

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions  
Oral History Documentation Project

**Mary Elizabeth Forbes Herbert**

Interviewed by Anna Moseley and Alma Jordon  
June 23, 2021

[unknown location]

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[this interview is not logged]

Original format is MP3 from digital audio recorder

1 minute, 9 seconds PLUS 56 minutes, 33 seconds

[Interview is two recordings – the first is one minute nine seconds to test the equipment]

[First recording]

Anna Moseley (interviewer):

Is that one on?

Male voice:

Yes.

Anna:

Good afternoon. I'm Anna Moseley with UCAC and I'm here to interview Miss Elizabeth Herbert. First I need to get permission from you to interview you.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Anna:

Do we have permission to interview you on Jun 23, 2021

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yes.

Anna:

State for me your name and birth date.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Mary Elizabeth Herbert. 1927. 1924 make it.

Anna:

Born in 1927.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

[inaudible]

Anna:  
Okey dokey, let's run that.

[End of first recording]

[Second recording]

Mary Elizabeth Herbert, and I wish, wish to give you permission to interview me.

Anna:  
Okay. Thank you.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:  
Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Anna:  
Let us get along. Tell me about where you were raised.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:  
Where I was raised?

Anna:  
Yes.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:  
I was raised, um, in um, Morganza. Um, 1927, by my parents. Um, my parents were, um, Rose Herbert, I mean Rose Forbes, and um, my father was, um ... Now I got to stop and think. My father was, uh, William, um, Forbes. And we lived, again in Morganza. Um, and I, um, Morganza, Maryland.

Anna:  
Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:  
Um, and um, I think I say, again, um, [crosstalk 00:01:51] 1927, I had, um, 14 children. Um, mother of 14 children. And we lived on a farm back in the days. Uh, it was, ah, Rita's farm. And then-

Anna:  
What is the person's first name? Excuse me. What was the person's first name? You said, "Rita."

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:  
Rita. Hart. Rita's farm.t

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Okay?

Anna:

Yes.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Rita's farm. Um, about ... We lived about, uh, a couple of miles from, I think ... From where my husband, where my husband's wife married now, lived. So that mean we lived on the same farm, about I'd say maybe a couple of miles. Um, um, we farmed together. And my father, uh, had, um, raised to be ... You know, my parents raised tobacco on the same farm that my husband only was a couple of miles apart, raised tobacco, corn, uh, they did all the, let's say, working together, you know, they'd had ... Um, they, they did, did the same thing.

They toba ... They raised the tobacco and would take the tobacco and, uh, cut it after it was raised and put it ... We had a barn, big old barn. And we used to put the tobacco up into the barn until it was, had turned brown. They, and they would take the tobacco and, and, uh, after it was raised, put it in a barrel. Take it to Baltimore, and, uh, that was where, you know, they sold it. And they would get their money, and you know, come back home. They did that every year.

Then they had, uh, corn, raised corn, and, and everything. They'll, you know, take it, shear it, and you know, sell that. That was the way that they got, made their monies. They didn't have it in a farm or they didn't think of their own, so they would, you know, being on a farm, you know farm, and have you know, a person who raised the farm there to ... And they would get, um, part of the, you know, like tobacco, the money and stuff to take care our family. You know, to raise our family and stuff.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Um, after that, you know, we ... I guess we were there until we were all, uh, you know, could find a place of our own and go to our stuff so we didn't have to worry about the farm or the money too [crosstalk 00:06:37]-

Anna:

So where did you move to?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

When you left that farm, where did you move to?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

When we left that farm, lets see where we went to [inaudible 00:06:48]. Uh, (laughs), Um, we left that farm we got a place of our own. My family, a place in [inaudible 00:07:01]. And my husband got a job, and he worked around again here in St. Mary's County for a while, a couple. And then, he got a job and went, um, where that place?

Anna:

Yeah.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Oh, gosh.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Got a job in, in Virginia.

Anna:

Oh, that's nice.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And they, you know, they got a van. We call it the van. You got not only my husband but it was, uh, uh, a big truck. They got a job in Virginia and they would drive back and forth where they made more monies.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And, you know, for their families and stuff. And, um, for the family. He raised, um ... He was able to go, take his boys with him. Those boys were grown up.

