

I N T R O D U C T I O N

This project is a study of the changes in Bridgeport neighborhoods from the viewpoint of selected Black residents during the historical periods of World War I, the Depression, World War II, and the 1960's.

By means of interviews, we have investigated the social and economic effects of each period on Black Bridgeporters. All persons interviewed have resided in Bridgeport during at least three of the targeted periods. We attempted to explore how their families, friends, and neighbors were affected during those turbulent times. We discovered the changes that occurred on their jobs, in their neighborhoods and in the city as a whole.

This kit contains a transcript and a tape recording of the interview along with suggested activities that are best suited for grades 5-8 and adaptable for high school students.

AAEA Education Committee Members:

Demise Foster-Bey
Susan Golson
David Hicks
Gwendolyn Johnson
James Johnson
Juanita Wright
Frances Judson, Chairman

Consultants:

John Sutherland, Ph. D.
David Palmquist, Curator

PERSONAL DATA

Carrie Celeste McAden
220 Davenport, Bridgeport

Born: March 2, 1902 - Bridgeport to Alice and
Taxwell Saunders

Spouse: Henry J. P. McAden, Sr.

Children: Ralph, Henrietta Ellis, Carrie Moreland,
Henry Jr., and Jeanette

Education: High School

Profession: Cook, Homemaker

Travel: Continental United States and Canada

Church: Walters Memorial A. M. E. Zion

Organizations: Church Women United
YWCA
National Council of Negro Women
Women's Auxiliary - Col. Charles Young Post 140
American Legion
Stewardess Board, Walters Memorial A. M. E. Zion
(President 35 years)
Home Mission Society

"A Study of Bridgeport Neighborhoods:
A Black Perspective, 1900 -- Present"

Interview by: Frances Judson
Interview with: Carrie McAden
Date: November 6, 1983

JUDSON: Mrs. McAden, I see on your questionnaire that you filled out that you were born in Bridgeport. Can you tell me something about your early childhood?

McAden: My early childhood was spent in the West End. We lived on Iranistan Avenue. There was this one building. There was eight families in that [building] that was just all Blacks. We went to Maplewood School. At that time in the neighborhood, school was --, [I] never went to school [with other Blacks]. There was never any other Blacks in the schoolroom with me. I didn't go to associate. I don't mean "associate", but I mean there wasn't -- No, they [Blacks] weren't there. There was only about --. Well, there's my brothers, my sister and myself. My sister, she was much younger than me. I was about out of school when she went to school. At the time we went to school, there was all white children.

That is another thing that I'd like to clear up. In Bridgeport, as far as segregation goes, we never had any segregation. You have the Blacks going into school and the whites too. We never knew anything about segregation. I suppose if it was prevalent -- but I didn't realize it because I never experienced it. I had gone into places. Now like in the theater. You sat in the balcony if you went. But the downstairs cost so much, you wasn't really wanting to go down there anyway.

You couldn't afford it. As far as the stores, if you went to the stores -- and there were certain big stores that the price of things kept you out of the stores. You didn't bother to go in anyway.

As far as where we lived, why the people were always very nice to us. My brothers, they worked in the drug store on the corner. They worked in market at the corner. They were just young boys. They were responsible to them. They went to the bank with the druggist's money. My brother worked for Mr. Frank Ballard. He was a County Commissioner and used to carry my brother around with him everywhere he went. We lived across the street from the Merlins and they're all lawyers here in Bridgeport now. We lived next door to a school teacher, Miss Ball. She used to teach at our neighborhood school. We lived next door to the Wilkson's and many other people, the Lovegrove's, and a couple of Judge Foster's daughters was in the room with me. And a lawyer, Hall, his children went to Maplewood. In fact, we came up in a better class neighborhood.

But as for our own family life, we were -- for our pleasures and entertainment and whatnot -- we had it at home. My father and my mother both played instruments -- organ, piano. We had an organ and a piano. We always had a piano in our home, always had an organ, as long as I can remember. My father and mother would play during the week.

My father would teach us how to play games. We would play Pinochle as children. But we were never allowed to play for anything. We were never allowed to play for -- like gambling. That was out. We were never allowed to play any games on Sunday. My father taught us how to dance, but we weren't allowed to dance on Sunday. When it's Sunday, we went to Sunday School. Sunday afternoons after we had dinner, my father and mother would play the piano. One sometimes would play the piano. One sometimes would play the organ. Sometimes they'd play it together. We would have a hymn sing. The neighbors would hear our family -- the mother, father and us children. They would hear us singing and they would come and gather down in our house. We'd just have a big time singing hymns. Usually on Sunday mornings, we went to Sunday School. Sunday afternoons, after I got older in my teens, I used to go down to A.M.E. Zion -- where I am a member now and have been for sixty years. I would go down there and we'd have what we call a Red Shield meeting. We'd leave the Red Shield meeting --

FJ: That's an organization of --

CM: That's an organization of the Church. A youth organization. It was Red Shield. From there we'd go at six o'clock. We'd go down there at five o'clock and about six-thirty, all of us would march up to Messiah to the B.Y.P.U. We'd go to Sunday

evening service. Then we'd all walk home over the hill, over Washington Avenue. Parents and their children. We would all be walking home over the hill from Messiah. Then we'd go down to Park Avenue and Washington Avenue, Laurel Avenue, there. Then we would separate because some of them lived up Park Avenue, some of the lived up Lee Avenue. Barbara Taylor and Miss Margaret Taylor -- they lived out in Lee Avenue. The Johnson's lived way out in the North part, out Water Street. That's where they lived. They lived out there. A girlfriend of mine, Ruth Brown -- they lived up Park Avenue. We lived on Iranistan Avenue. We'd walk home Sunday nights over Washington Avenue hill because there was no other way to get home.

FJ: Now, tell me, was Zion in the place where it is now?

CM: Zion is the second oldest church in Bridgeport. Zion was in Bridgeport before Bridgeport got its charter as a city. It has been on that corner -- right down there where it is -- for a hundred and forty-three years. Since 1835, Zion has been right there.

FJ: Now where was Messiah?

CM: Messiah was on Arch Street. But, you see, since they have torn down the city down there, they tore Messiah down and built this new church. The old church was a nice brick church. In fact, my grandmother -- my father's mother -- put the first twenty-five dollars down to build that church.

FJ: Your father's mother?

CM: My father's mother. That's what my mother's always told me. She was a member of Messiah Baptist Church.

FJ: This was to build the church they had on Arch Street?

CM: Yes. That's the second church. The first church was a red brick church. When the throughway and those things came through, they took a lot of property. The church insisted on staying up in that neighborhood because they'd been there ever since they'd been built. They gave them, or they bought land, over here on Congress Street. But they was always over on Arch Street. That's just [around] the block. That's where they -- In fact, I think part of the church -- part of the property -- is on Arch Street now. I think part of the back of it is. That's where the church was.

So that was our early -- Then, I was going to say my mother -- at night, and we'd be sitting around the table and playing card games or something. My mother'd be making fried pies on the stove. Some nights she'd make doughnuts. We had a big coal stove where you'd put your water in the side and [unclear].

As far as an outdoor toilet, I never went to one in my life until I went down South when I was thirty-eight years old. I'd never seen an outdoor toilet. We always had a toilet indoors.

FJ: You said something about fried pies.

CM: Yes. My mother used to make up dough and she'd put the apples in the dough, pin it over and then put it in hot grease. That was fried pies. Peach pies, dried peaches, dried apples. Sometimes she'd -- depending on how she felt -- she'd make cruellers. That was our feast after we got through our games for the day.

But as far as our running around like up and down the streets and out in the street like you see kids today -- we never did that. We weren't permitted to do that.

FJ: So all of the recreation that you had was at home as a family.

