Hall. I stayed over at Park Hall School till I got about in the 6th Grade, and then I went to Jarboesville. And, Jarboesville was on 235 and the Base has that land now right on the side of the road. I graduated from Jarboesville, but I went there by bus. Um hmm.

MT: And, what was that, through 8th Grade?

EH: 6th to the 8th. And then, everything, and after that, I went over on the other side. See, they had the elementary school classes, from 6 to 8, on one side. And on the other side, they had the high school. It was all in one building. Uh huh. It was all in one building. So, then I went to high school.

MT: So, you walked from the Brome Howard House to the Park Hall School?

EH: No, see, that was—. When I was going to Park Hall School, that was before my father got married.

MT: Okay.

EH: Yeah. And then after he got married, I was about, and then we went home.

MT: Okay. So, from Brome Howard you were bussed.

EH: From Brome Howard, bussed to Jarboesville. We were bussed to Park Hall, too, for awhile. Yeah.

MT: Okay. What was your, what was your classroom like? Do you remember, early in your elementary school?

EH: Everybody had their individual desks. It was good.

MT: Were all the grades separate?

EH: Oh, well, it'd be like, in that one classroom, we would have, like, 1st, 2nd and 3rd. We likely have about three grades in that one classroom, and that one teacher, she would teach all three grades. Miss Butler. Um hmm.

MT: Yeah. That's a, who was your favorite and least favorite teacher? Do you remember? Do you remember Miss Butler?

EH: Yeah. She was good. She was good, and—

MT: Do you remember her first name?

EH: Louise Butler. I think she dead, too. She was from Charlotte Hall. Yeah, she was good.

MT: Were there any other?

EH: In high school, Ms. Mears. Ms. Mears. She was, she lived on, they had a home up there on 235.

MT: What was your favorite subject?

EH: Home economics and when I got in high school and History.

MT: What was your least favorite?

EH: Mathematics. Oh, I cried. I could never get my math. I mean, never. Mathematics. I could never do math.

MT: How did you, did you generally like school?

EH: Oh, I loved school. Loved school.

MT: Would you have liked to have gone farther in school?

EH: I wanted to be a detective.

MT: A detective?!

EH: Um hmm.

MT: That's interesting. So what kept you from pursuing that?

EH: When I graduated from high school, Mr. Mears, the principal told me, you know, he explained to me what danger it would be and, you know, and all this and all that. So, I just forgot it.

MT: Oh, so he kind of talked you out of it.

EH: Uh huh. [yes] But I did. All my life I wanted to be—I don't know why I wanted to be a detective.

MT: All your life? Did you ever—. Did you read detective stories, mysteries?

EH: Yeah. That's all I ever read.

MT: I think it would be really interesting.

[End of Side 1, Tape 1 of 2]

[Begin Side 2, Tape 1 of 2]

[30:55]

MT: Okay, the tape is going. And the next question was: What were your dreams of becoming as a young adult? Was there anything besides the detective that you dreamt about? Just in terms, not necessary in terms of a career, but anything. What did you dream about wanting in your life?

EH: Oh, in my, I always wanted to get married and have a nice, nice, nice home and *big* kitchen. A big, a large kitchen and cook and to cook. And have money enough to buy ingredients so I could cook just what I wanted to cook. I always wanted that, too. And when I got the job and was transferred down in the kitchen to cook, to bake, that

was the happiest day of my life.

MT: At the college?

EH: Yup, because I didn't have to worry. Whatever was on the menu to cook, I could, that all the ingredients, everything was always there. I had a big space to cook and that was really nice. That's one reason why, I guess, I just kept on staying at the college because it was just something I wanted to do.

MT: But you didn't apply there as a cook?

EH: No. It was, you know, it was sort of in my genes because when I finished doing the housekeeping, I was working in housekeeping, I used to always go to the kitchen and work in the kitchen, and I got a chance to do most—. I did most baking though. I did most of the baking in college.

MT: Did you get a lot of—? Did you get good feedback? Did people appreciate your cooking?

EH: Oh yes. Right now. Some of those old students come back and, you know—apple pie. I used to make about 16 or 17 apple pies all at once without any recipe. Now, I can throw—I'm stop bragging on myself.

MT: That's alright! That's okay!

EH: But I can throw a apple pie together without any kind of recipe and just this, this, this and fix it. That's one of my—. The lady that interviewed me for, when I retired, she—I was telling her about the apple pie, and she could put it in The Enterprise. She was telling them how I could throw an apple pie together.

MT: So, I'm glad your cooking was appreciated.

EH: Um hm. It was.

MT: Okay. As a teenager, did your parents let you court?

EH: Yes and no. Well, I didn't have too much discipline. I, you know, they just let me do what I wanted, you know, and I just didn't do too much.

MT: Where would you go and what would you do? Did you go out? Did people come to your house?

EH: Yeah.

MT: Did men come?

EH: I had two, I had two boys before I was married. Two and they were born, like, '46 and '48. '46 and '48, yeah. I had two boys, too, and I had them before I was married and it's my father and my stepmother, they took them. And then, I went to work at the college at '48. And then, I got married in '53.

MT: And, okay. Is there anything? Were those—? Did you date those men for awhile?

EH: I wouldn't say for, I wouldn't say that long. I don't know. It wasn't that long.

MT: And, but your parents were [loud sounds of airplane flying overhead]—your parents let you, pretty much, come and go as you wished.

EH: Yeah.

MT: And did they let people come into the house and visit you? Young men could visit you?

EH: Yes.

MT: Okay. How old were you when you had your first child?

EH: Must have been about 18. Let me see. I must have been 18, I guess. I then finished high school. About 18 because—because, I finished high school. I graduated from high school in '46, I think. '46, yeah. And, Sonny was born in '48. So, I was

probably about 16, 17, 18.

[36:30]

MT: Okay. Where would you go, you know, when you went out courting?

EH: We would go down to, we go to the movie. It was a theatre in St. Inigoes. Then, you had to walk. We walked all the way down from St. Mary's City to St. Inigoes to the theatre. That was the only theatre they had.

MT: There's a theater in St. Inigoes?