Anna:

Uh huh.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And they would ride with him to Virginia, to, you know, for this job.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And, um, until they were old enough for themselves to go out in the world.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Um, he would take one at a time with him, back and forth to Virginia every day, and, um, until they were grown and ready to go out for themselves. But, you know, which they did leave home and get, uh, married. They were on their own. So we did that at a time everybody left home. [crosstalk 00:09:18].

And we looked around and, "Hey, we [inaudible 00:09:21] you or not?"

Anna:

Right. (Laughs).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah. I know this big, beautiful [inaudible 00:09:28].

Anna:

Yes.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

To [crosstalk 00:09:30] and they're grown, and they got, they got children of their own.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And it, uh ... So I have grandchildren, great grandchildren. And I don't know, I might have some great, great ones, I hear. But anyway. Uh, most of them are married.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And that's God. You know, they will, they come to visit this grand mama, grand mama, grandma ma. They all alone. This is what you call, we call it ourselves, the love parents. (laughs).

Anna:

(Laughs).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

We do, because when we had his birthday, was it?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

101?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Celebrated his 101 birthday-

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

We had it over to the old house.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, old house where the Rita was, you know. And it was such an old lawn, they got a big chair, big one, where we could put our feet out. Big chair there, and you know?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Um, when these (laughs). When he, is my birthday, we were over to our home. We had it over there.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Where I had my birthday, we was back to the old house. We just did it over there. Over there.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

I never seen so many people in all my life. Oh, and like (laughs) it was, you know, everybody go. I didn't have to do nothing but go out and sit down. Because Baby Boy, recorded Baby Boy, but he's not a baby. He's a man and have children of his own.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

But he always, is always the youngest one that does, uh ... That talking in a mood and everything. Boy. So he'll go out, he'll start the day. You know, he'll stand out and does this big circle that goes around and around and around. I don't know how many you put count in there. But everybody's, uh, it's like make a big circle. That's the way we do it. A big circle and everybody makes a big circle and turn at the other one. And what do we do? "I love you," that's the first thing. Turn to each other and say, "I love you." And that's the first thing we do.

And then, he is the youngest one, so he starts it. Prayers and everything. I ... By the time he finished the prayers we were ready to eat.

Anna:

(Laughs).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Everybody goes in. Every sheet. You know, take your child with you, your children with you because you're the one that have to feed them. So they tell, they take their little kids with them.

And then, there's Pamela and her sister, Agnes, will open the door and say, you know, "Come on in." They'll te ... You know, they'll come in and remember that you have to feed your own child. Don't pitch in, and don't put a whole lot of food. You know how much they're gonna eat. We can't afford to waste it, so you just ... They fix their plates. You know, mama fix their plates.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

First thing we do, it is we move people here or peop ... You know, things hadn't been here before the day. You know, depending on the day of week. Of course, we welcome them too. Like, I'll pay them and stuff. They'll be right there.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And then, Lord, the food is from here to here. And don't tell me what here, this food here, chicken, whatever, you know?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

[inaudible 00:14:21], chitlins, all that's left, all out there, but it's different is the one is the beets and the vegetables and all this stuff. Well, all ... Woo. I'm sitting out there. But the first thing, Mama and daddy got to be fed. (Laughter). My very first [crosstalk 00:14:49]-

Anna:

Is this a tradition that you, your family does for all kinds of celebrations [crosstalk 00:14:56] ?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Uh, celebration for all family. All children, I mean everybody.

Anna:

... body.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Then, the community, St. Joseph community, which we used to belong to-

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

... and all that stuff. They're over there too. They come up. They're, you know, the people come there, they eat.

Anna:

Yeah.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Shoo. I say a few because they have it picked so different. This is here and this here and you know, whatever. Parents don't pit on the points that them. No more.

Anna:

(laughs).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

The food is hot.

Pamela:

[inaudible 00:15:36].

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Feed your child.