CM: Our recreation was at home with the family. As I came up and married, that's the way I brought up my children. My husband and I, we took them on picnics on Sundays. We had a friend who worked for the hydraulic company. He had a house out in Nichols. We used to go out there on Sundays. I'd fix a basket of all the food but the meat. He used to kill rabbits -- catch rabbits and squirrels. He would fix the rabbits and squirrels.

FJ: The person where you would visit?

CM: Yes. We would go out there and spend the day on Sunday. The kids would just run around out there in the open and have a big time. We would enjoy the outdoors and have a Sunday picnic.

So, as we come along, and as my children grew

up, they -- That's the way all through our family. My children, my grandchildren -- we have family picnics. We all gather together. About fifty or sixty of us get together in my sister's yard -- we got in later years. We used to go to Seaside Park or Beardsley Park for that yearly gathering, especially on holidays like Decoration Day or Fourth of July or Labor Day, we'd always have these big picnic gatherings. Then in later years, as I say, my sister got a place where we could [get together]. Her property's a whole block from Logan Street to Hewitt. She has a beautiful yard there and we would go there for our picnics. We'd have everybody gather there.

FJ: You must have had fun.

CM: Oh, we used to have a wonderful time. We were a family. Now my grandchildren are bringing up their children in the same way. And it's come down for four generations. We still have family gatherings and they invite me. I was at one there a couple of months ago. That was the week before, the Saturday before I went to the hospital. I did too much that weekend.

But, anyway, that's the way that our family has been in this city and we've had -- Let's say my mother, she was a cook. She cooked for some of the best families around here. My father -- when I was a child -- he was a clerk in a hotel down

there on Water Street. He was a butler -- when my mother got married -- for a family that was right out here on Stratford Avenue. You can't believe Stratford had wealthy people out there. They had butlers and maids and nurses. Right there where that gasoline station's on the corner of Waterview Avenue and Stratford Avenue was a beautiful big mansion with a porte-croche on the side where the cars and the horses and things drove up in there and let the people out. Now where that other big place is right there this side of Main Street -- that's where my father worked. Over there on the corner of East Washington and Noble was the biggest oyster man around here. My aunt used to come up here from North Carolina in the summer and work there and go back in the winter. She had a lovely home down there. She'd come up here for the summer and go back down there in North Carolina and live like a lady all winter long from her working in the summer. She'd go right up here in the summer and work and go back down there.

FJ: You mentioned going to Maplewood School. Is that the same school that is still there now?

CM: That's the same school that is right there now. They are building a new one. But I went to that one that is right there now -- and the junior high. That's the Maplewood School I went to, my

sister went to. They taught you more in Maplewood School than they teach you coming out of high school now.

FJ: How was your relationship with other students there, being the only Black?

CM: I had a good relationship with them. We were used to being among white people because my mother was among them all the time. They used to come to -- Well, I knew we weren't on what you'd call "social terms" with them. I don't mean that I was socializing with them. But I know more about them than I know about our own people. But our people -- now, at the time, Blacks lived in Beardsley Street and Minnow Street, down Newfield Avenue. I'm telling you, at that time when you lived over in Beardsley Street, you were living somewhere. We used to live in Winter Street when I was a young child. It seems the woman in the house we lived in, she was selling the house or something. I don't just remember but, anyway, we had to move. We was living downstairs. She lived upstairs. My father went out to rent a home. Naturally, always living in a decent neighborhood, that's what he wanted to live in. He never lived in no neighborhoods like you say, Lexington Avenue -- places like that. We never lived in anything like that. He went out and rented a house. But my father looked like a white man. They rented him the

house. But then when he took my mother to look at the house, they wouldn't let him have the house.

Then he had to take a place that we really didn't like. It was a house over on Housatonic Avenue. But we got out of there as fast as we could. That was right where the brass shop is today. The same ground. We could look out of our kitchen window into the brass shop foundry. The brass shop was just a wooden building in back of it -- in back of there. Out of our kitchen window we could see the men working in the brass shop. That's land today where the brass shop is built.

FJ: So you've seen the brass shop come and go.

CM: Yes, I've seen the brass shop. My husband came to Bridgeport in 1915. That's the place he went to work because then they were starting war work in Bridgeport. He went to the brass shop to work.

Then they had to register for the draft. He registered for the draft. It wasn't until after we had married and my baby was born -- My baby was seven months old and I picked up the paper one night. We was getting ready to eat. They used to have band concerts in the park and I used to like to go to band concerts. So we was going to go see if there was any band concerts that night and where it was going to be. When I picked up the paper, I saw three names in there to report for duty. My husband had been called

for the Army. He had no notice whatsoever, just the name in the paper -- three names.

FJ: Was that the procedure?

CM: Well, that's the procedure he got. That was John Hampton, Henry Cousins, and Henry McAden. That messed up everything. We did not know until after he was out of the service that he could have stayed home if he had gone to the brass -- because it was in war work. But we did not know that. He just went on in there and got into the service. I hadn't heard from him in about a month. The week before -- the day the Armistice was signed, that week he was due to be shipped overseas.

FJ: Talk about lucky.

CM: But you know he didn't get out of the Army then until six months after the war was ended, because all those men were left in camp here had to stay in the camp until all those men was brought back from overseas. Then they had to clean up the camps -- get the camps in order -- before they was discharged. Over there they had what you call a lice -- a louse epidemic.

FJ: You mean those that they have now?

CM: Yes. The men -- My husband was a barber. [Laughs.] He had to shave all the hair off the men. That was his job. They had to shave every bit of hair anywhere on his body. They had to shave it all. That was his job. He was the barber.

FJ: [Laughs.] So he was busy!

CM: He didn't get out of the Army until six months after the Armistice. The Armistice was signed in November and he didn't come out of the Army until May.

FJ: When you were younger, you told me about the kinds of things that you did for recreation with your father and mother, and [about] singing and all, and going to church. You mentioned going to Zion after you got to be a teenager. What church did you go to before then?

CM: Messiah Baptist. I was baptized in Messiah when I was twelve years old. See my father in his younger years was a superintendent [of] Sunday School at Messiah. We used to go to Messiah all the time. But after I got older and got to -- Well, I don't know. I joined Zion when I was about sixteen years old. I was married at Zion. Even though I belonged to Messiah, there was something about Zion -- I just liked it. Even as a child I liked Zion. At the time, they had a minister down there -- the minister that married us -- Reverend Ely. He had some teenage children. We used to just go down there. You know how kids are -- kids draw kids. I just always liked Zion. I used to go down Zion and get in on the May Pole. My mother played the organ in Bethel Church. Bethel Church used to be on the other corner from us. That was their original church. It was over on the other

corner where Warner's parking lot is now. But they sold it because their church had got --

FJ: Down across from Zion?

CM: Not across. On the same side of the street, but just across the corner. Bethel church used to be over there. My mother used to play the organ for Bethel church. For a while I sang in the kid's choir. It wasn't enough to mention, but I sang in the kid's choir down there for a while.

FJ: In Bethel?

CM: In Bethel.

FJ: So you just covered all the churches. [Laughs.]
That's good.

CM: As I say, we went to Messiah Baptist Church. Some of my family -- my sister-in-law still goes to Messiah. She was always in Messiah. She went to Maplewood with us. She was one of the kids that went to Maplewood School because they lived out Benham Avenue. [There was] she and her sister, there was my two brothers, and Albert Cooper, and myself. And I think there was a girl named Lillian Carl. I think she was in the house. I think she must have been. That's all I can remember growing up. Louise Blake, she went out there. And Helen Williams. But none of us was in the same class in school. We was all scattered around in different rooms.

