

UNIFIED COMMITTEE FOR AFRO-AMERICAN CONTRIBUTIONS  
Oral History Project

James Gorman Thomas

Interviewed by Alma Jordon and Merideth Taylor

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Alma Jordon: It's a big one. I'm been bigger than John. No, No.

Gorman Thomas: Andy.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, Andy said it to me.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Okay.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, 'cause his wife, she's back to school now, teaching school.

Speaker 5: Andy's wife, or the lady was with you before-

Alma Jordon: Oh. Uh-huh. (affirmative) Yeah, she teaches at the college.

Gorman Thomas: Oh, she teach down the college?

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) How's your mother doin'?

Alma Jordon: She's doin' good, yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Good.

Alma Jordon: She's doin' real good. Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: So Rob, I'm supposed to be watching you, 'cause next time we still won't know-

Bob Lewis: We're already underway. Whenever you're ready.

Alma Jordon: So, we're gonna have to take you next time.

Gorman Thomas: Hmm. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: (laughs)

Gorman Thomas: Miss who was gonna get down here and watch, see how there they did, huh?

Alma Jordon: Huh? Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Alma Jordon: Okay, we ready?

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Okay.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Let's start.

Alma Jordon: Hello, Mr. Gorman. How are you today?

Gorman Thomas: Oh, I'm not, not doin' good. If I told ya I was doin' good, I wouldn't be tellin ya the truth.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: I'm been pretty sick, yeah.

Alma Jordon: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: For the last two weeks, I been suffering. I've had, been had a lot of dental work did to my mouth.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And it's, I been in a lot of misery.

Alma Jordon: Right.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, the dentist, oh. He admitted it hisself, that it was, it was one rough job.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, they treated this old 90 year-old body pretty rough. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mmm

Gorman Thomas: And then he had to go back in it a second time. He chipped a little piece off a bone, trying to pull one of them teeth out.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And uh, it was giving me so much trouble, I go back. He X-rayed it again, found out it was a piece of bone, or a little piece of tooth was left off.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Was left in there, and then he got it, you know?

Gorman Thomas: X-rayed, he pulled it out, but it's still real sore. I just wonder, I'm just wondering if he got it all. It's still real sore. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And then more than that, I had a, I turned over in the bed to answer the telephone, and something snapped in this arm, and I couldn't raise it. I have to take this arm and raise this one up.

Gorman Thomas: And uh, I went to the emergency room and they said it was a pulled muscle. So-

Alma Jordon: Now, when was that?

Gorman Thomas: That was right after, this last, week before last.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: All, all this happened right together.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And uh, so then yesterday I went back, up to my regular doctor and tell him about it, because they in the emergency room they just give you medicine for five days.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And uh, then after that medicine gone, that's it. I mean, and then I still have that hurt.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I was still hurtin'.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: So I went back up here to my doctor, and he recommend to an orthopedist.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I gotta go to see him Monday 4:00, then he said, the doctor said that he have an X-ray, my regular doctor, nothing but he said it was a rotator cuff.

Alma Jordon: Rotator cuff?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: So I got to see about what he's talking about, about Monday when I go up there. But I'm not going on with those operations.

Gorman Thomas: I know if that, he may, if he mentions that, he can forget about that, because at 90 years old, I'm not, think I'm gonna let him cut on it.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I'll just have to suffer the little bit more time I got.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I have to try to live with it. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Yeah, maybe some therapy and some medication-

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: ... might-

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, might, yeah. Well, I'm just waitin' and see what he's gonna say Monday.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: About what he gonna try to do about it. Because I still hurtin'. I still can't- I can't raise this arm up more on my own.

Alma Jordon: Mmm.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I have to take this hand, lift this up.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Right, right in this shoulder. Catch, see I catch like that, when I go try to raise it up? And it wasn't doing any good.

Gorman Thomas: And the medicine, the pills that he had, I got from the drugstore that he recommend, they was all gone, I don't see that he give me, oh, five or six pills. And so I had to, you know, try to see what they gonna do about it.

Alma Jordon: So did your doctor give you some more medicine?

Gorman Thomas: No, no. He didn't give me anything. That's all he did. Mmm. He, you know, just, he just said, well, he didn't have ta- have a X-ray taken. 'Cause they had just taken a X-ray-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: ... at the, at the, when I went to the emergency room. And uh, 'bout the last couple of weeks, goin' on three weeks almost now.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Since the last time that you was here-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I been suffering right smart. I been pretty sick.

Alma Jordon: Mmm.

Gorman Thomas: I was in so much pain, 'til I felt nauseated all the time.

Alma Jordon: Right.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative).

Alma Jordon: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: I was in so much pain.

Alma Jordon: Oh, well-

Gorman Thomas: And I said-

Alma Jordon: We could have waited to do this.

Gorman Thomas: And I said it was much, I said it was right smart for this ol' body. Mm-hmm. (affirmative).

Alma Jordon: Mmm.

Gorman Thomas: No, I didn't want you keep putting it off. I know what you want.

Alma Jordon: Mmm.

Gorman Thomas: And I can talk. My mouth is not as sore as it was.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: One time, I didn't even like to even open my mouth-

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: But now, it's not as sore as it was, and I said, not as sore as it was, maybe we can go through it so you won't have to keep putting this off.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Well, I thank you for that.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Alma Jordon: Okay, well-

Gorman Thomas: So-

Alma Jordon: I'm sure you kinda remember where we started before.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah. I can, I-

Alma Jordan: So-

Gorman Thomas: I remember. I was-

Alma Jordan: I, I'm gonna ask you to tell me about your family.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah. First, you want to start out where we, where I was born, and-

Alma Jordan: Yes, why don't we?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah. That's what we started off with before.

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And uh, yeah, I was born up in a little place, 'course y'all wouldn't know the name of it, 'cause they changed all the names. Over that amount of years, quite a few years, 91 years, well, it'll be 91, 20th of this month comin', I'll be 91. And, uh, up here called, out near California, right cross in, on the back of uh, there, what is it, uh, that dealership, of where they, uh-

Alma Jordan: [Dillard's 00:06:26]?

Gorman Thomas: Credit union is, you know where the credit union is, that new credit union up near the federal cre- there's a naval federal credit union?

Alma Jordan: Right.

Gorman Thomas: Right in the back of there-

Alma Jordan: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: There was a little ol' swamp, but there was some woods, back in there, a little ol' place there, my mother and father owned it. But she and my father worked that little piece of land there, and that's where I was born.

Gorman Thomas: And uh, they stayed there for a while.

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And then they moved, uh, me to Susquehanna. My, my father was a sharecropper.

Alma Jordan: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Down on Susquehanna Farm, that's where the state of- some people call it Cedar Point, some used to call it Susquehanna, well, a portion of it was called Cedar Point.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Where the Naval Base is now.

Alma Jordon: Okay.

Gorman Thomas: And what this farm my father used to sharecrop on was called Susquehanna Farm, and they carried me down there when I was five years old.

Gorman Thomas: Now I'm not like my brother, but he used to often tell me he could remember back when he was five years old, but I'm not gonna, it's obviously not gonna start realizing about that. I can't remember when I was five years old.

Gorman Thomas: Even when I was about five years old. But anyway, we stayed down there quite a while and worked, and uh, you know, worked and did some things, 'cause he was, he wasn't only a farmer. He worked on farm the sharecrop but he was another hustler, too.

Gorman Thomas: He would do a lot of things to make ends meet. To meet, feed them nine chil-eight children.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And uh, like I was telling you that now, mmm. That bother you?