Anna:

Yes.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Don't put a whole lot.

Anna:

On there? Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Parents fix your children's plate. They didn't work all this time to a couple days clean, I mean baking, I mean cooking it and baking it a couple days. And I want to say right, it terrible. I want to see it, you know. And they go fix the plates, you know, just right. I done ate by the time they go. (laughter). Whoa, I seen too much food in my life.

Anna:

Yes.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And you know, my husband, we inside by the time they finish eating.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

But he got, I don't know, he didn't feel so good that morning. But what it was, he was inside. And he gets his air, so they took him out by 10:00 that morning and he stayed out there a regular little while, until they said the prayers. My son, you know, you know, he say Lord Prayers and stop and tell you what's gonna do and what's gonna ... You know, what you, you know-

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

... can do. You're welcome, and all that stuff. And always get the youngest one. He's not young. He's just the youngest child. I mean-

Anna:

Yes.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Then they make sure that the kids wash hands, and you know, I just sit back and watch them do. It's like, "Woo." I used to do that stuff when I was home, you know?

Anna:

Yes.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

We used to say, "We are the love families," because that's the first thing said. You know? My son say to his [inaudible 00:17:24]. You know, "Welcome," [inaudible 00:17:24] welcome.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And Bets.

Anna:

Bets. Okay. What is your earliest memory?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

What was your earliest memory of you living? What things went on in your earliest memory that you can think [crosstalk 00:18:00] back? With your children? With your sisters and brothers? What's your earliest memory?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Um, my earliest memories? When I ... Okay. Does that mean when you were a little girl or-

Anna:

Yeah. When you was a little girl, three, four, maybe.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Uh, when I ... Hmm. My momma was the only, the only girl in my family. You know, my mom and dad were so close. Where you going? Where you going? Who's this? The boys, they used to come see you. They didn't know where to come to knock because my daddy was, you know, I was the only girl. I was the only girl living.

I did have a sister and she died. But, uh, when she was seven years old. Didn't, didn't remember her that much. I remember her as being a child because she was older. But, uh, yeah, she fell down a tree and killed herself. In fact, she was going in, going up stairs, she thought she was.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah, she fell down.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

That's why I remember calling my mama. Because I used to call her, "Alice, Alice." You know?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

That's why I, you know. So I'm the only girl with many years. And uh, he was, they were very protective over me.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Who you let out, and I could see my daddy standing on that door, standing at that door when somebody come take me out, even when he came over the house.

Anna:

Right.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Because he knew him, because we grew on the same family. A family, you know, two years, about two, two miles from each other.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

So he just very protective. The boys, fine. One or two of them. But they would come and say, "Daddy, this is so and so." [inaudible 00:20:22] girls.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

But me, it wasn't like that. But anyway. And they would bring their girl, girlfriend to meet my father and stuff like that. And uh, that, that, that was [inaudible 00:20:43] praying. But when I went out it was different. My, I would be in one car and I would look behind us, and I had a girlfriend, you know, we

used to go, go out and her parents were the same way. We were in this car and they were behind us. (Laughs). Pammy. (Laughter).

Anna:

So, yeah. So what chores did you have as a child?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Uh-

Anna:

What chores? What things did you have to do when you were around home?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Oh. When I, I ... Around home, I'd, uh, I would clean. My mom, mom worked. Daddy was on the farm, so that meant dad would be the last one. Momma would go to work up ... She worked for the nuns. She had about 12 up there. She worked for the nuns at the church, which wasn't too far from the church.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah. And I was home. And daddy would, you know, he would get up. He, oh he was a cooker. Had me all alone, do like this. And this was a table he had me setting up there. And up standing up at it, he said, he'd show me what to do.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

I had to build a dough that he was making, and you know he knows standing at one end of the thing watching you. And he would show me how to cook, you know, make it?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Make what you call them, and then-

Anna:

What, what were you making?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

What were you making? When you-

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Biscuits.

Anna:

Okay. So you made homemade [crosstalk 00:22:42] biscuits.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

I had to get them in, and he knows it and he went up there. And see here, [inaudible 00:22:50].