Then, of course, I did go to Wheeler School for

a while, because after we left Housatonic Avenue we moved to Harold Avenue. Then we moved from Harold Avenue to Iranistan Avenue. Then that's where we spent most of our childhood [and] teenage life on Iranistan.

FJ: So you sort of grew up on Iranistan.

CM: Yes.

FJ: What kind of chores did you do? Did you have any chores?

CM: Oh, yes, I had chores. I had to raise the family because my mother, she worked all the time. Most of the time she worked. My oldest daughter is just like my mother. She's always got her hand in. She'd start a bakery. She'd start a laundry. She didn't make a big thing out of it, but she always started it. One time she had five people working for her in the laundry. She used to do the laundry for all the nurses. One time she was the head of the Nurses Registry out on Fairfield Avenue. 1048 -- where the Fannie Crosby Home is now. She was the housekeeper there. She did all the laundry for the nurses. She worked out there in that big beautiful home doing the laundry.

FJ: What is that home's name?

CM: Fannie Crosby I think. It's at 1088 Fairfield Avenue. My mother worked there for Miss Bonnaman. Miss Bonnaman -- she runs the place. My mother was the housekeeper there. My mother used to do

homemade bakery. She'd send us out with the loaves of bread. All around people used to buy her bread and we'd go out and deliver the bread for her. She did all kinds of things. Then she'd go out and cook big dinners.

FJ: She sounds like quite a talented woman.

CM: She was. She used to cook for United Church. She used to cook up at The Spinning Wheel.

FJ: That was a restaurant?

CM: Yes, a restaurant. It's still up there. Up in Easton, Weston or something. She used to cook up there.

Then she cooked for the Anya Beckett Tea Room down in Stamford. I went down there one summer and worked with her as a pantrymaid. That's what my mother was. She was a person that couldn't be still. She had to be doing something. And when it comes to cooking -- she was a cook.

FJ: She could do it.

CM: After she stopped working, anybody in the church that had anything, was giving any dinners or anything, she'd go down there and help them, it didn't make any difference who you were. She was always ready to help the men. She'd help everybody. It didn't make any difference. She belonged to the Ladies' Aid Society. She worked in that. She belonged to the Home Mission Society and she belonged to the H.O.Z.'s. She was a --

FJ: A great doer.

CM: Oh, yes, she was a doer. Anything they had to do.

Sell tickets, she'd get out and sell tickets. Women's and Men's Day come along -- she would get out there and raise the money. One year she brought in more money than anybody else. She was like that. She was

I mean, we've had good family relations. In fact, I guess I feel kind of, I don't know. Maybe I am a little stuffy about our family relations because really there's few people believe -- I have my children often tell me that when they tell people about their family life, they don't -- you don't hear people tell of having family life like we've had. And that's the truth.

FJ: You are lucky.

CM: Yes. We are lucky. We are lucky our parents, my parents started out with us that way. I continued it on with my children. And my children continue it on. And their children are continuing it on. Now I went down this summer. We had my grandson. He came here yesterday for a little while. He brought one of his kids up to Bridgeport for a week. One of his sons. We went --

[end of side one, tape one]

FJ: Now you were telling me about your grandson that came and you had a family gathering at his house.

CM: Yes. We did this -- when was that? July, I think it was. He's down in Jersey, in East Orange --

West Orange. He works in Newark. He lives in a little suburb outside of Newark. They don't like to say they live in Newark. [Laughs.]

FJ: They don't. [Laughs.] Newark has been quite a city, though.

CM: Oh, it has been. His wife, he told me that she's got a supervisory job with the telephone company. She's just been made a supervisor. They transferred her when they moved -- when he got the job in Jersey. They transferred her from New Haven to Jersey and now she's a supervisor. So, he told me, say we can't get -- We've got to come off that telephone thing. I don't know, something to do with long-distance calls. Says they can't use that anymore since she's in a supervisory position. But they get \$35 a month free telephone calls. I said, good night, how many calls you want? [Laughs.]

FJ: Yes, that's true.

CM: They send out many like my granddaughter call me up the other day. When I got the bill, it was nine dollars and something.

FJ: I tell you, you could use that \$35. [Laughs.]

CM: The devil -- I told her she could have one call a month. She call and I say, "Why you call me in the daytime. Why don't you call me at night?" "Well, I don't want to wake you up." I said, "I don't ever go to bed before eleven o'clock."

FJ: I remember I called you about nine-thirty or ten.

CM: But my daughter says, "She just calls you and she feels like she wants to see some kid talk to somebody at home. Then she get out and call. That's why she calls like that. But she is just a big baby and she is the baby. She's her mother and father's baby and she is spoiled. So I guess she felt like talking to her grandmother and she just went out there and called. Because I told her she could reverse the charge. So she uses it when she feels like she wants to talk.

FJ: That's nice.

CM: She'll write her mother a letter and she'll put just one little piece of paper in there -- "Hi Grandma, love you Grandma." She's eight.

FJ: [Laughs.] When you were coming up, you mentioned your mother. Did your father work in the church, too? Was he involved?

CM: Yes, well not after we got older. He was superintendent of the Sunday School before we --

FJ: Was this Messiah or Zion?

CM: Messiah. In fact, my mother and father, they went to Messiah. As kids, I got going to Zion because on Sunday afternoons, just a bunch of kids going down to Zion. The same kids that went to Zion went up to Messiah. So we went to both churches. There wasn't anything else to do.

FJ: It was sort of a social activity, too.

CM: Yes, we'd go down to Zion. A whole bunch of us. You'd see us marching up Main Street. You'd think there was a parade. We would go down to Zion first. Then we would get out and go up to Messiah. Then, of course, our parents would meet us at Messiah at nighttime. You wasn't up there by yourself. You can believe that.

One Sunday night, my friend, Ruth Brown, and I and all the kids was sitting up in the balcony. Of course, we thought we'd sit up in the balcony too. You know -- have some fun. [Laughs.] We'd sit up in the balcony and of course we didn't think that when our mothers came in and they didn't see us -- [laughs]. I never will forget it. We always sat in the fifth seat from the front on the left-hand side of Messiah. In that fifth seat, you could look up in the balcony and you could see everybody in the balcony. Not everybody, but you could see along the front. Well, we were sitting along in the front. Ruth's mother marched up there and got us and marched us right downstairs where we'd usually sit. We thought it was so funny. We were two devilish kids. We put our hand around the back of the seat. The mothers sat between us. My mother was on the one side and the other was on the other side. Wouldn't even let us sit together! And I'd reach my hand up in the back and touch her.

She'd get to giggling and she -- [laughs] --
We was laughing because they pulled us downstairs.
Kids could have more fun out of nothing them days
and we enjoyed it. But the kids today, the things
that they have for kids -- But I don't really
think the parents pay as much attention to
children as they used to. Because your parents
knew where you were and they knew where you
were going. I did that with my own children.
If I had -- One thing that I never believed
in was too much of this spending the night with
somebody. I never believed in that. Especially
after the girls got to be teenagers. I didn't
believe in that, because I've known girls to do
that. They would tell their mother that they
was going to somebody's house and she would
tell her mother that she was going to that
person's house. Then the next thing -- I
know a bunch of girls got tricked one night.
They landed up in New York -- Excuse me.

[Phone is ringing.]

[Interruption of tape occurs here. It is resumed
mid sentence.]

FJ: --service. And your husband got called to service
in World War I. How old were you when you got
married?

CM: Sixteen. No, seventeen. I was seventeen years and
ten months old when my oldest child [was born].

I look younger than he does. [Laughs.]

FJ: You sure do look very young. You don't have any quiver in your voice or anything.