EH: Yeah, over—. It was overtop of a bar, and it was just a big—. Well, I guess, just a big room and you go up on the outside. You go up on the outside and go up to this room.

MT: Was it an integrated theater?

EH: No.

MT: So, it was, it was—it was an African American clientele theatre.

EH: Um hmm.

MT: And, what about the theater in Leonardtown?

EH: Oh, you couldn't go in there.

MT: Oh, so that's was the whites.

EH: White only. Yeah.

MT: White only.

EH: And, there was one in Lexington Park. You could go, but you had to sit in the back.

MT: Okay.

EH: That one was, too, in Lexington Park.

MT: Was there a name in St. Inigoes?

EH: I don't remember the name of it. I don't know. Somebody by the name of—

MT: I hadn't heard about that one.

EH: —Bill. Yeah, it was one in there, and it was just overtop the—it was overtop, I think it was overtop of a bar. I think the bar was on the side. You go in the front door to the bar and you go in the side to the theater. It's—in St Inigoes, right now, is the store. It's a bar right there. On the side, is apartment house, a little apartment house, a long apartment house, and that's where that theater was. Um hmm.

MT: And what kind of—. That was after the war.

EH: Um hmm.

MT: And what kind of films did they show? The same films that were showing in the other theaters or?

EH: I don't know what they showed. All this would be Western, like Wild Bill Hickcock, I remember. What's that Wayne, what you call him? That's what this all used to be.

MT: Okay. What about when you, what was it like when you first went out on your own? Or, did you move from your parents' house, at some point, before you got married or did you stay living with your parents?

EH: I, before I got married, yeah. I lived in Carver Heights. I roomed in Carver Heights and worked on the Base. I worked on the Base in the Officers' Club as a waiter. I did that, and then I worked, after I left there, then I worked in the laundry. Called Ship Service Laundry. I worked there, too.

MT: So, you did move out on your own?

EH: Uh huh. [yes]

MT: What was that like?

EH: Good.

MT: Did it feel good?

EH: Good.

MT: What was your money situation like? [jet noise in the background.]

EH: Good. You know, I made, you know, I made enough to save some.

MT: So, you worked on the Base and you paid for your apartment and saved some.

EH: I just had a room with an old lady, a lady that I knew, and I had a room there. And, she charged me \$5 a month. And you know, she said to just help her out some with her coffee and her stuff like that.

MT: That's good. So then, you didn't have to worry about transportation.

EH: Uh uh. [no]

MT: You didn't have a car then?

EH: I didn't have a car then.

MT: So, that would be the point in moving closer.

EH: Yeah. Close to the Base.

MT: Okay. Well, you've already talked about some of this. The question is: What kind of work have you done to support yourself? Okay. So, you worked, I mean, with, from working with your parents on the, doing to the family work, to working on the Base. That was your first job?

EH: Yeah. First job. Well, I guess. Well, my first job was, every Sunday, I used to go to the preacher's house in St. Mary's City, you passed it, at St. Mary's City, and wash dishes after that dinner every Sunday. I used to do that every Sunday.

MT: How old were you then?

EH: I guess I was about maybe 12 or so. And, I did that until I got, until I moved from St. Mary's City, guess about 16 or 17.

MT: Okay. Then, you were a waiter and worked with laundry, and then, your next job was the college.

EH: My next job was at the college.

MT: Okay. You want to talk about that a little big again because I think we talked a little bit about that without the mike on. So, when you applied there, was it as a housekeeper?

EH: I applied there as a housekeeper and then I got promoted to cook, Cook 1. I went down in the kitchen. I helped cook. I cooked. And after that, I got, after that, the college contractor took over the cooking and the baking, and we moved from Calvert Hall over to Charles Hall. They built a new kitchen, and the contractor took over so I went over there and I baked awhile in the college before the contractor taking over. I baked. I baked. And then, the contractor took over the whole kitchen. I got—. They had four dormitories ready. Miss Russell said, "Emma. You worked so hard and I think I'll try to get you promoted to be a supervisor."

And I said, "Oh yes."

And she said, "Well, you have to take the test."

I said, "Well, I'll take the test." So, I took the test and I made 89 and 9/10% on the test and she come back and she tell me, she said, "Emma, you qualify for being the Supervisor 1."

I said, "Okay."

"You think you can handle it?"

I said, "I'll try."

And she said, "We going to give you two dormitories to start out with." And, that worked out. I did that for about three years. So, she said, "Emma, you're doing a very good job."

I said, "Miss Russell, three years." I say, "I did it for three years." I say, "You think I should take the test again and maybe I could get Supervisor 2, they call their self." By that time, we were having, I guess I had. I got married and I had three children, and I said, "My husband, he's doing good." I said, "But we want to build a house. We're building on and trying to get" and he was in the Service. And I said, "I could use a little more money because I had to pay somebody to take care of the children."

She said, "Well, go for it. You want to go for it?"

"Yes."

"I will set you up and get you a date where you go suddenly."

[inaudible response]

She said, "Emma, when you, you, you—" She said, "You go, girl! You're alright now!" she said. [laughter]

And so, I got that and I got a little more money and we started doing things around here. We got this house built. The children—they all were going to school, and everything was going good. So I worked at that so when I got ready to retire—. By this time this new boss. See Miss Russell had gone. So, the boss, Bobby Able, came down and he was the supervisor over me. He had another person that he wanted to give Supervisor 3 to because he know that I was leaving, and I had got to the age of retiring. So, I

said, "Well, if I got Supervisor 3, that would really give me more money when I retire."

He said, "Well, you retiring."

I said, "Well, that's the point." I said, "All I, after I retire, you can just give the other person whatever you want." But, he didn't.

MT: He didn't.

EH: He wouldn't let me take the 3. When I went out I was Supervisor 2.

MT: So before that, you didn't really have a supervisor over you? You just reported directly Miss Russell?

EH: Yeah because, see, it was those four ladies that was running, you know, everything.

MT: So, the other four ladies were Miss Russell?

EH: Miss Russell, Miss Chan, Miss Simms, and Miss Saunders.

MT: And they pretty much ran everything?

EH: Um hmm. You go to them. Um hmm.

[46:18]

MT: You'd know what was going on.