Alma Jordon: Mm-mmm. (negative)

Gorman Thomas: No. Like I was saying, he used to carry the mail, he was a mail carrier. Back in them days they carried the mail in horse and buggy.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, he tried, many a time I seen him come in when it was, uh, cold in the wintertime. We, we, you think we have wintertime now? But we don't have no wintertime now, according to what back in them days.

Gorman Thomas: We used to have six and seven-foot snows, and things like 'at.

Alma Jordon: Mmm.

Gorman Thomas: And you know that old saying is, the mail got to go.

Bob Lewis: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And he used to carry that mail in an old open buggy. And horse. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And my mother used to take bricks and heat 'em, and wrap 'em into, uh, you know, some kind of cloth wrap-

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: ... like that to put down, so he could have, have, put his feet on.

Gorman Thomas: But anyway, he used to do that. And then a whole lot of more odds and ends he used to do to make a living, and there was a time he farming, on farm when winter come, they didn't have much to do on the farm, then they would go to the water.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: They would oyster, and do different things like that. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Any little thing they could do to make a living.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, and uh, he did that, and he bought this farm, up here, I guess, it's up beside of Jarboesville, up, that's up towards California. He bout that farm back in 1924.

Alma Jordon: Hmm.

Gorman Thomas: He worked and hustled, and carried mail, and did different odds and ends like that-

Alma Jordon: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: ... and managed to buy that farm, but he still stayed down there on the farm and sharecropped until 1927.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: That's when he moved back up, back, moved on his place that he bought.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: He didn't move as soon as he bought it, he worked and paid for that place, and then after he got it all paid for, he moved back up there. Well, I was, I was come

into to the picture then, I was mighty young, but, uh, to have to farm that farm up there.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And that's what I did.

Alma Jordon: Hmm.

Gorman Thomas: Worked on that farm, me and the rest, and, and all the children-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Everybody pitched in, even mom.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: She would go up there until it was time, ahead of time she would come in and fix meals for us, and we'd all come and eat, and after we ate we'd go back out there, all pitched in and helped.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And so that went on until 19 and 43. That's when I went into the service, yeah. In the navy. Drafted in World War II.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: World War II, because it was 1941 when I went in the service, and uh, I wasn't gone too long, by the war was over, as soon as the war was over, I got out.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And then I come back, come back home, and I worked on the farm, worked on the farm with my father and my brothers and all that until 19 and 51.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: And then 1951, you know, we would work on the farm, but see, we still had jobs.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: We would do a lot of different things to try to make ends meet.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I still had to have jobs, but in between.

Gorman Thomas: So then, in '51, I left from down here and I went to Washington, to take up a trade as a barber, because a GI, got to GI Bill of Rights, because at the time, was running out.

Gorman Thomas: And while I was up there, I just went up there to take this trade, and while I was up there I got a job, with, uh, Washington Terminal, it's called Amtrak now, but called Washington Terminal, and I liked the job, liked the people, liked the company people, was just like one big family almost, and don't you know I stayed on that job until I ret- stayed on that job for 33 years.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, I liked that. And after 33 years, I uh, I retired in 1983.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And then I come on back down here, and uh, I been here ever since.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Okay.

Gorman Thomas: Of course, I was up on the other farm. The farm that my father bought-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But in 19-, oh, I'm not quite sure, whether it was 1998 or '97, that's when we come down here on this farm here.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But sold that farm, it got so congested up there-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And uh, like the lady, she was a real estate lady, and she wanted the farm, and she told my brother, she said, "You know, Mr. Thomas, you goin', you goin' be a farmer raising in the middle of a city." (laughs)

Alma Jordon: (laughing)

Gorman Thomas: And she get, kept go- so, you been thinkin' about all that. And like it was, like I said, it was getting more congested all the time, and like you'd come out, try to get up that road, sometimes you have to set out there 15 to 20 minutes 'fore you could even get out.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Couldn't get out on the road. And do finally got together and we sold the place up there, and moved down here.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And now our place is, that place is all built up.

Alma Jordon: So, what's located in that area; do you know?

Gorman Thomas: Ah, in that area? Oh yeah, there's hotels, there's office buildings, there's lunchroom, oh it's built right up now, that place is built up.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Completely built up.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Great big old office buildings, and lunchrooms, and, and a Chrysler dealers, and uh the Hampton Inn motel-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: All, all of that.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Was built, they built up on that farm.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But, uh, I'm a little ahead on my story.

Gorman Thomas: Before that when the Base come, when the Base come here, the Navy, you know, government come here and taking that Base, all them people that live down here, the black people, fact everybody had to uh, evacuate.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: They had to come out of there.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But, you know the government found places for 'em, found place and pay- and paid for 'em, and oh, I don't know how many families down there didn't come buy property from us, from my father.

Gorman Thomas: From his built up, built up, raised it back up there, they uh, oh, they had on a corner Pegg's Lane, you know where Pegg's entrance is?

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: That Shell Station? Black people owned all that, but, but, but my father owned it first; they bought it from him. Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: All that, and on back down that road, Pegg's Lane, goin' back toward Chancellor's Run Road-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: ... going back in there, he owned a lot of property back in there.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, he sold, he sold, he sold all that, he sold pieces at the time, and uh, then uh, , wasn't you know, too long for, for that and then after people start dying off, the children, you know, were selling that, selling that land off, I don't know if any, if too many of them own that land back there now or not.

Alma Jordon: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Some of them, but still some of 'em, a few of 'em own it, but you would know, like the [Barneys 00:16:08].

Alma Jordon: Right.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, they're trying to sleep on that farm, but they all sold all that.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Of course, was living, there ain't too many of them living, now. Mm-mmm. (negative)

Alma Jordon: Hmm.

Gorman Thomas: And uh, that's there, I'm a little ahead of my story.

Gorman Thomas: But uh, did, all that was did before I went to Washington to stay. I went to Washington, and I stayed in Washington for 33 years.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And then after that, then I come on back down here-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And come back down here, and [inaudible 00:16:44] was still farming, in fact, I was even, actually still farming when I was in Washington, when I was working. I used to, uh, we raised a lot of hogs, you know, eh?

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And I was hauling garbage, we could feed garbage at that time, I would work nights. I would work a shift, uh, night shift.

Gorman Thomas: And then early in the morn I'd get up and go around to these, all these different hotels, and hospitals, and places like that to pick up the garbage, you load the garbage and bring it down here, with my brother 'cause my brother was down here.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah. And we, we'd still farmed.

Alma Jordon: So, you brought the garbage from the hotels down to St. Mary's to do the hauling?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, you could do that then, but they stopped all that, yeah. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yes, indeedy. Now ...

Alma Jordon: Now, you talked about your siblings. Tell me more about your siblings.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Alma Jordon: How many did you have?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, had, eight of 'em. Eight of us. Yeah, and they all, all, all did pretty good, but all of 'em gone now, except two of us.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: My younger sister, she still living and they, gone is long the eight of 'em, but uh, they did pretty good.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Times were a little rough then-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But they did manage to send two of 'em to school.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Uh, my older sister, she went to Tuskegee in Alabama.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, Mm-hmm. (affirmative) and [Ogden 00:18:09], he went to [inaudible 00:18:15], but the rest of 'em just went to school around here. You know, just to elementary school around here.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And ...

Alma Jordon: Did you have another sister who went away to school?

Gorman Thomas: Uh, no. Not, no. Only just that, just that one ... yeah, two of 'em. Clara; Clara. She went to Bowie, forgot about that. Yeah, she went you Bowie State College. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative), Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And my older sister, went to Tuskegee, and Ogden, he went to Cardinal Gibbons. And the re-

Alma Jordon: And what-

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: And what were the names of your siblings?