CM: The girl who comes to help me -- she says of all the people she's working with are eighty years old and eighty-nine years old. They told her that they'd give her a resume of the people they've gone to before they send them out. They told her that she was going to come to Mrs. McAden's and that Mrs. McAden was eighty-two years old and what she was supposed to do and whatever. But she says, when I came in and I saw you, she said, I was surprised. All them I work for, she's telling me how they act and what. People take me to be -- maybe I might be in my sixties. Almost everybody tell me that. My son, I called him up for his birthday yesterday and I told him. He said he was fifty years old. That's my baby. He said somebody in his office -- he told them he was fifty that day -- he says well, you don't look fifty. He says, well, I am. I said people say I don't look eighty-two. He said, "Well, you don't Mama." I said at least I look like I'm in my sixties. He said you do look like you're in your sixties. Now my baby's telling me that.

Anyway, the grandchildren and all of them tell me that I am going to live a long time. My

doctor tells me with all my ailments that I am the healthiest patient he's got. [Laughs.] He tells me that I am going to live to be as old as my mother. I says, I don't know. The condition the world is in today, I don't know.

FJ: How old was she?

CM: A hundred and six.

FJ: Years? Oh.

CM: Yes, a hundred and six.

FJ: Is longevity one of the things about your family? All of them live long lives?

CM: It is on the side of the women. Her grandmother lived to be a hundred and ten. She was part Indian. Or she was an Indian. Then her mother -- she lived to be eighty-some years old. My mother lived to be a hundred and six. Now I am already eighty-two.

FJ: It looks like you're going to make it, too.

CM: The kids tell me, my granddaughter say, "Grandma, you're going to live to be a hundred and six. Because if you keep the attitude you have and the spirit you have, you'll live to be it. You'll beat it.

FJ: [Laughs.]

CM: I said, "I don't know, Carrie." She is named after me and she just loves her grandmother. I kept her from when she was a baby two months old until she was thirteen.

FJ: Quite an attachment.

CM: Oh, yes.

FJ: What do you remember most about World War II?

CM: World War II?

FJ: World War I, excuse me.

CM: World War I. The most that I remember about World War I was that the Army didn't send me no money until five months after my husband was in there. Then, they didn't send me all the money that I was supposed to get and they didn't give me very much then. If I hadn't been living with my mother, I wouldn't have survived.

FJ: Oh, yes. So it caused quite an economic dilemma with you then.

CM: You see, the soldiers at that time were only getting thirty dollars a month. They were supposed to send fifteen dollars of that back home to their wife. The government supplemented it with twenty-five dollars. So they was supposed to send me forty dollars a month. He was in there from November until February before they sent me anything. In February, they sent me \$120. They still owed me two months. My husband was out of the Army two months before they sent me the last check.

FJ: A little slow.

CM: They were slow. Now that was a difference when my son was in the Army. My son went in the Army for the Viet Nam War. He was in Viet Nam. He went

to college. He graduated college and he came out a Second Lieutenant and went in the Army. He made Captain. He was a Captain over there in Viet Nam and had charge of all transportation and all the soldiers that came in and went out. And all the Army goods. In fact, somebody over there sent me a picture of him [unclear] on his duty. Then they made him a Major after he came out. I have a picture of him and General Westmoreland making him a Major. So he made a Major. And if the war hadn't ended when it did, he might have been a Lieutenant Colonel. My nephew made Lieutenant Colonel, but my nephew went in the -- what do you call it -- the Diplomatic Corps. He came out. He is retired. My son stayed in there seventeen years and was looking forward to his retirement. When the Viet Nam War ended, they discharged all the officers -- five thousand officers. My son was in the transportation corps, so they didn't need them anymore. He came out three years before his time was up.

Now he is in the Reserves. I think his wife said he is a Lieutenant Colonel in the Reserves. See there he's carrying on. He's been in the Reserves ever since he's been there in Hampton. He comes up to camp every summer. They come up here to Pennsylvania and New York State with this group that he has. They come up there and practice and

whatnot.

Believe it or not, my grandson's wife is in the Reserves. She's a -- what is she? I forget what she is. She was here a couple of months ago and told me what she is in the Reserves. Yes, she is an officer, too, in the Reserves.

My niece, she was in World War II. One thing about World War II. They took my nephew out of his [school] a month before he was to graduate from high school and sent him overseas.

FJ: In World War II?

CM: In World War II. They took him out of high school just one month before he was supposed to graduate. And sent him overseas.

FJ: At least now they wait for them to graduate.

CM: They didn't then. They took him out, but he came out. He went back to school and finished that up and then went to college. He's a C.P.A. He's had a good office job sitting down all them years since then.

FJ: That shows that you can still get it together if you want to.

CM: Oh, yes.

FJ: During World War I, was there more work? Less work?

CM: There was more work. That's when they start taking Blacks into the -- No, they didn't really start taking them into everything until World War II.

World War I -- they was in the brass shop.

They could work in there, but most of the work they gave them in the brass shop was in the foundry. That was the worst place in there. My husband worked in there, and he worked in there after he come out of the service. He had still work. That's about the most place he work was in that foundry, because they could make more money in the foundry -- the Black men -- could make more money in the foundry than they could anywhere else. So he worked in the foundry. Then after the Depression, see he left there just before -- No, he worked there all through the Depression. Sometimes, he only made one day a week. But they had to walk to work. We had a car sitting beside the house. We couldn't afford to drive it.

FJ: During the Depression?

CM: During the Depression. We owned the car, but we couldn't afford to drive it. He would walk to the brass shop. At that time, we was living on Central Avenue. He'd walk to the brass shop every morning from Central Avenue to Bridgeport Brass. They would never know -- they'd have to go down there and see if there was any work coming in. If the work came in, why the men worked. If didn't no work come in by eight o'clock, the men all come on back home.

FJ: After World War I, do you think that conditions improved?

CM: Yes, they improved as far as -- I guess, I'll tell

you. I believe they improved because there was more work in a way. Women could go into some of the factories. They didn't let them work on the machines like they did during the -- No, it was World War II. It was World War II where they let them work on the machines. I was thinking about --

FJ: Don't worry about after World War I. They wouldn't let them work then.

CM: During World War I, they didn't work the machines. Was World War II. Because my sister worked on machines for twenty-five years in the Bridgeport Brass.

[Phone rings -- interruption of tape.]

FJ: Now I suppose after your husband came back from the war and started back to work again. Then you had more children --

CM: Yes, we had four more children. Well, we had two. Two girls. Then for ten years we didn't have any children.

FJ: Did you have time to work in the church when your children were young?

CM: Oh, yes. I worked in the church when they were young.

FJ: I notice that you have a lot of organizations that are church-related.

CM: Oh, yes. I worked in the church when they were young. In fact, I worked more in the church than

than I do now. Of course, now I am not able to get around like I did then. Because I was the President of the Steward's Board. I have a plaque up there for that. They gave me a big banquet in Stratfield. After thirty-five years, I am still on the Board.

After ten years, why, I had two more children. That was right in the Depression. My youngest daughter was born and the next year my son was born. That was right in the Depression. Of course right after my son was born, I was sick for a good while after. I was in bed. He was three months old before I even gave him a bath because I wasn't able to. My legs went on me. I didn't know I couldn't walk until one day the doctor told me to try to walk. He had my leg elevated. I took five steps and went out again. They put my other leg up. It was the day before Christmas. The day before Christmas I got up and the first thing I did was make a cake for Christmas. I made a applesauce cake for my family for Christmas.

FJ: You got out of your sickbed to make a applesauce cake?

CM: I did that. I did it. I was in bed for Thanksgiving, but I got out of there for Christmas. I went downstairs and made that cake. So then, my husband -- Things began to pick up then after the Depression. Depression was --

FJ: You had a hard time during the Depression?