EH: Know what's going on. It was such a small place. You got to know every student. You know what the mother did, what the father did. You just knew their boyfriend. You just knew everything about them. So, it was really nice. It was nice.

MT: So yeah, you were thinking now, it's not so great. So, what's the problem now as you see it?

EH: Well, the problem, when I left—

MT: When you left?

EH: When I left, it was more prejudice.

MT: More prejudice?

EH: It was so hard for the black people to even move up. See, that was my case, you see.

And then, you see, the people there, they would bring in some of the white people that hadn't been there as long as you, and they'd give them the different positions.

And you know, and, it was just—

MT: So, you think there was less prejudice early on?

EH: It was. You would think it wouldn't have been at that time.

MT: Even though the school was just for whites.

EH: Yeah. Uh huh. [yes] And, you would think it would have been more prejudice there,

but no. Those girls—they would hug, kiss you, hug. When they go home, they lay on your shoulder and cry. I mean, it was just, it was just different. But.

MT: So, there was a change in administration is what really made the change.

EH: Yeah. I think so.

MT: So, and then, it seemed like people, if you were black, you were having a harder time moving up?

EH: Yeah. Moving up. Um hmm. Moving. It's like that now.

MT: Was most of the staff, when you were there, was most of the staff black? Or was it mixed?

EH: There wasn't any black staff back then when I was there.

MT: I mean, like, housekeeping?

EH: Oh, I thought you meant the administration.

MT: Yeah, I know.

EH: Oh yeah. All of them were. All the housekeepers was black. But now!

MT: Most of them still are.

EH: Yeah. Most of them, still, and they keep it like that. I—about me being a supervisor, I got a chance to interview a white lady. I mean, she had really, she was really good because I knew her and I knew some places where she had worked in the Base. And, I had the application on my desk and it was up to me to hire her. That next morning I went to work, it was nothing there. I couldn't find it nowhere. Nowhere. Because I had called over there and told Mr. Redmond, Mr. Redmond, Jimmy Redmond, because he was in charge of helping me hire people, you know? And, he had interviewed and everything, and asked me, "What did I think about her" that evening. And I said, "I think we going to hire her." I said, "That's going to make a lot of difference," I say, "in the way these other housekeepers work." I say, "It will make a difference."

He said, "Well, you think so? You think so?"

I said, "Yeah, I think so." I said, "Let's try, anyhow."

"Okay, Emma. Whatever you say. Okay."

I couldn't find that application nowhere. I was going over to the business office. I couldn't find it. And, it was just like this. It was sitting on the desk just like this when I left. On my desk. I couldn't find it. So, she called and I told her that, "I was really, really, really sorry, but I don't think we are going to hire you because I can't find your application. I don't know what happened."

And, I called him. "Well, Emma. Maybe a mouse chewed it up." That's what he told me. "Maybe a mouse chewed it up."

MT: What was his position? The same as Bobby Able?

EH: Uh huh. The same as Bobby Able.

MT: Was that before Bobby Able was there?

EH: Yeah. Yeah, he was before Bobby Able. See, when Bobby Able came, Mr. Redmond, he left.

MT: Okay.

EH: See, when Miss Russell left, Mr. Redmond came in and he was more like a supervisor over the housekeeping, too, you know. And, I worked under him. No, he didn't hire her so we still—. So strange, but that's how they do it. That's how they did it.

MT: Do you think that's the perception of the community that there's a lot of prejudices in college?

EH: I think so.

MT: And do you think that there's more so, like now, or since you retired than before you retired?

EH: The way I understand it is. I mean, I don't. You know. [inaudible]
But, the president of the college, she seemed to be *very* nice. I mean, she, because I went to a couple of retirement parties down there, and I see how she act, I mean, with those black people and everything. I mean, she looked like she was concerned. So, I think she's nice. I mean, you know. I think the problem was just left there. You know, it was just there and hasn't been corrected.

MT: Okay. Well. Okay. Let's see. You worked, so you supported yourself. And then, this is a good question: What does your work mean to you?

EH: What do you mean? I mean, what—?

MT: Did it mean—I mean, it sounds like, the way you talk about it, something you got a lot of satisfaction out of. Something you enjoyed.

EH: Yeah. I enjoyed it. Yeah.

MT: But, it also meant that you could build this house?

EH: Yeah, I mean, I could get—. It meant that, by working, I mean, the kind of work I was doing and how I liked it, you know, it would—I benefitted by it because some of the things I want, I was able to get.

MT: Okay. In this sense, you can answer this, if you like. It is: How much money did you make? And that means, at any point, I guess, that you remember, how much? That wasn't an hourly?

EH: No. We got paid—. It probably end up to hourly, but what we, the way we seen it, it was just a bi-weekly salary, the way you get it.

MT: Did it change a lot? So, you were there 40 years.

EH: Oh yes!

MT: 1948-1988.

EH: Yeah. That's why I wanted to get out of a—I got out of the housekeeping. If I had stayed in housekeeping? When I started working at the college, I was making \$22 every two weeks. I mean, \$22 a week. \$44 every two weeks. But at that time, it seemed like, you know, but it wasn't really bad because everything was cheaper. But as time went on and on and on, we just got up to \$88 every two weeks. And then, you know, I really didn't start making any money until I got out of housekeeping and I could really do anything with Housekeeping Supervisor.

MT: Supervisor.

EH: Uh hmm. And then, that didn't add up to too much. I'm doing better now with retiring. I'd getting a—I getting a 2% cost-of-living raise every July since retiring. And now, we'll get a 3% cost-of-living raise this July. And since I retired, it occurred to me I should have been retired long time ago in order to—I'm probably getting, you know, doing better.

MT: Okay. And, you worked from—? What were the hours you worked? Like a physical day on the job.

EH: Eight hour. Gotten out but—. Some time I'd work, when I first started working there, by—of course, when the president, he would have parties and anything, after I get off from work, I had to go down and cook and serve her parties. I would come home, some nights, around 10:30, after I cleaned up; and, go to work at 8. Take a break in the evening about three o'clock, 3:30, I come home and fix dinner here, and leave a note and go on back down to college. And, the lady next door, Miss Butler, she would feed the children.

MT: Did you get extra pay when you put in extra hours?