Gorman Thomas: Uh, eh, uh, eh, uh, well McDowell was the oldest.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And Evelyn. Evelyn Clark, that was her married, married name. And Vergie Somerville, and Geraldine Chase, well, you know them, know all their children, Geraldine's children.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And uh, Hazel.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And Clara. No, me, and Clara.

Alma Jordon: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: That's they way it is. Now, I told you about Hazel, I said Hazel and-

Alma Jordon: Right.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: There was eight of us. And, uh-

Alma Jordon: Okay.

Gorman Thomas: They all, they all did good.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: All of 'em gone, now. But they got, they got children 'round here.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: They got some, some of 'em 'round here, some of 'em gone away from here. Some of the children still live here, not to many.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Where you talked-

Gorman Thomas: Every three years-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: We all gets together.

Alma Jordon: Ah, yes.

Gorman Thomas: We have a family reunion every three years-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Instead of every year.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And all of 'em, every year, they comes here.

Gorman Thomas: See, we got 'em all over the United States, somewheres, but they come, they we go, we go like, a lot of people and a lot of family go from state to state, we have uh, but they all comes here. Like, in, uh, like uh, most of the time have it in July.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And um, one's in California, we got 'em in California, we got 'em in Alabama, Texas, Chicago, and, um, different places around, they most all, all comes here, we just, yearly every three years, Mm-hmm. (affirmative).

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And, it's uh, it's comin' up now, in this, this, this year, '012.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: This will be the year for the family reunion, mm-hmm. (affirmative).

Alma Jordon: Yeah.

Alma Jordan: Now, you talked about living on a farm, did you, what, did you eat most of the food? Was that the type of food you ate?

Gorman Thomas: Well, that's right, that's, that's what we did, that's why we could make, that's why you made ends meet. We didn't have a whole lot of stuff. We had to just buy stuff that we didn't raise.

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, fact, we raised our own hogs, and uh, have our corn-

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And wheat.

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And on the farm, chicken farm, we have our own eggs.

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: We used to, uh, trade eggs for food. Like how they's old corner stores used to have way back in there. When Mayor Lang was what had a corner store down there, we used to take our eggs, and go down there, that's where we get things that we didn't raise, you know?

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Like, flour, some, some, well, we raised some flour, but we didn't raise it all, we get some flour, and molasses, they had them big ol' barrels, like that there, molasses barrels, and used to crack 'em and pump the molasses out of it, you know? (laughs)

Alma Jordan: (laughs)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, and we'd carry our eggs down there and trade it in for food.

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And, uh, everything went along all right. I got along pretty good, I ... I don't know. For some reason it seemed like people was nicer to one another then, you know? They would help one another.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: They really would. Mm-hmm. (affirmative).

Gorman Thomas: And then Frank Aud, he's runnin' one of them little corner stores, we used to get a lot of stuff from him.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And old man Lang, different things like 'at.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Now, you talked about your farm.

Gorman Thomas: Yessir. And uh ... huh?

Alma Jordon: You talked about the farm. Now, did you have a specific chore on the farm?

Gorman Thomas: Oh yeah.

Alma Jordon: Did you like what- your chores?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah. Well, we worked- we, we pitched in. Did everybody had certain things to do, yeah.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: My sister and I, the one that's next older than me, Lawrence Chase's wife, I can name that, 'cause I think you know, I think you know them. Lawrence Chase's wife, that was one of my sisters. She was just older than me.

Alma Jordon: Geraldine.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah. She and I would milk the cows. That was our ...

Alma Jordon: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: We'd milk the cows. And that wasn't the onliest thing I did, too, because she wasn't had nothing but a wood fire there.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: We used to have to go in the woods, and get the wood, and have the wood we can make the fire every morning, get up and make the fire.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: In the old, old tin heater stove. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And things like that, for mama to cook with.

Alma Jordon: Right. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: You either have to, you either have to do that besides, that, we had, that was ours, Geri and I had to milk the cows.

Alma Jordon: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Okay.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Yes, indeedy.

Gorman Thomas: And then we would go out and work in the corn fields, and things like 'at, during the day, you know, that was in the summertime.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And the wintertime, they always have something for you to do, well that's one thing, keep 'em busy, 'cause they always had something to do.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And when the times we would cut wood, we would do that, too, sometimes for a living.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Oh.

Gorman Thomas: You know, people would, like, want some wood cut.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And me and my brother, we worked together most of the time, very close just like that. Mm-hmm. (affirmative). We'd cutting the wood, and cut wood, and sell wood. We used to sell wood to schools.

Gorman Thomas: You know, they used to have these ol' one-room schools, and then they even had these little great big ol' stoves in there, and they, uh, they have to have heat in them, had to have some kind of heat.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And we used to furnish wood, we'd get paid for it. We used to furnish wood to the stoves, that, that was another little hustle that my father got, had. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Do it in the wintertime. We used to furnish these schools in wood. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: What schools were they? Do you remember?

Gorman Thomas: St. Francis wouldn't have one-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And, old, old Jarboesville School. Old, old one-room school; they all tore down 'round here and gone, now.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: They was one old Jarboesville School, you know where, the, uh, hotel on, uh, Franklin D. Roosevelt Road, road that go through there?

Alma Jordon: FDR?

Gorman Thomas: FDR, yeah. Back in there, was old school, 'cause I never get, for I was, passed my brother, he passed in '04, we tried to find out where it located, but we found, found out where it was, but we thought we were going to find something out there that showed where the- oh, maybe a few old bricks or somewhere the wood was-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But they didn't have any of that, because it was, they had cleared that off and built up there, where the, where the theater was; you know where the theater is?

Alma Jordon: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: That's where that old Jarboesville School. We used to carry wood to that-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And then we used to carry also, carry wood to St. Francis School. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: And then, uh, we used to go to our church was St. Nicholas. See, when the Base come, they'd taken that from us.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: See? And then we relocated, we didn't have nowhere to go, but St. Francis Hall, an old hall they used to have up there, and that's where they used to have mass, Catholic masses, up there.

Gorman Thomas: Until after they, a while, my cousin, my mother's cousins, donated some land, right across there where Immaculate Heart of Mary Church is now, donated some land, they built a little ol' church right along side the road-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: So we could stop, so we had someplace to have mass other than in the hall, you know?

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: And that little church, we went to that little church until after it, well, I don't know just what year it was, 'til they built that big church; Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Now, was that church open to both races?

Gorman Thomas: Oh, yeah. Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Where was the hall located?

Gorman Thomas: St. Francis Hall?

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: You know where Kelly's living, don't cha?

Alma Jordon: Oh yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Right there where Kelly Cutchember lives. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And that's where the school was built on to. That's where they used to have the school in there. One end of it at Holy Hall, you said St. Francis School? Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: So, it sounds like-

Gorman Thomas: Theresa used to teach down there.

Alma Jordon: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Theresa Somerville?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, Thomps-

Alma Jordon: Thompson.

Gorman Thomas: Somerville-Thompson. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Well, it sounds like you got along very well with your one brother, you get along well with all your siblings?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, got along, well, we'll all, we all got along nicely.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But you know how it works in the family, there's always one closer than the other. Ogden and I was most closest, 'cause we did everything together.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Ah.

Gorman Thomas: Did a little bit of everything together.

Alma Jordon: Ah. So, do you remember your family having, um, many health problems when you were growing up?