CM: Well, I tell you. We didn't really feel the Depression. We didn't feel it until they -- around '39, '38 and '39 -- in between there is when we felt it mostly because we had -- We have always been insurance-conscious people. We had a good bit of insurance. My husband had a New York Life Insurance Policy. Those policies you could pay on them and borrow on them and do everything else with them. But so we kept cashing in policies --

FJ: So that's how you made it through the Depression?

CM: We made it through the worst part of it. With his work and all, whenever anything came up we had to do it, go cash surrender the policy. But we made it through. The worst years as I say was them last few years. I thought if my husband ever made thirty-two dollars a week again, we'd be on easy street. But he went and made much more. [Laughs.] He had so little he could make before that time.

Anyway, that's what happened to us. He was able to get through that way. We was living on -- we have a little six-room cottage down on Central Avenue, down right next to Reverend Wainwright's -- next to East End Tabernacle. The East End Tabernacle, that's the same church. But they have added on to it and whatnot. But that was Reverend Wainwright's church. We lived next door there. Then, after the Depression, in 1940, things started to picking up. The brass shop started picking up and everything

started blooming. My husband came up here and he saw this house and he said, "I'm going to buy that house." I said, "Buy it?" I didn't know how in the world he thought he was going to buy this house. Here we was in the Depression.

FJ: Were you in the Depression then?

CM: We was just still -- [laughs]. How in the world was he going to buy this house? He used to lay in bed at night and think about this house. Lay in bed at night and talk about this house.

FJ: This house here on Davenport Street?

CM: This very house. Forty-three years ago. We've been in this house forty-three years. But you know what? Same old insurance policy.

FJ: [Laughs.]

CM: It was the last one that we had. It was about to cash surrender that policy. I mean it would run out in about -- I think we had how many years to go? Three or four or five years or something like that to go on that policy. But we had enough on it to get a down payment on this house. We took an awful chance. But the man that owned the house -- his brother was out of work. He was out of work. There was nobody working in the house but his wife. His brother and his family and his five kids lived downstairs. He lived upstairs. They was all trying to live off of what his wife earned. He was about to lose the house. They only way that

he could save the house or get anything out of it was for him to sell it. Anyway, we took that chance. Cash surrendered our policy, made a down payment on this house. He took what we gave him and went out in Stratford and put it on another house so they could move into it. But he stayed in this house, though. We got the house in August and they stayed here until December and paid us rent. They stayed in the house until December and paid us rent. Then they moved out and moved up in Stratford. One Sunday morning when we was getting ready to go to church, we was leaving out the house to go to church and the man was standing out in front of the house looking up at the house. He said if he could have just held out a little bit longer, he would have never sold his house. But he couldn't hold out no longer. The banks was down on him and everybody, you know. [He] couldn't make it and he had to sell it. He was standing out there. But you see he went and bought a one-family house and I suppose all them kids was running him crazy. All of them had to pile into a one-family house. I don't know how big the house was but they all piled into a one-family house. Just a few months later, everybody went to work.

FJ: Everything went -- oh.

CM: Well, they was getting ready for this World War II.

So, they went and told my husband, but it was too late then. He stood out there looking up at the house. Stood right out there and looking up at the house, longing for his house. But his loss was our gain. But there is only one thing about it that I really was glad of. When they started that war and they was making that war money, I was glad we didn't buy this house on blood money. It might sound funny, but that was one thing that I don't think I'd ever been happy about. But that we could do it ourselves without -- of course, my husband worked in industry and those things. But I mean to take the money to start out with this house on blood money -- no. I have always said that I am glad that we didn't have to get this house on blood money, because that was one awful war. I had nephews and whatnot and two brothers and there were two half-brothers in that war. And nephews in it and I don't know what not. They no more than get over that and every twenty-five years they're starting something else. Here comes next time, my son goes. My son gets hooked up in this by the time he get out of college and they have to start this Viet Nam War. Now, he's been out of college twenty years and now they are starting another mess. So, you see, it's every twenty-five years they are starting a war. Taking all the kids and sticking them in there. It's disheartening. It really is.

But then again, when it comes right down to it, if you read the Bible, you will see that these things must be. Because man is so wicked. We hear people say, why don't God stop it? But you see, God gave us a choice. He gave us a choice. He can stop it. But he don't want to make you do, He want you to do it voluntarily. See? But when He gets tired of it, I think He is going to stop it. But you see we have got to go through all these changes before these things happen.

FJ: When you were having children, did you go to the hospital or did you have them at home?

CM: No, m'aam. [I had] all my children at home.

FJ: With a midwife or what?

CM: No, m'aam, I had a doctor. The same doctor that delivered all my mother's children -- well, he didn't deliver my brother, but my oldest brother and I were delivered by a white doctor, Dr. Watson. I was just telling my daughter coming by here today -- that house on the corner of Stratford Avenue and Pembroke Street was his house. It was Dr. Watson's house. It was a beautiful big place. Could be again if somebody just take it and fix it up. But that big house there was Dr. Watson's house. He delivered my brother and I. There was no Black doctors in Bridgeport. Then Dr. Bradley came in here. Dr. Bradley delivered nine of my mother's children, or twelve of them. It was in Stamford. She was living

in Stamford. That one was born in Stamford, so she had a doctor down there. But he delivered nine of her children and all five of my children.

FJ: Yes.

CM: At home. Every time I was going to have a baby my husband was threatening to send me to a hospital. But I can't stand hospitals. I know I have to go but I just dread it. I carry insurance to cover it, but I'm telling you I dread hospitals. I don't know why but I never wanted to go. So my husband said next time you have any babies you're going to go to the hospital, because he would have to work so hard. [Laughs.] He'd have to go to work and come home nights and work. And he did. He washed he'd iron, he bathed the kids, he did everything. So he said, "Next time you having a baby, you're going to the hospital." I said to myself, "That's what you think." [Laughs.]

When I was going to have my babies, I'd get everything -- I still have the little chest that my mother gave me for my first baby. It was a little --[end of side two, tape one]

-- then their basins and everything. Everything'd be ready for them when they'd come.

FJ: When you were getting ready to deliver.

CM: When I'd get ready to deliver, I had the doctor and two nurses. I'd already arranged the visiting nurses. The doctor would be there and the nurses

would be there. My poor husband would still have to go through. [Laughs.] My mother was no help because she remarried and she was having kids the same time I was. Except the last one. But it was funny. I had all my five children at home. They all got along all right.

FJ: Where did Blacks live during the Depression?

CM: In the same sections. There were some down in what they call a hollow, that's down there in Lexington Avenue and down in there. But that was before them [unclear] there. They had begin to come in here. The came in here during the war. During World War I, a few more came in here and there was a few -- then they used to live down in Whiting Street and around down the South End, some sections of the South End they lived down there. There was a few in [unclear]. In any numbers, they lived where I said -- Lexington Avenue, down Jones Avenue, more of them lived down in there. Some lived -- [That's the dog. It sounded like a person.] Where else did they live? Highland Avenue and Arch Street, Fulton Street. Those streets are gone now since the throughway has gone through there. They lived on Fulton Street and Arch Street. Some few lived on Washington Avenue, down that lower end of Washington Avenue. They was scattered around, but I mean in any numbers --

FJ: But they were scattered.

CM: They was all scattered around different parts of the city. Few lived in North End, but they lived like one or two families be on Jackson Avenue. But in no great numbers. They was scattered around the city like that. In the West End, and out there on Howard Avenue there was about three. In Beechwood Avenue there was the Reed's. Most of the people lived in these sections owned their own homes, see? They're on their own property. There was some families there in Beechwood and there was -- around in Howard Avenue -- there was three or four two-family houses where they lived. The Johnson's owned a house out there and the Demming's and Miss Spry, she owned a house out there. The Reed's, they owned a house around the corner of Beechwood, right around from Howard Avenue. Then there was another big house further down Howard Avenue. It was a house that rented to them. They just lived all around -- just all around down in the city.