EH: You'd get that same check. That was the only problem. And you—I don't know. I did a lot of, I guess, I'm still doing it. A lot of work for people and just, you know—. Well, after that, we got a union. We got a Union going and we told that Union that, MCA, we told them what was going on and everything, and a lot of that stuff changed.

MT: Oh!

EH: And, Miss Chance told one of the employees that somebody's going to get in trouble because there's something going on around here that's not supposed to, and

somebody's going to get in trouble. But, we kept on, we kept that Union. I don't know what's happening to it now.

MT: I didn't think there was a Union.

EH: Yeah! We had a Union. MCA. You haven't heard of it? Still at the college. because I was the President of it. Nobody wouldn't take it because after she said that somebody going to get in trouble, everybody was scared. I was the President.

MT: So, things were good in most ways, but you still weren't getting paid for all the time you worked.

EH: Um hmm. [no]

MT: But they were just, maybe, more personally discussing it?

EH: Yeah.

[57:10]

MT: Okay. Alright. Well, here's a big switch of topics. You're doing okay? You tired?

EH: I'm okay.

MT: What do you remember about your wedding?

EH: Oh great!

MT: When did you marry and where and all that?

EH: I got married, [emergency radio in background] I got married in 1953, I think it was, and at St. Peter's Church in Ridge. It was alright. We had a reception at my mother-in-law's house, and we had about 50 people. My husband's family is very big, so I guess that was just for his.

MT: Are they from this area?

EH: Um hmm. They live right down the road.

MT: So, they were all here.

EH: Um hmm.

MT: How did you meet your husband?

EH: At the college. He worked at the college. Over at the college.

MT: What did he do at the college?

EH: He was a waiter. He was one of the head waiters.

MT: And, did he work at the college for the time that you were there?

EH: No, he worked—. [pause] I guess he might have worked about three, yeah, he worked about the time I was there. Yeah, he worked about three years, I guess, and then he went in the Service. Um hmm.

MT: And, did you have a honeymoon? What was your honeymoon like?

EH: Where did we go? Where did we go? Oh, I know where we went. We went to Ocean City. Yeah. Yeah, it was nice.

MT: Why did you decide to get married?

EH: [chuckle] I don't know! [chuckle] We just decided to get married! [chuckle]

MT: Okay. What has your family life been like? Describe your marriage, your relationship with your spouse.

EH: Good. It went good. He reminds me more of my father because he's a hard-working person and he's trying to have something, you know. And, he was real good.

MT: And so, well, he obviously retired from the Service.

EH: No, he didn't retire.

MT: Oh! He's still in the Service?

EH: No. He's out. He came out. He just did three years.

MT: Oh. He was just in a few years. I'm sorry. And then, what has he done since then?

EH: He worked for contractor excavators. And then after that, he got money enough, he got his own business. He got a good little business now.

MT: What does he do?

EH: Put in septic systems and build. He did this room. This was a porch. He did that. He did all the carpentry work and anything. Any kind of plumbing. He'd do some plumbing.

MT: Okay. Well, describe your relationship with your children and grandchildren, if you have grandchildren.

EH: I have one just graduated from college. Mount St. Mary's. Yeah, my relation, they good. I have a good relationship with my—. I mean, they good.

MT: How many children do you have?

EH: Six.

MT: Six? Uh huh. And—

EH: They all mine.

MT: A good relationship?

EH: Um hmm. One daughter is in—she was here for our daughter's graduation—in Hawaii and her husband is a Colonel. And with the granddaughter that's graduating, she's going to the Army. She went through the ROTC school. And, another granddaughter's in Virginia Tech going to college, and she's getting her Masters. She's staying there this summer. And, my— [Dialogue cuts off abruptly.]

[End of Side 2, Tape 1 of 2]

[Begin Side 1, Tape 2 of 2]

[1:01:52]

MT: This is Tape 2. Merideth Taylor and Emma Hall. And, we're talking about her children. Okay.

EH: So, the others, one of the other son, Armor, he's, he works as something with the air condition technique for the Government. And, one is an inspector, a health inspector, you know, an inspector go around inspecting, safety inspection. And Linda, she's a computer analyst. And Carmella, she's in Florida. She works as a, in a factory where she's a supervisor where they makes parts for, where they make parts for, ears, and different parts of the body—they're bones. The artificial bones. And there's Junior, he's a contractor.

MT: Do you see all of your children frequently?

EH: Oh yeah! They, you know they see me. They come here to eat! [chuckle] They come here every holiday to eat! You'd think Mother's Day was *Mother's Day*. I tell them, "This is supposed to be Mother's Day."

MT: But, you're the great cook.

EH: I'm the cook. They be here.

MT: That's great!

EH: They good children, all of them.

MT: That's wonderful. And, grandchildren: How many grandchildren do you have?

EH: Seven.

MT: Seven grandchildren. Okay. Okay. What part has religion played in your life?
Church. What church do you go to?

EH: I was a Methodist first. And after I got married, I go to Catholic, joined the Catholic
Church. It's good. I mean, you know.

MT: Do you go to St. Peter's Claver?

EH: I go to St. Cecilia's.

MT: St. Cecilia's. Oh. Has that been an important part of your life?

EH: Um hmm. It's good. Yeah.

MT: Okay. How do you know that there is a God and/or what's your relationship with
Jesus?

EH: I really don't if there is a god, but I'll try to—. I just follow the seven
commandments. That's all. You know. You just try to do, treat people right and do
what you think is right and that's it, and keep going. That's all I know to do.

MT: That's being a good Christian.

EH: Um hmm. To me, that's all it means. That's all, you know. Try to do the right thing.

MT: It guides your behavior.

EH: Um hmm. Um hmm.

MT: What community activities do you participate in? Any clubs or church activities?

EH: Yes.

MT: Holidays? Family reunions? Fairs? Bingo? Anything?

EH: Bingo. Ladies of Charity. I don't. Ladies of Charity. It's church.

MT: Is that for the Catholic?

EH: Catholic. Um hmm. Like people need something and, well I belong to there and ask—. You can get up some clothes or such-and-such aside for person or find something. Or, you want to take a meal to—sometime I take meals to the shelter up here. The men's shelter? Take a couple meals as they'll call or whatever. Like that. I used to work at Bingo down at St. James, but don't have it anymore.