Gorman Thomas: Ah, not a lot. No indeedy. No indeedy.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: They didn't have a whole lot of health, family health, health, uh, conditions-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: ... when we were growing up.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And mostly the ones we have, they'd take care of it. They was the doctor, mama.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Oh, you know she used to use all those little remedies, for different things, you know? Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Yeah, I'd say mama was the doctor.

Alma Jordon: Do you remember any of those remedies?

Gorman Thomas: Ah, yes indeedy, yeah, like the colds, and, she'd put some kinda stuff you'd call mutton tallow on a red flannel rag, and put across your chest, and if you got a little cut, they'd take a piece of fat meat and put on it, and wrap around it, and all like kind of stuff. They, they, they, they was the doctors. (laughs)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: All Doctor Bean did, when he come, come along in his times, he was the one delivered babies.

Alma Jordon: Doctor Bean delivered babies for your mom?

Gorman Thomas: Doctor Bean. Exactly. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Oh really?

Gorman Thomas: Um, before they, what's it called; midwife?

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: They used to do it first, and then after Dr. Bean come along-

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: ... that was his job.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: They was a big write-up about him, how, the amount of babies he had delivered.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Did he deliver any of your siblings?

Gorman Thomas: Oh yeah. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Did he deliver you?

Gorman Thomas: Ah, Now, I don't startin' to lie, now; I don't remember whether he delivered me or not. But mostly all the older ones, those midwives used to deliver.

Alma Jordon: Right.

Gorman Thomas: Remember?

Alma Jordon: Right.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah. You don't remember, but you heard about it. (laughs) 'Cause you're too young for that.

Alma Jordon: I remember.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) yeah.

Alma Jordon: Remember when you were younger, and what type of games did your family play together?

Gorman Thomas: Oh, well, we used to play all kinds had a lot of different games, but we made things we had to play with, we made it ourself.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, like old carts, we'd push 'em, we'd put a thing called, uh, uh, tomato baskets. Bottom, and then we'd find some kind of wheels off a little something, and put on that little cart so we would show-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Then we would use these ol' steel rims, we'd run along with them, play with them, but most of thing like that, like I say, make 'em wag- make the little wagon.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, 'cause our parents didn't have no money to buy nothin' like that.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: It come in most stuff like 'at, go to junk, go to the junkyard, and find old bicycles and put 'em together, make our own bicycles. Yeah, that's the things we played with.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And um, like games, when we was going school, games, we used to play something called basketball. Wasn't no football in them days.

Alma Jordon: Mmm.

Gorman Thomas: In them days, wasn't anyone playin' them, wasn't no football, had a little game we used to call basketball. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: And what did you use for a basket?

Gorman Thomas: What. What, a ball?

Alma Jordon: For the, for the basketball, and the ball.

Gorman Thomas: No, we didn't play basketball. I said basketball, I meant, vol- was it basketball? No, not basketball. It was, uh, dodge ball. Dodge ball.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Some kinda ball. Just looked like a basketball. Bought something, get into a ring, make a big circle, out there, and a bunch of 'em be in the ring, and if you could hit 'em with that ball, then they have to come out, come out that ring.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Games like 'at, we just made up for, sat and played, we entertained ourself.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, I enjoyed it, tell you that.

Alma Jordon: Sounds like a lot of fun.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) I enjoyed it. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: So-

Gorman Thomas: Yes, indeedy.

Alma Jordon: Now, tell me about your schooling; uh, where did you go to school-

Gorman Thomas: Oh, I just-

Alma Jordon: ... and what type of books did you have, and-

Gorman Thomas: Oh, yeah, well, see, now, I didn't go to school. But, I didn't go no further than seventh grade.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Yeah. I remember some of 'em, I went to Bannerker, first opened up, my sister just older than me, she went to, uh, to Bannerker High in Jarboesville.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But other than that, I didn't make it to high school. Just seventh grade is as far as I went. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: What was the name of your school?

Gorman Thomas: Jarboesville.

Alma Jordon: Was it the same?

Gorman Thomas: Jarboesville, Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: Everything was called Jarboesville down 'round here.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: 'Til you go out on the Base, where the Navy Base taking over?

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: That was, uh, used to call that Cedar Point and Susquehanna.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And they was Great Mills, you know where Little Flower Church is?

Alma Jordon: Yes.

Gorman Thomas: We used to there, sometimes, too, to mass.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Catholic, there was a Catholic church over there.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And 'cause they had a old church way down the road where they have Cecil's Mill. You know where Cecil Mill is?

Alma Jordon: Yes.

Gorman Thomas: They had a old church back in there. That was the first Little Flower School, but then they built the new church, built it up on the hill.

Alma Jordon: Right.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And a Little Flower School.

Alma Jordon: Ah.

Gorman Thomas: They built that up on a hill.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: So what about when you were in school; did you have supplies like books and pencils and all of that?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, oh yeah, yeah. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Miss Marie Smith. Remember her?

Alma Jordon: Was that one of your teachers?

Gorman Thomas: That's right.

Alma Jordon: Yes, I do remember her.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Was she your- one of your favorite teachers?

Gorman Thomas: She was one of the teachers. Well, yeah, she was all right.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But Theresa was a favorite 'round there.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Theresa Thompson. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Oh yes.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordan: When you were a child, what, what do you- do you remember dreaming of being anything particularly?

Gorman Thomas: No.

Alma Jordan: When you grew up?

Gorman Thomas: Mm-mmm. (negative) Mm-mmm. (negative)

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-mmm. (negative) Hmm.

Alma Jordan: And you were telling me about where your family went to church.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Alma Jordan: Yeah, uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: That's right, St. Nicholas, Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordan: Was your family involved in any church activities, did you have church festivals?

Gorman Thomas: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. My mother, she was a strict Catholic.

Alma Jordan: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Very, very strict Catholic. She was- fact, she used to play the organ, piano.

Alma Jordan: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: Mother did. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative) For the church. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordan: Yeah, Uh-huh. (affirmative) Uh-huh. (affirmative) Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yes, sir. She was gonna see that we went to church, too.

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordan: Did you have church festivals then?

Gorman Thomas: Oh yeah. Yeah.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Every year.

Alma Jordon: What were they like?

Gorman Thomas: Oh, it was nice, they would have church festivals and they would have, you know, dances, and music, afterwards, at night. They would have the festival during the day-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And at night they would have dances.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) They would have old country bands and all that kind of stuff-

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: ... like 'at. Yeah, we used to enjoy ourself.

Alma Jordon: Ah.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Up here.

Alma Jordon: When you were coming up, do you remember how you for your news, how black people got their news? Did you have a newspaper?

Gorman Thomas: Well, we have one old newspaper 'round here, but, uh, what did we call it; African-Americans paper? You know, mister-

Alma Jordon: Afro?

Gorman Thomas: Young. What was the name, used to come down through in here sellin' that paper? But the, we, we heard news, that's the way we, used to set and listen to Joe Louis. On the radio.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: We didn't have nothing but radios then.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, we used- we used to get, get the little bit the news, what there was.

Alma Jordon: And so, that was-

Gorman Thomas: But people didn't care. The news, if people cared for once it would be, had that little old paper-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: African-American paper; that's where we got some news from, and they had radio. They had radio.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: My, in my time.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: And some of your favorite was Joe Louis, listening to Joe Louis?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, fights, listening to them fights, yeah.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Do you remember your family taking any trips when you were younger, taking any trips together?