FJ: Did the church play a particular role during the Depression helping Blacks who maybe didn't have enough food or clothing?

CM: No. Well, I'll tell you the way our church used to help and I think the others, too. It was at Thanksgiving time, people would find families, someone would send in the name of somebody that needed a basket at Christmastime. We would get food together and make up Thanksgiving baskets and

Christmas baskets. Our society, the Home Mission Society, all during the year if we heard tell of anybody that was in need, why we would always get baskets of clothes and things like that and take them out.

FJ: So you were sort of working -- What about clubs and social organizations? Were there any fraternal organizations outside of the church at that time?

CM: There was the Elks organization. The people that belonged to the Elks, some of them belonged to the church, but not as an organization. They belonged the same as the Masonics now.

FJ: Was there a lot of it back in the Depression times, the '20's and '30's? The Masonics were in existence?

CM: Oh, yes. We've got Masonics in our church that's been in there for any number of years. The Elks, too. The Elks organization has been here since I was a kid. I used to go to the Elks ball. That was nice. We weren't allowed to go to every Tom, Dick and Harry thing came along. The Masons used to give a reception the 29th of May every year. The twenty-seventh was our wedding anniversary and we'd always go to that. There was no hard liquor in the Masonic. If you was caught bringing any in there, they would just throw you out, that's all. They had punch and they used to serve a salad. Some women used to make the salad and put it in these little dinner rolls

and things like that. That's what they served for their reception. There was a dress affair and you only got an invitation if you was --

FJ: If you knew someone socially --

CM: Yes, that's right. That's how you got to the Masonics. The Elks, of course, was a little more open. But it was a nice affair and they used to have a big band and things like that. We used to go to that. The Elks Ball -- that was always the Easter Ball. They'd have that after Easter. That would usually be the Monday after Easter would be the Elks Ball. Of course most people look forward to going to the Elks Ball.

Then at that time, we had several -- we had a Knights of Pithius here. My husband used to belong to Knights of Pithius. We had a Knights of Pithius organization here. There was several, the household of Ruth. That was a women's lodge. They had another one here. Miss Clara Wilson used to belong to all of them. I can't think of the other one. But they had those organizations here. They've always had them. But I think the most active right now -- the Elks and the Masons have always been active.

FJ: Let's move to World War II. You said you had a son participated in that war?

CM: Oh, no. My son would, if he hadn't gone into war work, he would have had to.

FJ: But he didn't.

CM: Because he was married then and he had a child. He had a good job. But they told him that if he didn't go into war work that he'd have to go in the Army. Well, he didn't want to go into no Army and I didn't want him in no Army. So that's when he went to the brass shop. He went in the brass shop but he wouldn't take anything in there but a crane job. He went in there and he'd run a crane. He didn't go in the foundry like his father. He'd run the crane. Of course, they'd change his hours. The thing of it was -- he had started, he wanted to be a Certified Public Accountant, no, Business Administration. He had started out to U.B. [University of Bridgeport]. But the thing of it was that after they kept changing him up on that he couldn't go. Didn't make it like they do -- he couldn't go.

So, anyway, he went in the brass shop. After he'd been in there I don't know how many years, they put him head over the Shipping Department. From running the cranes they put him head over the shipping and they found out what he was capable of doing. Which he was capable of doing when he went in there. But at that time, they wasn't putting you in office jobs and things like that, you know. The man wanted him to go into -- That was after his children had got all grown and they'd married

and gone away from home. He was always catching cold on the crane and things and whatnot. So they wanted him to go in the office. He says, "Mama, what you think about it?" I said, "Well, Ralph, your families --" He says, "They're making me a good proposition. What do you think about it?" I said, "Well, your families out of your hands and you might as well take it easy. Go on and support you and your wife. Take it easy. Get a job in the office. He became the first Black president of the Quarter of the Century Club in the Bridgeport Brass. Some of the men that work with him they say, "Oh, I wish you could go to one of their affairs and hear your son conduct those meetings." But, you see, nobody could go to the Quarter of the Century Club but the members. The wives couldn't go. My husband's a member of the Quarter of the Century Club, too.

FJ: Did he get a chance to see him?

CM: He never got a chance to see his son because he was sick. He had taken sick. Of course he was in the Quarter of the Century Club before my son was.

FJ: I'm sure.

CM: He's been in the brass shop much longer. No, he never got a chance but I am sure he would have been very proud. Anyway, he became the president and then stayed in there until the brass shop -- in fact, he was in the brass shop for thirty-four years, my son was. He retired with a pension.

That's one thing that I am so proud of. In my heart I am happy to see that our Black men were able to -- so many of them -- retire like other men and enjoy a little of life while they were still alive. I was just proud of that. And I still am. I think it is a wonderful thing. Because they have worked, worked, worked, worked and worked. Then die and never have anything. But they were able to retire. I know many of them that's retired. We've got several brass shop men right now at church that have worked in there. Men that just praise my husband because they said he had done so much for them there because he had worked with the union. In fact, during the Depression, he was the one that started -- he was one of the main organizers of the union. He went off and represented the union in Philadelphia one time. He was there and he couldn't draw -- wasn't making any money -- was taking part of the money he wasn't making out of what we ought to have had to pay for a place to have a meeting place for the union -- trying to organize that union. The union used to meet in our cellar. They used to meet everywhere trying to get this union organized. My husband was one of the [organizers]. Men today tell me about my husband and what a great --

FJ: Great work he did.

CM: Yes, great work. The men have gained from it.

To me, just to see that some of them was able to

be around here and enjoy it -- I think it's great. It's been a great blessing.

As far as prejudices go, I think there is more of it in Bridgeport now than I have ever seen.

Because I mean I hear --

FJ: Do you think it's because there are more Blacks here now?

CM: I hear tell of it more. What disgusts me is when people talk about segregated schools. There has never been any segregated schools in Bridgeport. I'd wish they'd stop saying that. What makes these schools segregated in Bridgeport is that -- A lot of this thing about where we are all in one lump together is the real estate people. That's who I blame it on. If you get in a neighborhood where the majority of the kids are Black and then you put them in a school that's Black -- that's not segregation, not in my book. That's not segregation. Because if you're in a neighborhood and the majority of them are white, would you call that -- you might as well call that segregation, too. But it's not segregation. So you can't tell me that Lincoln School over here or Dunbar School is a segregated school. It's not segregated. The majority of the kids over there are going to be Black kids and they go to that school because the school in their neighborhood. I believe in neighborhood schools. I don't believe in this busing. I do not. I never did. Because, one thing

they put people on them buses to drive that are not always qualified drivers. I see the buses go through here with those children sometimes coming through here going over to McKinley School, and honest-to-goodness, they come down this street and take that corner there on almost two wheels. Carrying them little kids over there to school. And you know that is dangerous. I'd much rather see my kid walking from here over to McKinley. In fact, nine kids from our family graduated from McKinley. All of my grandchildren and two of my children graduated from McKinley School and went to high school from there. They went to Harding High School. They didn't go all over town to no high school. They went to Harding High School. It did my heart good to go up there at graduation time and see them kids crossing the bridge up there. That was the most beautiful sight I ever seen, to me. They've got a bridge up there. They've taken the bridge down now. But when you see those kids with all their blue gowns coming over that bridge, it was the most beautiful sight. It would always be the sun shining on them. It was just beautiful.

FJ: Do you think that the Black neighborhoods developed during or after the World War II? Do you think that World War II had something to do with the development of this -- certain things being Black and White?

CM: I'll tell you, this started about twenty years ago.

FJ: So, in the Sixties?