MT: Oh! Are there any other—? Are there activities, mostly through your church that you do?

EH: Um hm. Mostly through the church.

MT: Okay. And, you say you have family. Almost every holiday is a big family gathering.

EH: Yeah.

MT: Do you have family reunions?

EH: Every two years, we do.

MT: For your husband's family? Your own or both?

EH: It's on my side.

MT: And, any other big community things that you do? Do you go out a lot into the community or do you do more family, private family things?

EH: Home. I don't go. I don't go out in the community. I don't, you know.

MT: You're not a big joiner?

EH: No. Look like, somebody around here to join, you know. Everybody look like they like me. They just do whatever they go to do. But if you need it, they, and I'll found out. I'll help them.

[1:07:04]

MT: Okay. Okay. How do you feel about life in general today? In what ways is it different from the way it used to be? And, is the quality of life better or worse now and why? You know, if you just think of the whole thing, like how do you feel about life now compared to when you were coming along? What's better or worse? It's a good question.

EH: It's more. It's less to do now to entertain, in the entertainment field. Like I used to—less to do now and it more safer years ago to venture out and try to really have a good time or do something in life. But now, you feel safer just doing what you're doing. Just staying to yourself and whatever.

MT: So, it doesn't feel as safe.

EH: Doesn't feel as safe.

MT: What were some of the things you are thinking about that used to be able to do for entertainment that no longer are around?

EH: Ah, we used to always go out to the bars and a lot of parties that was having out. We used to always go and like, um, like social parties, you know, like they would have. We used to always go at night, some nights, some weekends. We used to always go, every weekend. Either Friday night or Saturday night, we used to go out. Just feel like, we just don't feel like it's safe any more.

MT: What were some of the places that you went—the bars that you went to or clubs?

EH: Clubs: We would go to Robinson Barns' and Lee's, Lee's in Hope Farm, and we used—. We don't even go to movies much as we used to. We used to go the movies. Tell the truth, we don't do too much anything [chuckle]. I mean, sit here on this

porch at night and watch TV or get a movie and or get a movie and some tapes. Look at that. My husband's brother and his wife, and they usually come over most weekends or we'd go over to their place weekends. That's about it.

MT: Is that the biggest difference you feel is that it's more dangerous?

EH: Um hmm.

MT: Not as safe?

EH: Safe, yeah. More dangerous, yeah.

MT: Just more crime?

EH: Yeah. More crime now.

MT: Any other big changes? Do you think people are different than they used to be?

EH: Yeah. They not—. People are not as social as they used to be. I mean, years ago, I don't know. You could just go to people's houses and enjoy yourself [inaudible]. You know? Cook and this—. It's a lot different to me now than it used to be.

MT: Are the teenagers in St. Mary's County different today—

EH: Oh yeah.

MT: —than they were? How are they different?

EH: Well, you just can't judge teenagers now because they, like, do just about anything. You know, you never know.

MT: What do you think has caused these changes?

EH: I think a lot things, a lot of ways I think would help. I mean, they really messed up when they took prayers out of school. I think that should, that should start them off. Every day they would have something to look forward to. But now, it's just go to school. You know.

MT: So, you looked forward to the prayers?

EH: Yeah. Start off with the prayers. Just seemed as though it just made the day better for you, knowing that—I mean, you'd think that you had God on your side all day and you could look—just looking forward to something. And this drug, this scene, this drug is not really helping anything. I don't know where it came from. It's really messed up a lot of families, even old and young. It's really terrible.

[1:11:28]

MT: Are race relations different today in the county?

EH: It's different, yeah. Race relations is different, but it's not as bad today as it used to be.

MT: In what way?

EH: Well, they're doing a lot of integration, you know, marrying and everything now. And why? I don't know, but it seems it sort of—I'd say, evened it out. Look like it's not as much. You know, people used to really fight. You know, I don't know how to say it, but they usually—people usually would be so prejudice to the extent that they was arguing. You know, look like to me it's being accepted. Whatever, whatever's going on now is being accepted. More accepted, yeah.

MT: Well, what was, you know, can you talk a little bit about what it was like back when it was segregated, what segregation was like?

EH: Terrible.

MT: Were you ever afraid of a group or a person practicing hate as, you know, as a racial, some kind of racial prejudice?

EH: It was really—. It wasn't like that. It was really—it had me wondering why, you

know. Just like, you couldn't go to the—if you go in, like, right up here, like you go to the bar up here or go in for something, like we'd be walking—. I remember we'd be walking one day. It was about three girls, three of us women, and it was so hot, so we stopped there, right up here in the bar, to get a soda. “No, you got to, to the—. “What do you all—what you niggers want?”

And, one of them said, “We never asked you which? We didn't ask you for a name. We didn't call you a name. We just want—we'd like to get three sodas.”

“Well, I'll hand them to you out the back door. Give me the money. I'll hand them to you out the back door.”

You know. And, I said, “Well, you know, why?” All he had to do was, all he would had to do was to say, “You all come in and stand here.” You know, even, “Come in the door and stand here, and I'll go get your sodas. What kind of sodas?” and went on. But you know, all that, it's all unnecessary.

MT: Did you ask him why or did you just stand there?

EH: Huh?

MT: Did you ask him why or did you just?

EH: No, I didn't say anything. The other girl say it. I didn't say anything.

MT: Had you been there before?

EH: No.

MT: No, okay.

EH: But, he had a sign, but we didn't see the sign.

MT: Oh.

EH: We seen the sign. It says, “Colored people—colored use the back door.”

MT: "Colored use the back door."

EH: But see, we didn't see that sign because all we was thinking was we was just thirsty. And, we got our [inaudible] sodas. It wasn't that high then. It must have been 25. I know, anyhow, we got our little money together enough to get three sodas, and we had the money. I said, my father always say, used to tell us, "The best way to get along with a fool is say nothing."

MT: That's good.