Gorman Thomas: Uh, no they didn't do too much trips. They didn't have time for a whole lotta trips. My mother used to go away every summer.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: To work. Yes sir, they, they hustled, they would do something to try to make a living. She had some of the rich white families-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: ... they would work for, they'd do housework for, and when in the summertime they had a place, in New Jersey, I can't think of the name of the place, where

mama used to go up there every summer with some of the people that she worked for.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And uh, the next oldest child, she would take care of the rest of the children-

Alma Jordon: Ah.

Gorman Thomas: Which would be Vergie and Evelyn, the oldest one; she would take care of the rest of the family, and while she'd go away in the summer and work.

Alma Jordon: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: She'd go away every summer and work, and then she'd come back. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And then later on, there was a whole lot of people used to started going away from here, because there wasn't a whole lot, but was, but nothing, really, but the farming, and oystering and things around here, but the whole lot, to make more, make money, make a little, try to make a little ends meet, a lot of the fellas used to go up to New Jersey in the wintertime and go dredging. Oystering. Dredging.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: And then they started going up there, and after a while, some of 'em started staying there, making their home up there, a lot of 'em.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: A lot of 'em went up there and made their homes.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Like the Cains, the Cain, a lot of them boys, Webster, not Webster, Webster stayed in Washington. But Andrew, Cain, and Oliver, and my niece's father's people; Somervilles.

Gorman Thomas: A lot of them used to go there in the summer, in, in the summertime go up there-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: ... and work on them farms up there-

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: And in the wintertime, a lot of times it's a lot of them go leave here and go up there and oyster. And a lot of 'em made their homes up there, stayed up there and died up there.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: You remember what, you don't remember of the name of the area in New Jersey where they are?

Gorman Thomas: Oh, yeah. I was trying, trying to think of it. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Asbury- but I know mama used to go to Asbury Park.

Alma Jordon: Asbury Park.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: That's where mama used to go. We, where they used to go to farm, on a great big farm, like they'd had it all the time, big, uh, you know, farm, farm, big farms up there.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: They used to go up there and work on them farm, I can't remember the area.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: In New Jersey.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And-

Alma Jordon: Did, do you remember at what age you started going out on dates? Did you go out on dates?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Alma Jordon: And what did your parents think about that?

Gorman Thomas: They didn't think too much of it.

Alma Jordon: (laughs) Tell me about it.

Gorman Thomas: (laughs) No, you had to be right up even on there.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Oh, at, at all times, you had to be right up on that. I never forget, I thought I was old enough to go on the floor, everybody else was out there dancing, I wanted to be in dancin' with one girl, I kinda had eyes on, you know?

Gorman Thomas: Shucks, child, my mother got on me. Yeah, and I was 17 years old.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, they didn't change us too quick. Mm-mmm. (negative) Mm-mmm. (negative)

Alma Jordon: (laughs)

Gorman Thomas: Yessir, but none of us, none, none of us give 'em, give 'em any serious trouble.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-mmm. (negative) She was pretty strict. And she was in charge now. Now, my father never beat us-

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But mama; she would beat us. She was-

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, she would beat us. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Well, when you did start to go out on dates, do you remember where you, you usually went on dates?

Gorman Thomas: Mmm, no. Well, yeah, I remember where I went. All 'round here, little part of St. Mary's, 'cause I got a car kinda early.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, I was about, soon as I got my license, 16.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) I remember mama helped me to get it.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: 16 or 17; something like 'at. And she helped me to buy this old car. Old piece o'car.

Alma Jordon: Ah.

Gorman Thomas: We used to ride around, different parts of the county-

Alma Jordon: Ah.

Gorman Thomas: When we could find the gas enough.

Alma Jordon: (laughs)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Well, tell me about your immediate family. Uh, do you have a wife and children?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah. I had a wife.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, she passed, but my children wasn't by my wife.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-mmm. (negative)

Alma Jordon: Huh. Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, she passed quite a while ago. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: How many children do you have?

Gorman Thomas: I have, uh, three children altogether. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Lyle, Lisa and Elaine. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Oh,

Gorman Thomas: Two girls and a boy.

Alma Jordon: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: And they live locally?

Gorman Thomas: And they're lovely. Uh, well, if you call Fort Washington locally.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: That's the furthest one away. I got one living in Fort Washington, one in Bud's Creek and one in Charlotte-. Or, Mechanicsville.

Alma Jordon: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: I guess you call that locally. They don't live out this, in the state of Maryland, anyway.

Alma Jordon: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Well, how do you feel about life in St. Mary's County? Uh, is it different now, or-

Gorman Thomas: Ah, oh yes, whole lot different. It's whole lot different.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yes, yes. Things is more, you know, convenient. But like I was, I started telling you the last time, that I always got along.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I got along with people. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) I like people. And people, see, I seem like I can get along with people.

Alma Jordon: Right. Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah. I never will forget, I tell them ... uh, I was working down by the- I was working at a filling station. And that was bought up off our property. Gabe and, uh, Gabe and Smitty, two, uh, airplane pilots after they retired off this Base, way

back there, way back in there, they bought a piece of property from us, and they built that garage up there, and I used to work for them.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And, uh, I never forgot, I was working and a guy, he's comin' in, the guy said, and he used to talk with me, he said, you know, he said, "You're going to always have good luck. You goin' be liked, because you try to treat people right."

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Indeed, he did. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Well, that's nice.

Gorman Thomas: I'll never forget it. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) I never forget them words he said.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Yeah-

Alma Jordon: So, do you think times are better or worse now than they were then in St. Mary's?

Gorman Thomas: Well, times is better.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Is better. Yeah. There's more money.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But 'cause, but the money that we made, 'cause things, you know, according to what things cost then, I say we, we were gettin' along with it.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But they have more chance to get a little bit more money now than they did then, 'cause, for one thing, it's one of these, one going wanna come along after me, people what them got an education, they could get good jobs, you know?

Alma Jordon: Right.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Look how many, look how many teachers here, recently that I can name, that uh, that left here and went way with the school and come back and taught school here.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: So many of 'em. I know you know a whole lot of 'em.

Alma Jordon: Yes, mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) They went away and got that education, and they could get jobs.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Right,

Gorman Thomas: You know? Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Well how did, how did people feel about the Base moving here?

Gorman Thomas: Well, you know they didn't feel too good about it.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: When it first move in here, you left here. When you get uprooted from the place that you was born and raised up, you're not goin' feel good about it.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But that Base, it really did something for this community down here, 'cause suppose this Base wasn't here now, this'd be a ghost town.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah. It would be a ghost town around here, I mean it really did something for 'em, but do you know they didn't feel too good about it, when they gettin' rooted up from the place where they was born and raised, you know.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: A lot of them had to move off that Base, and it was a lot of families down there-

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: And a lot of big farms. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Fordtown, Cedar Point, oh, Hermansville-

Alma Jordon: Did you say, Ford, Fordtown?

Gorman Thomas: Fordtown, yeah, yeah, all them places on that Base there.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Uh, I say, see that's Susquehanna, for that's where we come up, was, you know, Susquehanna, big farm down there.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But then there was another, big, great big, section farms was called Cedar Point-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: There were a lot of big farms down there.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And all, all of them had to come off there, when that Base come in here. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) What about race relations? Um, how did, how, how were things, and how are they now?

Gorman Thomas: Well-

Alma Jordon: In comparison?

Gorman Thomas: Well, oh, well you knew it's a whole lot of difference.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: There's a whole lot of difference now. Mmm, whole lot of difference now.

Alma Jordon: Is it better, or worse?

Gorman Thomas: Oh, oh it's better. It's much better.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Much better. Much better.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yessir.