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Until I was old enough. The only thing that I ... A lot of feminine things I could tell about. And we would, you know, he would, my mom would put up my hair. And I wore these stockings that came ... They was way up here. Right up here. And then, I had ... We had uniforms. The blue and tan blouse. And see, I didn't have to drive or nothing. We lived down here, because the school was up there. We had ... Just black. The probably black school up there, color school up there, and the white school was over down here, where about a couple miles downhill. We had to walk, you know.

The white school had eight school rooms. Up there, we had to walk about a mile up the hill to the black school. That was a black school. We had toilets, we went outside. They had eight bathrooms for them, and they had ... Yeah. Down the, they were down the hill. They had this big old school down the hill by the church.

We had nuns that taught us. They walked up to school. And of course, they didn't have to because they were right by the school, right by the church too, like that. They, you know, and they had this big old, that was the distance between us.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

We, so I told her to go sit. They had all the big beautiful toilets down there. All made up. With all the-

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah. That was [inaudible 00:25:11]. You know?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And our teachers, (laughs), just nuns. You know how they used to wear these hat things?

Anna:

The habits, yeah.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

The boys, one of the boys out there playing ball said, the boys used to come up because they used to separate them because the boys were so rough. They ... We had them in groups anyway.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

We had one room, who was one first to the fourth-

Anna:

All in one room?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah. We had two rooms. Yeah.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And the next teacher had the other one. Fourth to, to the eighth, eighth. And the boys, they got so rascally sometimes. They'd get out there and play ball. But the sisters would get out there and play with them.

Anna:

Uh huh.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Then one day, one of them boys come, and watch me, "Poom." That was that boy who locked that. (Laughs). I was like, "Yeah, well that [inaudible 00:26:23]," pour that thing on top of her head to hold it until-

Anna:

Woo.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah. [inaudible 00:26:26] (Laughs). Them boys, you could say, them boys was something. You know, because you know. But anyway, then she, she would, you know, she had the cape here, anyway, put it over there real quick. And but, they would ... We had, you know, we'd wait.

That bell would ring the first time. You know what that means? You stand still. You know? The second bell would ring, and you know what grade go in first. So the grade would be in some time before we got in. We were, we were eighth grade. We just sat there and wait. We didn't ask of course. They were, you know, they didn't want one of them running ... But they were very, those nuns knew exactly, and we followed the rules.

If you broke a rule, then you almost got a broke finger. "Put that hand out," with that big ruler. And she would, "Poom." Yeah. So you know, we just took our time and went in there. That's, you know, we would wait, and you know we waited every day. And you, uh, and you go in and that bell ring. Next time, you would go to your room, whatever. You know, sit down. And I, I didn't have to. I have nothing. I, gee, I did bring down the hill so I'd be [inaudible 00:28:16].

And then when we did get a bus, we had one bus. And, uh, the bus would take the children to where they wait. You know, like Loveville, and whatever. Down near almost walk to school. And the bus would take Miss Gallant. He was elderly, but he, he could drive the big old school bus and go take them home first. I didn't have to bother about take ... You know, me. I would, you know, be coming home.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

But one day, a couple of times, the bus was late. And who's the first man up on that hill looking for his daughter? Was my, my father was standing. He didn't go. What in the world? What happened? You know?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

When he come take, you know, to walk me downhill. We walked downhill. He was always, you know, but he talked to the man, "Oh, you were late this evening." And even Mr. Herbert [inaudible 00:29:38] writewould call him and tell him what happened and stuff. But we could just walk right on down the hill and make another turn, and there's my house in, one, two, three. You know?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Down the end. But, uh, he was just I guess like any other father, protective. He taught me everything I know. My mama walked out of here with just ... I think she had 12, 12 nuns that she had to cook for and even wash their clothes and all that stuff. And then, want to do the priests' clothes and stuff. And she did all that. You know, she would tell me. And we used to, my brothers and I used to ... There's a graveyard right across there. And they would say, "Who's turn is it to go meet mama this evening?" Yeah, go through that graveyard and right, right at the church that's where mama, whatever. But she

would be ready to come down here. But my mama was, whew, she never ... She was raised by white. And my mama gave away when she was five years old. She couldn't read or write.