EH: And, that's why I didn't say anything. But, he always used to tell us that. My father used to just come right and tell us. I mean, you know. "The best way to get along with a fool is to say nothing." So, that's what I did. I got my, give the girl my money and she went on and give, put the money together and went on and he handed us the three bottles of soda. Took the sodas and went on. And, they were just really just raising coming back down the road, down, and I didn't say anything.

MT: Well, were most places like that? Did they have signs?

EH: They say they had signs, but somehow—.

MT: I mean, did a lot of places—

EH: Yeah, they say they really had signs. They had signs. Uh huh. And then, some of them didn't have signs and some of them would wait until you get in the bar because I heard my brother used to say, they wait until you go in the place and then tell you, "No niggers allowed." You know. If they had signs, if I had seen the sign, then I would a told, said something. "We can't go in there unless you all want to go in the back door." And see, that's your decision, but I didn't see the sign.

MT: Did they have separate drinking fountains? Did they have drinking fountains

anywhere?

EH: I don't know. I didn't.

MT: Did they_? When did that change? When did those signs come down?

EH: After Martin Luther King had that, you know, what-you-call-them, segregation stuff, that segregation. It was changed, wasn't it, through the?

MT: Yeah.

EH: And after that.

MT: It could have been any time after 1954, but it might have been in the 1960's.

EH: They say some of them didn't change right away. I heard.

MT: Yeah. No, they didn't, but that's why I wanted to ask. Yeah.

[1:16:54]

MT: So, how—? Did—? What about the churches? Were they segregated, too?

EH: Oh yes! I've got to tell you this one.

When I turned Catholic, after we got married—. I turned Catholic before we got married. Yeah. No, after we got married because I got married in the sanctuary because you couldn't get married in front of the altar if you weren't Catholic. That's the rule. You know, it was one of the church rules, but it's not now. I don't think. But anyhow, I would get up every morning because I used to be over here with my aunt, when my husband was in the Service. And, every Sunday, we go to church. So, you could go one—no, five, four seats from the front, anywhere after that you could sit. And then, one Sunday, they had a rule. They had a little yellow rule come all the way across, and I didn't, you know, I didn't know. I said, it didn't I sit here. Dee, you know, she was saying, "No, Emma. Come back. Come back. Come back here."

I said, "Why? Why?"

"Come on. Come on. Come on."

So I come back and sit back there. So, we got out of church and she said, "No. That's for the white people."

I said, "What?"

She said, "Yeah."

I said, "Well, okay. Well," I said, "I don't have to go back there no more in that church. If that's for the white people, that's their church. Then, why you all going there? What don't you all go, what-you-call-them?" I said, "I should have stayed Methodist." I said, "Because we had our own church."

She said, "No, but that don't make no difference." She said, "Just sit. Sit. Sit."

I said, "Okay." And, I sat. And so, next, what-you-call-them, Sunday, go back. Same thing. We sat and I just kept going. So, my daughter, Glenda, Glenda, yeah. I guess she was about 12. Yeah, she was about 12 years old. So, we go to the church and she said, "Mamma," she said, "that's not fair. Why can't we sit in church anywhere we want to?"

I said, "Well, you know, they say you can't sit down." The same thing.

She said, "Um."

So, we went on in church. She didn't come in right—I turned around and looked for her. She's sitting right up [giggles] in the front seat! [giggling]

MT: Ah. A rebel!

EH: [laughs] She's sitting right up in the front seat! And, what-you-call-them said, my

sister-in-law said to me, she said, "Emma, that's something you would have done."

I said, "Yeah. I would have done that." I say, "I would have done that," but I didn't want her, I didn't want her to see that I would, you know. She wouldn't [inaudible] anything. I say, "I would have probably done that!" That's something I would have done.

And, she sat there and she sat there and they come in and got behind her. She said, "Momma, you know what?"

I said, "What?"

"I wouldn't turn around because I know you had your eye on my the whole time!" And, indeed I did!

MT: Good for her.

EH: Yes, she did!

MT: She had a mind of her own.

EH: She said she couldn't understand. She told us folks at home which we didn't think, you know.

MT: And so, did she keep sitting there?

EH: Yeah. Every Sunday she went. And then, her other sisters started sitting there. They went on.

MT: So, they really—

EH: So, somebody went down there. Somebody moved that string though.

MT: When did that happen? Any idea?

EH: I guess, must have been in the 60's. Somebody moved that string. I don't know who took it down, but maybe the priest did. I don't see why he would, you know. I didn't

see why, why roping off—. Just, I don't know, but I guess.

MT: Do you think it's better for the schools to be integrated?

EH: Um hm. Less fights, I think. I think, because the children—I don't think, I don't think it's the children anyhow. I think it was the older people that was, you know, because by not being integrated, as long they grow up together year after year, you know, they be staying there. The same class or same group will be there together for at least three or four years, and that makes it difficult. But, that's, I think it's better.

[1:21:41]

MT: Okay. Did you ever feel threatened by any groups?

EH: Um hmm [no]. I never, you know, I really didn't have any trouble. It's like my father said, "Say nothing and they'll go along."

MT: Except for the indignity, like you said, when you went to get the drinks.

EH: Yeah, yeah. Don't pay no attention to them. But down, when I was working, I really got along. I mean, really got along. I don't, I don't have any trouble getting along with, you know, with different people and all that.

MT: How do you feel about living in the county? Have you ever lived anywhere else out of the county?

EH: Um hmm [no]. St. Mary's City and here.

MT: Do you feel there's a difference between county people and outsiders?

EH: Yeah, I feel like there's a difference.

MT: What makes them different?

EH: I don't think they understand. Like city folks don't understand how we are living and they just, I don't know, they just can't—you know. I noticed them that they don't

know. They just don't act the same to me. [chuckle] They just don't act.

MT: Well, there are a lot more people moving into the county now. They seem, they just seem to act differently?

EH: Yeah. I haven't—Yeah. I haven't met up with too many. But the people that I've known there and moved in, you know, they trying to get adjusted. They say to the people here where they live, you know, because that put a lot of pressure on them: the way we living and the way they trying to get used to how we living, you know, you see. We—. One lady told me, said looked like the people that's been here all the time have everything. You know, so you're just satisfied. I said, yeah. I guess so because we know where to get whatever we want. We know where to go to get it. And whatever we need, we plan for it, you know, and everything. We been used to doing. We did a lot things that you all thought you all had to have. That's what I told her because sometime you think you have to have these things. You can live without them, too.