Alma Jordon: Did you have a-

Gorman Thomas: 'Cause you remem-

Alma Jordon: Excuse me?

Gorman Thomas: You remember when they integrated Great Mills. Ah, you remember that; I know you do.

Alma Jordon: Yes.

Gorman Thomas: Because that child comes down here now. She was the first two blacks, she and her brother went to that school.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: She come down here now, when they have that thing here, they sing up there.

Alma Jordon: Joan Groves.

Gorman Thomas: Joan Groves, yeah.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Oh, things is much better. Since, since-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: ... since, you know, since they integrated things, you know?

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Very.

Gorman Thomas: I think it's much better. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I think it's much better.

Alma Jordon: So what, so what are you feel are the biggest changes in St. Mary's County other than the Base?

Gorman Thomas: Uh, other than the Base-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Well, there's so many more businesses here, for one thing.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And, every get, everybody gettin' a little piece of the pie. I was talking about it today, all these lunchrooms-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: ... that's been built here.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And that accumulate more work for people.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Garages. All different type businesses.

Alma Jordon: Right.

Gorman Thomas: That's been, uh, that's accumulated 'round here. All that was, was good and helped with the, helped the, like I said, Jim and I, I don't know what would happen now if you had to close this Base down.

Alma Jordon: (laughs)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-mmm. (negative) Mm-mmm. (negative) No sir, don't know what would happen.

Alma Jordon: Ah. So do you feel that you've done everything in your lifetime that you wanted to do?

Gorman Thomas: Well no, that never happens. (laughs)

Alma Jordon: (laughs)

Gorman Thomas: To, no, that never happens. But, uh, I, I, I did, I did, I did all right.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I had a pretty good life.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I say, must say, I had a pretty good life.

Alma Jordan: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: I'm catching right smart a heck, now, but that comes along with age.

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But I've had a pretty good life. I'm very well satisfied, not complaining.

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-mmm. (negative) Mm-mmm. (negative)

Alma Jordan: Is there anything else that you'd like to share with us?

Gorman Thomas: Uh-

Alma Jordan: That we didn't cover?

Gorman Thomas: No, well, I can't think of it right now, until you gone. (laughs)

Alma Jordan: (laughs)

Gorman Thomas: That's what usually happen. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) And I'll think of a whole lot of stuff that I could have told you.

Alma Jordan: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yes, indeedy.

Alma Jordan: Okay. Well, I thank you very much, Mr. Thomas.

Gorman Thomas: You're quite welcome. You're quite welcome. See, I'll turn some air on in here, I'm getting, I'm starting sweating. See, I'm kinda runnin' a little temperature, I think. That my mouth is very parched up.

Gorman Thomas: My mouth was hurtin' so bad.

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Bob Lewis: It's warm in here.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Ah, yeah.

Alma Jordon: (laughs)

Gorman Thomas: I'ma turn the air condition on.

Bob Lewis: Tell me about the first car you got.

Gorman Thomas: First car I got?

Bob Lewis: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Oh yeah, I can tell you about that.

Alma Jordon: (laughs)

Gorman Thomas: It was a used one. Ol' 31, 31 year model, but it wasn't new, it was a ol' used car. I'll never forget it. That's the one my mother helped to get. 'Cause, you know, money was hard to come by back them days.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Was an ol' 31 Chevrolet. And I got that, eh, I don't know how many years it was old, here, to tell you truth. But that the model of it. That's was the model of it.

Gorman Thomas: Shucks. It's just like when a child get a new toy, oh, I was tickled to death to get that car, old 31 Chevrolet. That's what I started out with. And I kept workin' up, kept workin' up, kept workin' up, and then I got out there, got hustlin', make my own money, started buying my own cars.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yessir. I haven't had a new one now since 1997.

Alma Jordon: Did you used to drive a cab?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, I had cabs.

Alma Jordon: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: I used to have a cab. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Taxicab. Leo, Leo used to drive for me, my first cousin.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) He used to do most of the driving, when he, especially when I make trips, but see, I was, he was, had been to the city, lived in the city, he knew about the city, that I have a trip to the city he would drive it up there-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But I would do a lot of driving around here, Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Bob Lewis: Did you have to stick to one area? Were you-

Gorman Thomas: How's that?

Bob Lewis: As a black person, did you have to stick to one area?

Gorman Thomas: No, indeedy-

Bob Lewis: Could you drive anywhere, yeah?

Gorman Thomas: No, indeedy, no indeedy. You could drive anywhere. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Bob Lewis: Ah.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Yeah. Yessir.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But I used to like that farm work. That was my biggest occupation, that doing on that farm, working on that farm. We've had, one time we had over, three or four hundred head of hogs.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I used to raise hogs, and three hundred head of chickens. Yeah, I used to like that. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mmm-mmm-mm.

Gorman Thomas: Like I said, my brother in-law, we're just like 'at. We were real close. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) We did a lot of different things together.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) I'm sure you really miss him.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Yes, indeedy.

Alma Jordon: Okay, is that it? Okay, well thanks again, Mr. Thomas.

Gorman Thomas: Oh, you quite welcome, you quite welcome.

Alma Jordon: This has been wonderful.

Gorman Thomas: Yessir, you quite welcome.

Alma Jordon: Very, very interesting. I'm learn, I learned a lot.

Gorman Thomas: That's, see, yeah, a whole lot more I could tell you, too, but-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) I remember hearing about Asbury Park. My folks used to go up there.

Gorman Thomas: Did they go to Asbury Park? Yeah, a lot of people-

Alma Jordon: I've never been, but-

Gorman Thomas: A lot of people used to go up there. The Chases, we was talking about- Alvin and I talkin' 'bout that the other day. He had some aunts used to go up there, you know?

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And, uh, you know? We'd get jobs, they would do up there with different families.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And then a lot of 'em would go up there and get jobs.

Alma Jordon: Uncle Brent and Aunt Theresa used to go up there in the summer and work.

Gorman Thomas: Did they? Yeah.

Alma Jordon: On the school.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah.

Alma Jordon: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: That's it, yes indeedy.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: They were seeking out; go out.

Alma Jordon: Yes.

Gorman Thomas: See, way back there. I can't go too far back there with my grandfather. My mother's father.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Now, he was a captain. And that's the most, the onliest way that people got their stuff then. He was one of 'em.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And he used to take 'em by sailboats to Baltimore.

Alma Jordon: Oh, okay.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) He was a captain. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative) Where did he, where did he sail out of?

Gorman Thomas: Oh, all there, any ports down there, airport, I mean, airports. You know like these, uh-

Alma Jordon: Like Sotterley?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And uh, Susquehanna Wharf-

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Down there at Susquehanna Farm they had a wharf comin' here. And big ships would comin' in, bring stuff in there. Mm-hmm. (affirmative).

Alma Jordon: Hmm.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: That's interesting. Oh, I forgot to ask you, you, about your parents' names.

Gorman Thomas: My parents' names?

Alma Jordon: Yeah, your mother and father's name.

Gorman Thomas: Uh, yeah. I was goin' over some of that stuff with Alvin, I like let him know 'fore I go away from here, I let him know as much as I can, I go back as far as I can with him, let him know about lot of the people.

Gorman Thomas: My father's name is Joseph. Joseph, uh, Joseph I. Ignatius Thomas.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And my mother was named Irie. Mary Irie Thomas. She married him, but she was a Smith first.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: She was a Smith, her maiden name was, uh, Smith.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But she married my father, and uh, I was telling about lot of people that my, my, my mother and them, and my father and them was related to, lot of people moved. But you remember, I know you remember Kelly's mother.