CM: Yes, there on in the Sixties. They started moving in. I'll tell you. Out on State Street -- When they cleaned out Lexington Avenue, in the hollows, as they called it, to put up Green Apartments down there -- at the time down in State Street there was all brown fronts. They used to be all doctors. When I was a kid, that used to be all doctors homes and lawyers home. All middle-class white people lived all up and down State Street. During World War II, the middle-class whites moved out of State Street. They started going out in the suburbs. Like all down Myrtle Avenue where they're trying to fix up now -- all down in there was all rich white people, middle-class white people, the people who owned D.M. Read's, the Howland's people, all them. I've seen their names in the paper just last week. [They] lived all down in them side streets, had beautiful homes down there. All up Fairfield Avenue when I was a kid, all out there was rich people lived out there. I didn't live around no poor folks. I lived around all rich people.

But then, when they cleaned out Highland Avenue and Lexington Avenue and those streets down around there to put up Green Apartments, they put them people all up and down State Street in them old brownstones that the people had moved out. I guess

some of the bought some of them and whatnot. They got in there. Honey, I'm telling you, I used to take the bus. I used to go out to United Congregational Church because I belonged to The Church Women United.

FJ: When was this, 1950's or '60's?

CM: This was in sixties, seventies. I used to go up to United Church with the Church Women United and I'd come home on the bus sometimes. I'd see them people out there. I used to be so ashamed when I'd go. I'd just feel so bad. The way they looked and the way they acted.

FJ: And the way the neighborhood had changed?

CM: Then, when they decided to put the courthouse down there on State Street -- when they decided to clean out State Street and put the courthouse down there, where do you think they start pushing them?

FJ: Where was that?

CM: Stratford Avenue, all in here. All in here. I met a woman in the church women and she heard I lived in Davenport Street. She said, "Oh, I live in Bunnell Street. Have you a daughter named Joan?" I said yes. "She and my daughter went to school together, went to Harding." So every time somebody would come in she, she'd tell them that she and I had something in common, that our daughters went to school together. She was proud to live over here. They started selling this. You see, when real estate men get to selling to our people, they

don't care what the neighborhood is. This has always been a nice neighborhood. Always a nice, respectable kind of Black people lived over in this neighborhood. But when they got to putting everything -- and the thing of it is they put them right out there on the main highway, because that was the only place to sell. Even some of those people that were down there when they took the throughway, all them people down there -- you should have seen Winter Street. Winter Street was the nicest little street. All them people had their nice homes and had them fixed nice. Some of them were just beginning to fix them up. They took every house on Winter Street but one. The worst looking house was down there, it was right on the corner of Newfield Avenue and Winter, and left that house up there. All them other houses they took for the throughway.

FJ: I've heard about that from other people I've talked to.

CM: They took all down -- The Elks place was down on that side of Orange Street. They cleaned Orange Street, all down Orange Street. They just wrecked the neighborhood. This was a nice decent neighborhood. Of course, when they're selling in the neighborhood where Blacks already are, they don't ask anybody anything about anything. If they got the dollar, they give them the money. Of course, people got to live someplace, too. The thing of it -- what

ruins the thing -- is when people come in, if they go into a decent place, why don't they keep it decent? Why don't they?

FJ: I don't know.

CM: I heard a man on the radio the other morning say that how he sweeps out around his place and how his mother swept around his place. They lived over here in the East Side somewhere. They were white. He said how his mother used to do. I know what he is talking about because I used to do the same thing myself. I used to go out here when I was able and I'd sweep all around my house. Even now, when I come in from church and somebody's been here and thrown bags down there in front of my place, I pick up those things before I come in the house and bring them in here and put them in the trash can. I can't stand to see the street all messed up like that. The lady across the street will be down here. We try to keep the neighborhood decent.

FJ: It looks nice down here.

CM: They'll come in and -- now, there's a house there just the other side of Newfield Avenue there was Mrs. Fitzgerald's. I know that woman has turned over in her grave a dozen times to see her house the way it is. I looked at Mary Wilson's house today [when] I came home. That was a beautiful house. Whoever's got that house is letting it go down. Those houses down there were owned by people who

were property concious and kept [them.] Mary Wilson used to live here on Davenport Street. She bought this big house, big nice brown porch around it, down there. It was the third house down there on Stratford Avenue from Newfield. And that's running down. They just get in the place --

If you rent people the places, they won't take care of your rented property. We lived in rented houses until we bought this place. My husband was always painting. We were living there. That's where you live. Why can't you keep it clean around where you live? If you've got people coming to see you, you want people to come into a decent place. Just because you're renting you don't want it to look like a --

FJ: Sty.

CM: It's not the landlord's place to come in there and -- Then you hear them tell people they don't have a decent place to live. You can't have a decent place if you don't keep it decent. You've got to keep it decent.

I was talking to a friend of my in court -- you see them people sitting out there and the grass standing this high in the yards. They're sitting around the porch and they're eating this junk food and drinking out of these soda cans and things, throwing them on out there in the street. I looked today coming home from church and Stratford Avenue

is a wreck. It's a wreck! All everything all boarded, honest to goodness, it's heart-sickening. If I hadn't lived here and know what that street was, if I came into this town, I'd say, "Lord, what would anybody want to live here for?" That's not the way this town was. There are some of the people in this neighborhood that have lived here for forty and fifty years and more. They're still in here heartsick. They are heartsick over what's happened to the neighborhood. Wilmot Avenue down here was one of the most beautiful streets in the city. Beautiful houses. They're beautiful houses down there now, but look at them. Bunnell Street, down there behind the church there, they had some beautiful houses down in there. All these streets in here.

I don't know where these people came from. They sure weren't born in Bridgeport and they didn't come from Bridgeport. But they have come off of the farm somewhere, I don't know where they came from. But they've come in here and they've just wrecked our city. They've wrecked it -- that's all there is to it. I don't know, it's just heart-sickening. I see the further out there -- and now, what's happening to Stratford Avenue now. There's this man out there that's got this devilish garage. He's just buying every corner here and got more -- When we bought this house in here, you know they

wouldn't allow you to have anything on this side of the street for business. This was a residential zone. A "B" residential zone. You couldn't have any business on this side of Stratford Avenue. Down in the these side streets. There was a Black man who owned a lot down there in Myles Street and he wanted to put him up a garage there. He wanted to put up a car repair. They wouldn't let him have a car repair. He's dead, but I wish he could see this place now. They wouldn't allow him to have a car repair and look at this place now. Every corner, every everything around here is now nothing but old trucks and cars. It's just sickening.

FJ: But those cars and the businesses out there that look bad are not Black-owned, though, are they?

CM: No, they're not Black-owned. But that's what they do to you. They get in the neighborhoods and they ruin them and then these other people come in here and just mess them up for you. Like they had the motorcycle gang and all that gang came in here. They drove them out and they said they'd burn down the East End. Black folks made a complaint about them. They didn't want them in here. They had their motorcycles riding all up and down Stratford Avenue. You couldn't get through there. Where they had the place is a church in there now. They got in there. They was down here at the end of Wilmot Avenue and shooting through people's windows

down there.

FJ: So you say that the neighborhood started to change not after World War II but during the Sixties?

CM: Yes, that's when it started changing.

FJ: Do you think that the social upheaval that was going on during the Sixties had something to do with the changes that were taking place? Do you think there's a connection between them?

CM: I think this dope business coming in here was what started it.

FJ: Okay. That scene -- there seemed to be more drugs after the social upheaval started. Because the marches and sit-ins started like in '59, the late Fifties?

CM: It was in the Sixties when the kids started rebelling in the schools, having all these -- I don't know, what you call them.

FJ: What I am trying to say is that I can remember that the marches and sit-ins started in the late Fifties. Then the drugs came. Is this how things happened here in Bridgeport?

CM: Yes.