MT: Do you feel content?

EH: Um hmm.

MT: More content?

EH: More content.

MT: What do you think of the direction the county is going in today? What do you think, I guess, you know, just with the influx of people and the land development and the way the county's growing and all that? How do you feel about that?

EH: I don't know. It is really making a lot of changes, you know. And, like, with my husband's business and everything. Least, we got 40—38 acres of land out here and

it's really—. One time, you could build and didn't have to go through all this stuff or else you could sell a piece of land. But now, with the county, with the rules they got now, it's so hard because all that land, he can only sell six lots. See? And the rest is going to lay in reserve. See? But still, you have to pay tax on it? It's really a lot, it's really a lot of—. It's a lot of changes out here. In the county.

MT: How would you feel if everybody developed, put as many houses on the land as possible?

EH: Yeah. Well, that'd be good.

MT: That'd be good?

EH: No. Yeah. That'd be good if they, if they didn't have to. See, like, if they allow him to have on that land more houses, more—. If they allow him to sell more lots than they, you know, than they doing now, he wouldn't have to put the houses on there. You know, he wouldn't have to put the houses on there. It would just make him feel good if he's paying tax on land if he needs to sell it, he could sell it. But right now, if he needs to sell this land, he won't be able to sell but six lots and still pay tax on it. But we, he, what we planned on is putting certain kind a houses, big, you know, not little house here and a big house, you know. That what-you-call-them. So, that really.

MT: Do you think that something's lost with so many people and so many developers and so much, so many people moving in the houses?

EH: Yeah. It's terrible. It's going to be worse. It's going be worse because we going to run into a whole lot of different kinds of people now.

MT: What kinds of people?

EH: I mean, different kinds of people that wants different things and see, you know—just want different, want different things, different ways of living. They're not going to want to live like everybody else. Hard to tell what they'll do or what it's going—. The county going to be messed up after awhile because it going to have too many people in one group.

MT: In one?

EH: In one group. Yeah, one space.

MT: Close together?

EH: Close together, yeah.

[1:27:44]

MT: Looks like it. Okay. How do you feel you've contributed to the county through your work, paid or volunteer work, your family, your citizenship, your politics, your values? What are some of the contributions that you've made?

EH: To the county? I don't know. [chuckles]

MT: Well, you said you do some volunteer work.

EH: Yeah.

MT: Ladies of Charity.

EH: Charity. Yeah. Um hmm.

MT: And obviously, you pay taxes.

EH: Pay taxes, yeah.

MT: A lot of taxes! [laughter]

EH: Lot of taxes.

MT: And, you just went through talking about your children and you seem to really have

- wonderful success as a parent. What about, I mean, those are contributions too. Your values.
- EH: Oh yeah. Right. Values, yeah.
- MT: I mean, have you contributed to St. Mary's County being the kind of place it is?
- EH: I mean, I would think so. I mean, I've been able to—I've been able to pay tax. I am a, I do pay tax and whatever and anything else, you know, I can do in the county.
- MT: Have you ever gotten any recognition? Any awards or certificates or something like that?
- EH: Um hmm. [no]
- MT: Except from the college?
- EH: The college. Oh yeah. From college.
- MT: What did they do for you when you retired after your 40 years?
- EH: Senator, not Senator—
- MT: Congressman?
- EH: What is the—County Commission Jarboe.
- MT: Yeah.
- EH: He was at my retirement. They had a retirement reception for me over in the Blackistone Room. I got a picture. Now, I'll show you. Over in the Blackistone Room, and they gave me a picture of the college, you know, different buildings of the college. And, I got, I got, I got all recognition, what-do-you-call-it, for 40 years. I show you before you leave. I got all.
- MT: Good. What do you consider to be the most valuable thing you've ever had? Something you could not have done without in your lifetime?

EH: I don't know.

MT: Is there anything, when you think back, that you couldn't have done without? [pause]

I think it doesn't have to be a material thing. It could be a—

EH: I would say a home. I don't know.

MT: A home? That makes sense.

EH: I would say a home because I tell you, it's nothing like, you know, it's nothing like it's special. It's, you going work, by working for something and have a nice, have a home, comfortable. You know?

MT: Yeah. I can relate to that. I don't know how to answer these questions [chuckle] myself. Okay. A home. That's good. Okay. Have you done everything in your life that you wanted or planned to?

EH: Pretty much. I want to go to Hawaii.

MT: Okay. So, you haven't been there—

EH: I haven't been there. I've been to Germany. I've been to Japan. I haven't been to Hawaii yet. I mean, they going to leave July the 11th, so I told Angela last night, we don't have much time. He just laughed and went off. [chuckle]

MT: Did you try to get him to go?

EH: Yeah. Try to get him to go. I don't know. All the children, probably, put together. If we want to go, they'll have to put together and help us, you know, to go, like they been, like they did. But if I don't go, I'll be alright.

MT: If you could go back and live your life over, what would you change, if anything? If you could go back and live your life over, what would you change?

EH: I don't know. I just don't know. I can't think of anything.

MT: That you'd change? So, you're pretty happy with the way things happened?

EH: Whatever, yeah. It's not been too bad. You know, because some of the things I'd change might change for the worse, I mean, wouldn't make it any better. So, not been too bad.

MT: So, was there anything else that you wanted to—? You wanted to travel to Hawaii. And, well, you wanted to be a detective when you were young.

EH: I did.

MT: Anything else that you were not able to do that you would have done, maybe, if something hadn't stopped you?

EH: No. That's it.

[1:33:54]

MT: What do you think have been the biggest changes in the county in your lifetime?

EH: I guess the roads, the roads. I've never seen anything in my lifetime of the roads! I had to walk the hard roads! I tell you, they in concrete been much easier to walk on. I guess the roads.

MT: Let's see. Okay, and how did black folks get their news in the county when you were growing up? What did they read? Or, what radio or television stations did they listen to or watch?