But I'm gonna tell you what, she never went to school because she was given away by white when she was five years old. Um, she was bathed up and my daddy met her. [inaudible 00:31:21]. He set her down with a ... At nighttime, come and see my father. We did our work. Wash the dishes and come sit down, done our homework. We would all sit around. He would be with that old pipe in his [inaudible 00:31:40] like an old lady.

Anna:

(laughs).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

I never will ... Liked smoke. He had a pipe. He [inaudible 00:31:47] but he'd pipe. But he would sit down and with his legs crossed. Sit down. He'd tell us about, you know, how he was raised up by whites. He was brought over here by a slave. He was brought to Virginia.

Pamela:

Yeah, ask him about that.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

He was brought over here by a slave. He was raised by a white guy. White, [inaudible 00:32:19] white. Momma was raised by a white, but that was a different girl, because she was already here. He was from slavery. He would sit down and tell us the type of things he went through. You know?

Anna:

Do you think that by being-

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

Do you think that by being raised by the whites that your life was different?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

My mom was different. My dad, he used to tell me to, was it was just because she was raised by slavery times down the hill. Way over there, he came across from slavery to.

Anna:

Okay.

Pamela:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

It was different, a different world. Different. He had an invitation. But my mama was given away.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Her mother gave her away. I would never got ... And when she got back, got back to, to her family, it was because my mother had all these kids when her husband died. So she came down to St. Mary's County, and dropped some of them off. Not dropped, I don't mean dropped, but she gave them to some, her people, way that come way down in another world.

So they met, you know, when they grow up. Then they met when they grew up and went to Washington. Well, you see, my mama didn't. She stayed here. She, she was married to, well she wasn't married to my father then, by that time. That was back in another world.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

But she, they, my daddy used to sit there and talk, tell us everything that happened in their world.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). When you were in school, what kind of games did you guys play?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

What kind of games did you play [crosstalk 00:34:24] when you was in school?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

School?

Anna:

Yes.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

We had regular games like uh, games that teachers made up. I mean, you know. Girls, she always separated. Boys were rough. They always, she always separated. Just bring the boys until, you know, they got into eighth grade and stuff like that. But we used to play an um, hip? What you call them?

Throw this thing and jump. Jump here and jump there. We played that hop game. We played a little ... we played the ball game. Then we played ring around the roses, and all those type things.

Anna:

Okay. Yeah, the same thing. Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah. At our age, we didn't get ... The boys never played. We was lucky because what we did once a year, we would visit a school. We visited the school, black school way down into, what was the name? Way down at the end of the world, I call it. A group of black children, once a year we would go down. And they would feed us and everything. And we would play games.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And we did this until they got ... You know, until we graduated and whatever. We end up with a choir. Once a year, we would go there. We had a choir of our own here, St. Joseph. Guess what? The choir was the Herbert family down ... The first choir came at St. Joseph's. First choir. And we had that place lit up. And it were made of my children at first, the boys, then me, then one that missed, God rest her soul, but one who's passed. She was a teacher. She was a teacher up at ... Up the school like Miss Marsha. She got this choir up. And I'm gonna tell you it was the choir. We had one elderly guy, oh, God rest his soul. Mr., uh-

Anna:

[inaudible 00:37:02].

Speaker 4:

Thank you.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

[crosstalk 00:37:05]. I forgot his name there. Loveville. What was Mr. ... Used to sing in our choir with that heavy voice. He had a heavy voice. We had that choir lit up every Sunday, Christmas Eve we used to ... We prayed to Christmas. We had to ... I mean that place was lit up. We had to go twice because that was all the choir. We had to go at nighttime because the 12:00 ma ... 12:00, you know, the last mass. And Sunday, Christmas morning, right back there again. We would go play it. Run home with, get my kids stuff to go back to that choir. That was a nightmare.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

We can say that's the first [inaudible 00:38:06].

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

(Laughs).