Alma Jordon: Kelly?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, married to James Brown. Remember James Brown?

Alma Jordon: My grandfather raised her.

Gorman Thomas: She did. Well, she was-

Alma Jordon: Kelly's mother.

Gorman Thomas: Is that right? She was a Lotz.

Alma Jordan: Yes.

Gorman Thomas: Then mama was related to her.

Alma Jordan: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Alma Jordan: Okay.

Gorman Thomas: And uh, aw, what's the lady's name? I can't think of her name now. They were a point, they were not, point of uh, Piney Point. Oh the Maddox, Maddox.

Alma Jordan: Marie Maddox.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, Marie Maddox. Aw-

Alma Jordan: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But the Marie, she married her.

Alma Jordan: She was a Thomas.

Gorman Thomas: That's right. Yeah, she married a Maddox. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordan: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: She was a Thomas, but, uh, her husband, she best, or fact, her first husband was a Maddox.

Alma Jordan: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And I can't think of his mother's name, but she was related to mama, too.

Alma Jordan: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) You, I know you don't, uh, so I say you-

Alma Jordan: I, I, I'm I can't remember her name. I, I see her face.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) You don't remember uh, my mother's sister used to live over there. She's, that way, she was, but she at Baxter, she had moved to Washington. She married a guy by the name of Wesley Barnes.

Alma Jordan: I've heard of him.

Gorman Thomas: Old man. Wesley Barnes. He married my mother's sister.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Alma Jordon: But your mother's brother married your father's sister.

Gorman Thomas: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. About him-

Alma Jordon: You can, you didn't tell us that.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Sister and brother married sister and brother.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I didn't show you in the picture, did I? I didn't show you in the picture. If I can get up.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, show Bob the pictures, yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah. Let me about that, them children, their children, well, she didn't have that many. She didn't have but three. She didn't have but three.

Alma Jordon: Oh, really?

Gorman Thomas: But, uh, Leo-

Alma Jordon: Leo and-

Gorman Thomas: Parnell, and one girl; she died.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: She died, in her childhood-

Alma Jordon: This is showing you pictures.

Gorman Thomas: It was too young.

Alma Jordon: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: I betcha ... Where do you live at?

Bob Lewis: Park Hall.

Gorman Thomas: Park Hall. I betcha the man, he used to remember Leonard. Leonard Briscoe. Now that's that-

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative) He, he had red hair that long.

Gorman Thomas: See? This ... No. This is, uh, my mother, and this is my father. And this is my father's sister-

Bob Lewis: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And this mother's brother.

Bob Lewis: Your mother's brother. Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, see, let me see if you know her Hazel, [crosstalk 00:55:28] wife. This is one of my sisters.

Alma Jordon: See, her grandson was in [crosstalk 00:55:35] too.

Gorman Thomas: I don't know if you can, you might remember Leonard Briscoe, the one that married her. That's one of my, my sisters there. Right there, Hazel. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: But I, I don't, I didn't know your sister Vergie.

Gorman Thomas: No, Vergie left here kinda early. She left here early and went to Washington.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah. That's Hazel.

Alma Jordon: This lady used to live, you know, going to St. Peter's?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah. [crosstalk 00:56:00]

Alma Jordon: Right at the top of the hill.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Bob Lewis: Okay, yeah.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, right up there.

Bob Lewis: She looks familiar.

Alma Jordon: Oh, her-

Bob Lewis: I think I've met her.

Alma Jordon: Her husband was, her husband is the, was the father of, what's his name-

Gorman Thomas: Leon.

Alma Jordon: Leon Briscoe. Okay.

Gorman Thomas: Used to call, used to call him Pork Chops. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) And, and Ida. Pork Chops and married Ida.

Alma Jordon: We've got a note that they're there.

Bob Lewis: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Pork Chops.

Alma Jordon: So, you, somebody's interviewed Ida and Leon both, right?

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Bob Lewis: Well, Merideth and I did, yeah.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, yeah. Well, that was-

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: That were, her husband was their father.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yessir.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Oh, there's so many in here.

Alma Jordon: So Bob, you, over here, sneaked this on, so that I still don't know.

Bob Lewis: (laughs)

Gorman Thomas: Huh? On soda.

Alma Jordon: Huh?

Gorman Thomas: Oh. Yessir.

Alma Jordon: See, and these lights were on, but now you've turned it off, right? Right? What you're doing now?

Bob Lewis: No, it's on. It's running.

Alma Jordon: It's still running?

Bob Lewis: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Oh, I heard the other day, now that's one had got away from me, that, uh, Leroy, Leroy Chase's wife, Louise, was related to your mother. You know Louise Chase?

Alma Jordon: I know.

Gorman Thomas: I know you know Louise Chase.

Alma Jordon: I don't think she's related to my mother.

Gorman Thomas: I heard she was related to your mother. I did, hadn't heard that. Somebody, somebody was telling me that. That's my older sister right up there.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: I remember her.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Not that I know of.

Gorman Thomas: No? You know Louise.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, she comes to mom's house all the time.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah. I heard they were related. I say, well it's possible, because your mother was over running 'round Leonardtown.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And Louise was from over that way, too.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, yeah.

Gorman Thomas: It's possible they could be related.

Alma Jordon: They're from over-

Gorman Thomas: They, I forgot who was telling me.

Alma Jordon: My, her mother's father was from Avenue.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, mm-hmm. (affirmative) Yeah.

Alma Jordon: But she, she, a lot of times is with my mother's sister in-law.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, you're talking about-

Alma Jordon: Agnes.

Gorman Thomas: Francis' wife.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: But um-

Gorman Thomas: So you have Francis-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: John Dee, and what was the other one's name?

Alma Jordon: John Dee? John Louis, you mean?

Gorman Thomas: John Louis. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) He was the oldest boy-

Alma Jordon: Leandis.

Gorman Thomas: Leandis, yeah, we used to go fishing together. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: He was something else.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: (laughs)

Alma Jordon: (laughs)

Gorman Thomas: Yessir.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Them were your uncles.

Alma Jordon: Right.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: They, they weren't long livers like mom.

Gorman Thomas: No. No, Huh-uh. (negative)

Alma Jordon: I don't think one of 'em lived past 80.

Gorman Thomas: Well, see, well see, that's what-

Alma Jordon: Maybe Francis did.

Gorman Thomas: I was talking about the other day, I said, you know, you know, see that one right there?

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: She and I were the onliest one that lived to be in the 90s.

Alma Jordon: Oh really?

Gorman Thomas: In the 90s.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: She was 97.

Alma Jordon: Right.

Gorman Thomas: When she passed, and I'm, I'm still hanging in there, and I'm 91-

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And uh, but the rest of 'em, they didn't, they didn't live to be long. Now Virgie, she didn't live to be in her 60s.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: And McDowell, my oldest brother, he lived to about 70, 75.

Alma Jordon: He died about two days after my husband.

Gorman Thomas: Is that right? Yeah.

Alma Jordon: Miss Marva, they were here, yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Huh. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: No, we, me, just two of us lived back into to the 90s. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Alma Jordon: Yeah. Well, my grandmother lived to be 100, so-

Gorman Thomas: Your grandmother, she did?

Alma Jordon: Miss, Miss Marie.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, I didn't know her.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, she probably-

Gorman Thomas: That's your grandmother.

Alma Jordon: ... played cards until she was 100.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, that's was a-

Alma Jordon: You didn't know Miss Marie?