EH: There wasn't any television. I mean, you know. Probably, we had a radio. That's about it. And, I tell you how my father used to tell what the weather by the sunset. The sunset, and the sunset and we, I don't know what, the West, East, whatever. He would say, "When the sun set, the sun would be real, real red, that mean the next day going to be a hot day." So, in, if it set and it had the circle or something, going to

- have a lot of wind. He would tell us like that. Now, he would tell us how the, you know, by the sun. And, he'd have to get up early, he said, "Tomorrow morning if I want to get that plowing done because it's going to rain." And, he watched the sun.
- MT: How do you get your news today? Television?
- EH: We get television and newspapers.
- MT: What newspapers do you read?
- EH: [yawns] Excuse me. The Enterprise and sometime, he comes in here with The Sun, Baltimore Sun and The Enterprise. And, St. Mary's Today has all news in it. St. Mary's Today.
- MT: St. Mary's Today, you read?
- EH: Yeah. My daughter calls it "The Rag." [chuckle]
- MT: Okay. Well, the last question is just: Can you share old stories about what life was like in the county for your parents? Just, how much do you remember about what they would tell you? Did they pass on to you stories about what was life was like for them when they were coming on? Your father didn't really talk much about his childhood?
- EH: No.
- MT: Your mother?
- EH: Stepmother.
- MT: Stepmother?
- EH: She used to—. No. She didn't talk much about it.
- MT: What about your cousin, Mary Smith? She talked about it some?
- EH: About what happened years ago. Yeah, well, she talks about how you used to

iron—put on the stove. I remember that. How we used to put the iron on the stove, you know. We have a wood stove and iron. And, used to have, used to cook on those wood stoves, but that was the best—. That would make the best biscuits you want to eat. I mean, they cooking on the wood stove. And she put them in that, my stepmother used to put them in the oven, it just takes the right time for everything to happen to him. Not fast.

MT: Did you have a wood cook stove when you were married?

EH: Um hmm [no]. We had a gas.

MT: Gas?

EH: But my, Ernest's, my husband's cousin over there, she has, she used to have a wood stove.

[1:37:52]

MT: And, well, how did you learn about the old days? Like, how did you learn about slavery and the Civil War and the early days in America? How did you learn about that?

EH: Mostly slavery, by reading. I mean, yeah. Reading about slavery and everything.

MT: In school?

EH: In school. Yeah. Learned most of it that way, but I haven't heard anybody—I didn't hear of many people, you know, talk about slavery like they used to do in slave time. And, I did, too, didn't I? I think I did hear some tales about slave time, about slavery—how they used to, how they used to shuck corn and take the babies in the corn field and, yeah, and make, make beds, like in the shucks of corn, you know. Take the corn and lay it down and fix it so, put cover over it so they have shelter, and

- they would cut corn that way. That's how they take the babies to the corn fields. I did heard that.
- MT: Do you know anything about your, like, your great-grandparents? Anything back? You know a little bit about your father's parents?
- EH: My father's parents. That's my grandmother. She used to have a trailer right out here. And, well, I never—I guess I was just working all the time. I never really didn't sit down and talk to her that much.
- MT: Do you know what they did? His parents did? Did they work on farms or?
- EH: My father's mother, I don't think she did anything. I know she used to crochet. I'd see that.
- MT: Did you have much interest in your family's history? Just not something that particularly concerned you?
- EH: Didn't concern, not up until. Yeah, lately, some—. On my father's side, well, I can find out anything I want now from my cousin on my mother's side. But on my father's side, there's nobody really in the family seemed to know too much about my father's side on back. Because he never talked about it.
- MT: Did you cousin say—do you know if your mother's family was from the county, too?
- EH: Yeah.
- MT: Lived here a long time?
- EH: Yeah. They was from the county. Courtneys in Park Hall.
- MT: Do you have much—it's interesting because you said one of your favorite subjects was history. What kind of history do you like, did you like to study?
- EH: Like with the War way back then, the World Wars, wars and stuff like that. I used to

study that.

MT: I think history's interesting. Did your—? Let's see. Did your husband fight in any wars?

EH: Um hmm [no]. Too young. [inaudible]

MT: Too young? What about your father? Do you know whether□?

EH: He didn't go to war. Uh hmm. [no]

MT: He didn't go to war. Okay.

EH: I think I had one, three—I had two brothers in the war.

MT: And, where did they go? Did they go overseas in the war?

EH: Overseas in, what, World War I? Was it World War II?

MT: World War II.

EH: Two, yeah.

MT: Did they talk much about it?

EH: Um hmm. [no] They didn't say too much.

MT: Did any of your children seem real interested in family history? Did they ever ask you questions?

EH: Yeah. When my daughter comes back from Hawaii, they buying a home in Virginia.

When she come back, we supposed to be going to Leonardtown up to that place where you can find out stuff about your history? And, we going, we trying to find out stuff about my father's people. That's the people we just don't, yeah. We don't know anything much about them because it said that my aunt was adopted by a white family, and that wasn't her name. Her last name. They gave her, this white family, gave her her name, their name. So, we wanted to know where did she come from.

- You know. If she was adopted, was she my father's real sister or what? We just want to find out what's, you know.
- MT: Yeah. Do you think—? How do you think about that? Do you think it's good for young people, like in the school, to learn about, about black history? To learn about Emancipation or learn about the slavery times, or, way back in history?
- EH: Yeah.
- MT: Do you think that's useful? Do you think it's good?
- EH: I think it's good. But really, some of it's not going to help them any, you know, to appreciate what they got now. And, that's more like to study that history, way back. You can appreciate what you got now for what you had first and, your parents and where you came from or whatever. And now, you can put it together and say that the change, the different changes and what, you know, you appreciate it more. I guess that's why I appreciate so much now.
- MT: So, you can learn about a lot of good role models?
- EH: Um hmm. Yeah.
- MT: That we don't always hear about in school, and maybe there are more now in the schools. I don't know. But, it also, maybe, it helps to understand today's problems.
- EH: Yeah.
- MT: Well, okay. Well, that was a lot of good information. Thank you very much.
- EH: Okay.
- MT: Is there anything else you can think of that you didn't, that I, sort of jiggled your mind, still thinking about? Well, if you have anything you want to add, let me know.
- EH: Okay.

[End of interview on Side 1, Tape 2 of 2]