Anna:

What was it like when you first went out on your own?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

What was it like when you first went out on your own? When you left home, what was it like?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

When I left home?

Anna:

Yeah.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Uh, when I left home. When I left home, I left home with a couple kids and went to my own self. Own. Had my own children and stuff. And then, mom would come to visit me and dad will be home. And you know, daddy passed first, and then mama she come lived with us, because she wanted to come live with me. The kids took her back to Washington. Then they would tell me, she passed up there.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

You know. But when dad passed, you know, she leaned on me and I took her. You know. Then I was on my own with my own, you know, but she stayed, uh, until I, you know, had my own family. You know, we got up [inaudible 00:39:29] where everybody lived at first. I think it was cause to [inaudible 00:39:34] who I visit. Go home. We go home. [inaudible 00:39:39]. Just where she lives now. (Laughs). Yeah. I can get out of here and walk with you right over there. Yeah.

Anna:

[inaudible 00:39:51].

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah. We had a house of our own, big old, big house.

Pamela:

Ask what city that was?

Anna:

What city was that? Or where? What was the place?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

What was the place? You said you could walk.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Same that ... Yeah, um, over ... We call it Oaksville 00:40:16] I forgot. Um, I call it Oaksville. It's got new houses.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Over there Anna?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Where she lived. Over there.

Anna:

Okay. But it was right here in the county, though?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Yeah.

Anna:

Yeah.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

I adopt two kids.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Uh, you know. And I raised them. She's lively and recall I had got them. A boy and a girl. The boy passed. Then, Agnes, we called her Agnes. They call sisters now. She comes and just left here yesterday, went back to Washington.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). How do you feel about life in general today?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

What?

Anna:

What do you think about life now?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

I set here and sometimes think about I can't get up. Well, I'm gonna get up and do dishes. She would say, "Sit down. I got it." That's her words, "Sit down. I got it." (Laughter). Every day and call, "Sit down. I got it." "[inaudible 00:41:29] cup. I know you're trying to get up. Girl, here's to, I gotcha. I gotcha. I gotcha."

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah. Um, but you know, you sit here and you look. You see people. They're so nice when come with the kids. Some come. They got to come.

Anna:

They do.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Hey, [inaudible 00:41:50]. I told you this little family. Their kids. The boys come. You know?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And this is what they got here. One get here and gets one. And then one in Washington DC. He update, one in Washington DC says, him and a friend, he had a friend. "Mama." I said, "What?" Uh, he said, "I'm going to Washington. Mama, I'm going, I'm going to Washington. We going to watch Henry's guy." And when I seen him, and never heard from him, I never heard from him, I said, "Dear God, where is he?" And he was gone, how many years? Raymond, he left home. He left home. How many years, we were beside the road. We were living beside that road. Raymond left.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

I didn't hear from him. He was gone about eight or nine years. And I sit there and I prayed and I prayed. And then one day, remember, the car?

Pamela:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

This car drove up in the yard. It was about nine years after or 10 years. He had to ... This car drove up in the yard. And the kid ... Oh, one was Christmas. It was either Christmas or we was fixing for, you know, for Easter. One of them. We was sitting down in the yard and all at once here come children come running to the yard ... "Mama." I said, "What?" "Raymond's here. Raymond." That's the oldest one. "Raymond is here." I should've known it. We were fixing [inaudible 00:43:58] and I'm slicing up, baking a stuffed ham and all that type of [inaudible 00:44:01]. And I look, and here he ... He was the first one. Got out of the car. Left all of them and here he comes. Left his whole car full of people and came walk to the back door and came in.

And there he was. And of course, you know, I said, "Well, you don't want nobody coming to the back door in the kitchen." You want them to go around to the front.

Anna:

[inaudible 00:44:27].