Gorman Thomas: No, I didn't know her.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: I, I didn't know anybody too much, at ... no. Let me see now. Your father, when your father's side; I knew a lot of them.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mr. Bunton Thompson.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) They was all in the school system.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And politicians.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, that's where I learned him. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Mr. Bunton Thompson, and his wife, I didn't know too much about her.

Alma Jordon: Mmm. You ever hear of, uh, Rock Castle School-

Gorman Thomas: I'll tell ya-

Alma Jordon: ... in Virginia?

Gorman Thomas: I heard of it, yeah. I heard of it.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, my grandmother went to school down there.

Gorman Thomas: Is that right?

Alma Jordon: Rock Castle.

Gorman Thomas: That, now, whose mother was that? When who was-

Alma Jordon: My mother's mother.

Gorman Thomas: Your mother's mother. Yeah, no, see, I didn't know too much about people on your mother's side.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But you, people on your-

Alma Jordon: And that school was started by a sister, Mother Katharine Drexel.

Gorman Thomas: Is that right?

Alma Jordon: You heard of her, right?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Yeah, yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Yes, indeedy.

Alma Jordon: Yeah. If we get everybody talkin' we'll have a lot of history, won't we?

Gorman Thomas: I'm tellin' ya, yeah. Yeah, as I said, if I start talking, I could go back, bring up a lot of things.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I say, as soon as you leave, a lot of them things come, be comin' up. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Right, but you've been so interesting, I've not heard of Susquehanna or Ford.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Alma Jordon: I'd never heard of those places.

Gorman Thomas: Mmm. Mm-hmm. (affirmative) All them places, all southern Maryland.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative) yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Yeah, see, that's why it's uh, so many, so many Catholics was down here.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Not a whole lot of Catholics now, so many more people have come in down here.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But that's why there was so many Catholics, 'cause, you see, that's where the pilgrims landed down here. St. Mary City.

Alma Jordon: Right. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And you done knew that they was all Catholics.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And that's where the Catholic mode is stem from.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Yeah, my girlfriend in California, she used to tell me, she went to Catholic school, well, uh, yeah, her husband did, too, but they'd never heard of a Catholic order of nuns, a black order of nuns.

Gorman Thomas: Isn't that something.

Alma Jordon: Ever before.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Alma Jordon: Yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, they have, they have 'em now.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Yeah. Well, you know there's a Sister Marilyn; you know Sister Marilyn? She's at the, Hopewell.

Gorman Thomas: Oh yeah.

Alma Jordon: Well, she retired and moved down here to this new senior place down here.

Gorman Thomas: She's, she's down here? Yeah.

Alma Jordon: New senior-

Gorman Thomas: In the Hopewell.

Alma Jordon: Woods, something woods.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, she down here now, huh?

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative) And I met another nun, but she wasn't with the Oblates.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: I don't know, I don't remember her name, but she wasn't Oblate sister, but she's a black nun.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, yeah, so-

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: And a lot of them, Clara, Clara, now Clara, Clara could tell you a lot about that.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: 'Cause she goes over there now, well she don't nothin' now, 'cause she's too sick to go anywhere now, but before she got real sick, she used to go to-

Alma Jordon: St. Francis?

Gorman Thomas: No. Over to Baltimore.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, to St. Francis?

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, you're right, right, and she met, she met a lot of sisters over there. She met the families, two of those Frederick ladies was sisters, too.

Alma Jordon: Right, right.

Gorman Thomas: From Loveville?

Alma Jordon: Right, right.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Alma Jordon: My cousin was talking about them. I talked to my cousin from New Jersey.

Gorman Thomas: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: And she graduated from St. Francis and she said she came back to a reunion-

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: And she, she, uh, always see the, uh, nuns.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, yeah.

Alma Jordon: And she mentioned Frederick. I don't-

Gorman Thomas: The Frederick, yeah, yeah.

Alma Jordon: ... know what-

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, she did.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Well, we'll have to get to interview, uh, Clara.

Gorman Thomas: That's what you need to do, yeah.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, but Clara's not doing too good now.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-mmm. (negative)

Alma Jordon: She doesn't drive any more.

Gorman Thomas: Mmm. Now, I don't know what to say 'bout that. She's having a time trying to get up some driving. Didn't have no troubles stopping me.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: But I just give it up myself. See, I fell off sight in my right eye.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I just didn't trust myself out there any more.

Alma Jordon: Right, Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Didn't have no trouble stopping me. Mm-mmm. (negative)

Alma Jordon: But Marva told me that Clara wasn't driving any more, but Marva didn't know.

Gorman Thomas: No, they, they, they, they, they trying, they workin' on it, and like the- well, I say, I can't say too much. They workin' on her.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: That's why they most always go up and get her now whenever we have a gathering down here on holidays.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: I see all these other families and they younger ones, they got cars, I say she don't need to be driving on the highway now.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-mmm. (negative) Mm-mmm. (negative)

Alma Jordon: Yeah, yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-mmm. (negative)

Alma Jordon: Yeah, I tell ya.

Gorman Thomas: Yessir, that was, that was all her, and I say they always had, had nicknames for 'em you know they had nicknames for when-

Bob Lewis: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Pal, that's my father right there, and that was his sister. Her name was Carrie, used to call (laughs) used to call Scar. And Uncle Ernest, his name was Sam.

Alma Jordon: Ah.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) That's his mama, Sussai. Him now, Sussai. Ira was his name, I-R-A, but he called her Sussai. Yeah, nickname for all of 'em, mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Um, your mother's brother's son played with Ralph Butler.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah.

Bob Lewis: Oh yeah.

Alma Jordon: The drums, uh-huh. (affirmative) Just Leo Smith.

Gorman Thomas: [Bubby 01:05:42]. Called him Bubby.

Alma Jordon: No, Leo. Leo. Bubby's father.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, Ernest, Ernest, yeah, that's Leo's son.

Alma Jordon: Bubby's father.

Gorman Thomas: Leo's father, too. Yeah, Leo's father. And Bubby played bit, a little bit, too, before you left up here.

Alma Jordon: Bubby did?

Gorman Thomas: I say Bubby played drums with him a little bit before he left here.

Alma Jordon: Oh, Bubby, Bubby's son plays music music all over California.

Gorman Thomas: Oh yeah.

Alma Jordon: Yeah, yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Yeah, that's what I heard, yeah.

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Uh-huh. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) yeah, Leo, Leo used to play with the Ralph Butler. And I know you-

Alma Jordon: Oh, yeah. Yeah, he did.

Gorman Thomas: He beat the drums, mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: Yeah, yeah.

Gorman Thomas: Let's see there, he got his ol' cane there? My father, I don't know how he's got a cane with him or not, I can't see that good. But, uh, he used to pick the chair on our old side porch, and we'd raise the back, 'cause you know he liked that. All he ever did all his life was farm.

Alma Jordon: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Gorman Thomas: Well, did other things too, but that was his main crop was farming, that was his main, main occupation. But we used to say, 'cause he liked to see things grow. And we used to plant things in that field where he could set out there on the porch and see that, because he had a stroke, you know.

Alma Jordon: Oh.

Gorman Thomas: And he had that stroke, we fix plants and stuff out there where he could see it grow. Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: You know, I'm supposed to give the names of your siblings. So MacDowell.

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative)

Alma Jordon: MacDonald, or-

Gorman Thomas: McDowell, M-C-D-O-W-E-L-L, McDowell. Let's see, that's him there, McDowell Thomas.

Alma Jordon: Ogden?

Gorman Thomas: Mm-hmm. (affirmative) Uh, should have-

[1:07:19]