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

So anyway, they went over. You know, they went and by the time I got in, they were sitting there. And I'm like, "Hi, Raymond." We were so glad to see him, you know?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Talk about and his wife, he got married, and she had a brand new [inaudible 00:44:38]. And I told them, "Go ahead." They were ready to sit down and stuff. And we went in and, um, and, um, his wife, he'd got married, everybody sitting to come running to me, and I wanted to meet [inaudible 00:45:04] I wanted to meet the wife. But she was too scared. What's she scared of? She was just [crosstalk 00:45:10] (laughter). She was so scared. You know me, I'm not afraid of nobody. I'm a lover. And we sit down and loved his children. I love his children now. That's the way I am.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Pamela:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

She sat down and said they got ... Everybody got get up and eat. Just seeing all that food stuff, ham, all that stuff, I think they're ready to eat, but she still was so scared.

Anna:

Did you stuff the ham yourself?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Oh, honey, I do all my cooking. (Laughter). [crosstalk 00:45:48] My mama, my daddy taught me how to cook. (Laughter). I'd a make and I teach. I [crosstalk 00:46:03].

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

What they do cook. My boys, they can cook for their wives.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

You got married, they cook for their wives. Yeah, show them how to be able to. So they, you know, they, you know, they cook.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Know how to cook for them. Yeah. They can make anything and ...

Anna:

How did you get your news back then?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

How did you get your news?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Oh, we ... Well, we, um, we had paper. I mean, you know the paper that comes around and everything.

Anna:

Which one.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Some got ... They would put it in the, um, actually, we only had one paper at first.

Anna:

Do you know the name of that paper?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

Do you recall the name of that paper?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Oh, The Time. It was called something about a time. T-I-M-E, time. That early, back in the '80 days.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). You got news from the paper? Where else did you get news?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Anna:

Where else did you get news?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

Or where else or how else did you get news?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Uh, honey, we had friends that come. (Laughter). This one come ... you know the story I'm telling. So and so beat this woman, and so and so beat this (laughs) you know?

Anna:

Yes. So you got people that came, yeah.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

You had all this. Came. You got. People came and got the news. (laughter).

Anna:

Did you ever listen to the radio?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Oh, when we got one. My, my grand, my aunt gave us a radio. Not long ago, she passed. But she had a little radio. We used to look to rad ... Listen at the radio, rather. That's how we got a radio. From the radio, say, we were able to buy ... We had that radio, radio, radio until we got a little cheapie television.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah.

Anna:

Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh? Woo. (Laughter).

Pamela:

[inaudible 00:48:34].

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Also, do we even want to go to a place, we'd walk. We made sure it be within walking distance and walk. Because, you know, a lot of people right, those days, they did not have cars.

Anna:

Have cars, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

You know? So if we wanted to go someplace, we'd start out walking. And somebody come along, and give my husband a half a toot, he'd say, "Hey." (Laughter). And we'd catch a ride back home. We wouldn't be too far. Couldn't be about all about 10. We walked 10 miles. Back in those days we didn't mind. That was exercise.

Pamela:

That's true.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

You know, of course, it wasn't be about five miles or 10 miles to get to the [crosstalk 00:49:28]-

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

... we could walk. But other than that it was fun. Feel it. I could say it was fun back in the days. Just sit back. But today you sit back, all you really do is sit back and think about (laughs) where you been, how you got there, what you did.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

You know? Because when I, you know, young, I was involved in so much. I taught school. I taught [crosstalk 00:49:55] school-

Anna:

Where?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah. I taught-

Anna:

where? Whereabout did you teach school?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

In Lexington Park most of the time. I taught classes up here. Religion classes.

Anna:

At the church?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Mm-hmm (affirmative). I taught religion classes up to, up to ... Then I had ... I started, well [crosstalk 00:50:21]. I got a job.

Anna:

What was the name of the church where you taught?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

The church where you taught, what was the name of it?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

The church? The church was, uh, ... No. I taught down in Lexington Park.

Anna:

At what-

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah, I had a class of my own. Mm-hmm (affirmative). I had morning class. I had two classes. We had one in the morning. And then the afternoon kids, we had the afternoon kids and I'd help the afternoon kids. And then I come-

Anna:

Was this at a school where you was in Lexington Park? Was it at a school?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

Was it at a school when you was in Lexington Park?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah.

Anna:

What was it? Do you know the name of the school?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Oh, God. Oh, God.

Pamela:

[inaudible 00:51:14].

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

(Laughs). Uh, it was at ... Because we had one class, I had one class in the morning, and then I had one class in the evening.

Anna:

Was it like kindergarten?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

It was way ... Yeah.

Anna:

Was it like kindergarten that you was doing?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yes. Kindergarten, first grade and second grade. It was-

Anna:

But you don't remember-

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

You don't remember the name of the school or ...

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Um, no. It was-

Pamela:

Tri County. Tri County.

Anna:

Tri County?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Huh?

Anna:

Was it Tri County?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

No. I used to have to teach in the evenings. [crosstalk 00:51:48]-

Anna:

Was it Tri County Head Start that you taught?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Head, Head Start, yeah the Head Start there.

Anna:

Okay.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

I did two classes.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And then, uh, I did that. That was part of my work. I did that when I was working in the, uh, Tri County ... I mean Tri County Community Center. Oh, boy. What was it. (Laughs). I used to work for Tri County Community. I mean-

Anna:

Tri County Head Start?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Head Start. I used to work at Head Start. And they would send me from here, sometimes go across the bridge. We used to have to take classes. I used to have to take classes. I took classes from guys, people I didn't know. These men that I know, I did know, but they were big. We had to go to class.

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

And then, I mean, you know to teach.

Anna:

Yes.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yeah. And then these guys would come from other places. Other, You know, Virginia, whatever. Um, yeah, they'd teach at ... I mean we had classes.

Anna:

Did you ever work at Banneker Head Start?

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Did I go to Bannaker? No, I don't remember Bannaker. They didn't give us nothing close to home.

Anna:

Oh. (Laughter).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

They, some of us went out to ... [inaudible 00:53:35] came and they all got ... And we used to go, week, I mean go by, go and leave my family about a week.

One time I remember coming home, Good Friday, for Easter. We had to go up a whole week. Then, you know, and, uh, by working for that. You know?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

I got home a bunch of old [inaudible 00:53:59]. Will I get home for Easter? Will I get home for whatever I have my ... You know? You need me home and you need me there. But I know they'd be all right because they already knew how to cook and stuff. Lord, but, but yeah. But they'd be so angry because they know they had it. That I know I guess I had to give it. You know?

Anna:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

But I was, I then I was keeping my kitchen. You know? It working when pay come. I'd been to a whole lot on [inaudible 00:54:34] and then come home to my kids and my family and my husband. Yeah. (Laughter).

Anna:

Well, Miss Herbert, we have enjoyed talking, listening to you. (Laughter). You've had an exciting life. (Laughter).

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Well, I mean, that's the way you learn and that's the way you-

Anna:

Yes, it is.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

... all, and that's the way you know-

Anna:

And your family, learning all about your children. I've enjoyed listening to you. I learned about your children, your family.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

(Laughs). Yep.

Anna:

Your traditions.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

(Laughs). Lord, how you go. Yeah, I've been through so much, babies. By, what's you call it? But I've been through it.

Anna:

Yes. But-

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

But I'll tell you, thank God, I sit back, think about your kids and where I am back then and where I am now, that's where I [inaudible 00:55:40]. You know where I [inaudible 00:55:40]. That keeps you living. You wanna go back to stuff.

Pamela:

[inaudible 00:55:40].

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

I started out, one time, I think I let ... Lord, how it shook me. Thinking about my life. I have wrote, I don't know how many pages. I, Mary Elizabeth Herbert, was born in such and such and such. And where I took them, something. Some, I, somewhere or something, they're somewhere. So they're somewhere.

Anna:

[crosstalk 00:56:08]. You might find it one of these days. You're down there in some of those drawers-

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Anna:

Or somewhere, you might find that beginning to that story and-

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Oh, I-

Anna:

Maybe you'll get Pam to finish writing it for you. You tell her what to write and maybe one of these days you might get it finished.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Yes.

Anna:

We thank you.

Mary Elizabeth Herbert:

Lord. I said, "The Life of Mary Herbert, Mary Herbert."

Anna:

(Laughs).

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