FJ: And then the rebellion with the children. Things started to change during that time. Were there marches and sit-ins and all that going on in Bridgeport, too? During the Sixties?

CM: We didn't have that among our people. There was no marches.

FJ: Were the people in this area aware of the social changes that were taking place in other parts of the United States?

CM: I was aware of it. I guess some of them were.

FJ: But there was just no participation in particular.

CM: They had different things started. As things go. The churches involved. But I mean to take part in them, in the march in Washington. People went from here -- you know, Martin Luther King. I didn't go. My daughter went.

[end of side three, tape two]

FJ: The civil rights movement in the United States and in Bridgeport -- do you think there were changes that took place in the neighborhood for the better?

CM: No, I can't say they took changes in the neighborhood for the better, because our neighborhood is getting worse.

FJ: Okay. Was there a change in Black and white attitudes?

CM: The only change I see in this Black and white attitude is this Klan business coming up here now. That's something that we never had before. Now they have this Klan. Of course, that I don't think the people are going to let amount to anything. I don't think. Because I don't think the white people want any such foolishness as that. I don't think if they start it the Black folk is going to stand for it. That's something that they's just coming along here and

I really think it's the poor whites that's coming out of the South and they're coming up here looking for work. Since the Black man has as much chance getting a job as the white man does, I think that's what's starting them on up here. I really do. I think it's the poor whites out of the South. We have more trouble with the poor whites than we do anybody else. That's the ones you have trouble with. You hear them on the radio every day talking about the minorities on welfare. It's the whites, there are more whites on welfare than there is anybody else. If it wasn't for the whites needing welfare, the Blacks wouldn't be on it. They wouldn't have no welfare.

FJ: What about the desegregation of facilities? Can you think of anything that was restricted before that became open because of the movement in the Sixties? Or did the reverse take place?

CM: No. The places I've went, I've never had any trouble. I haven't seen anything.

FJ: Any changes.

CM: We didn't have any white here and whites there. I've never seen that in Bridgeport like they've had in the Southern and some of the other parts of the country. I haven't seen that up here.

FJ: What do you think about the jobs programs and employment programs that started during the Sixties to help poor people get suitable

employment? Do you remember anything with A.B.C.D. and C.E.T.A. and all those things that were supposed to train people so they could get jobs? Do you think that did any good?

CM: Yes, I think so. They had the community college and they had colleges they could go to. One of my granddaughters just graduated last week from Butler's Business School. She graduated from there. I have one that she graduated just a couple of years ago. She's married. She worked down there in the unemployment office. She was in the office down there. She got married and of course when she became pregnant, she gave up the job to go and have her baby.

I think that there are opportunities out there. But I want to tell you -- as far as that goes -- our family's never had any trouble getting jobs.

FJ: What do you think about how the government provides subsidies and things for families to help them get jobs and to sustain them, food stamps and all those? What do you think about those kinds of programs for people?

CM: I guess if people need them, they are necessary. I don't know much about them because I haven't had any --

FJ: Need to use any?

CM: No. I went to the Senior Citizen's place. A man was down there talking about them one day and I

just walked up to him to ask him a question. I don't know why he just looked up at me and told me, "You can't get them." I wasn't asking for them. I hadn't said anything to him. I hadn't said one word to him. I just walked up to him. I was going to ask him a question. I don't even remember what the question was now.

FJ: But he assumed you were going to ask --

CM: He assumed him I was going to ask him and he just told me before I asked him that I couldn't get them. Now how did he know whether I could get them. He just looked at me and I looked too prosperous for him. [Laughs.]

FJ: Yes. [Laughs.]

CM: I said I know I can't get them. I didn't ask. I can give him a smart answer too. I said I know I can't get them. I don't think I ever asked him the question. I don't know whether I did or not. Because I walked up to him and just as I got the table, he says, "You can't get them."

FJ: That's what you get for looking so prosperous. [Laughs.]
Now you were telling me that your youngest son was in the Viet Nam war?

CM: Yes.

FJ: And he was over in Viet Nam?

CM: Yes, for two years. He was over there for a year and the government sent him over to Hawaii. He was supposed to be going to Hawaii for three years.

Just as my daughter and I were thinking about going to Hawaii to visit him, they sent him on back to Viet Nam for another year. My son was in Viet Nam and I didn't hear from him for a while. I knew something was wrong. I didn't know until after it was all over that he had become dehydrated over there. He was in the Army Hospital and I didn't know anything about it because he wouldn't allow them to tell me.

FJ: That was the only family member that was in [the Viet Nam war]?

CM: My nephew, he was in the Army, but he was in the Diplomatic Corps. He would have to go back and forth to Viet Nam but he wasn't on active duty. Who else did I have?

FJ: Was there anybody else besides Earl and your son?

CM: I think that's the only ones in the Viet Nam war. I had them in World War II. I had a half a dozen of the family in that one.

From World War I up to now, there was fifteen members of my family in the service.

FJ: That's too much.

CM: We had lieutenants. My son and my nephew made the highest offices. My niece, she was a sergeant. She made sergeant. But she had to be sent home from Germany, put in the Navy Hospital over there because she got a goiter. Something about the water didn't agree with her over there. Her poor eyes looked like

they was coming out of her head and whatnot. But she's still working for the government. She works for the government in New York now and she's got much better. That's all she's done. She was in the World War II. She and her brother both was in World War II.

Our great-grandson now just joined the Air Force. He's out in Nevada -- just come out of basic training. He's stationed in Nevada now.

Who else is in the service? Nobody else in there besides Derek. I don't think anybody else's in there now. So, he is the sixteenth now. I've had nephews, brothers, son, whatnot, uncle, brother-in-law, my husband -- from World War I on up, in all the wars.

If they start another war, I've got seven great-grandsons that are eligible to go at one time or another. Great big boys. I am sick of being the grandmother or the great-grandmother for cannon fodder. But they were all fortunate enough to come back home but my youngest brother -- he was a half-brother. The Army just messed that boy up. He had all kinds of silver plates and shrapnel and everything else in his -- He died a couple years ago. He was only fifty-two years old.

FJ: From World War II?

CM: World War II. Staying in and out the Veterans

Hospital all the time. Silver plates in his head and his legs and everywhere else. They operated on him. I don't know how many operations he had.

FJ: I am to the end of all the questions I had to ask you. In closing, I wanted to ask you if there was something that you would like to tell me about that I didn't ask about that you think is important and that you'd like to tell us about.

CM: I didn't show you any of my pictures I was going to show you.

FJ: That would be for something else. I want the pictures.

CM: I could tell you about my children, my daughter, Jeannette. She went to Wilberforce University and she graduated from there. From there from Rogers and Wilberforce, she had to do her field work. She was in sociology. Education was her minor and sociology was her major subject. The professor from there sent her where she wanted to do her field work in summer. She didn't want to take time off from school so he made arrangements for her to do her field work here in City Court in Bridgeport. First Black girl ever did it. So she worked the summer here in the City Court and I have a picture of that where they took of her doing her work there. She went to Manning University working on her major. Now they sent her up to Chicago in the market district. She

worked for market district. In all the years she's been in social work, most of her work was done with white people. She worked a year for the Red Cross in New York. She did medical social work in Fordham Hospital. She worked a cancer hospital, medical social work. Then, there in the Sixties when the Black history became so -- was it Sixties or before that?

FJ: Sixties.

CM: The Blacks became interested in their Black history. She took a class of high school students down in Teaneck and started teaching them Black history. Became so interested in it. I always wanted her to be in education. She went on back to college and got her Master's in education and science. Then she became a guidance counselor. She was a guidance counselor in the schools in New York there for several years until they decided to -- when they got broke down there. They fired about two thousand guidance counselors. She had a friend of hers that got their Master's degree together -- she is a white girl. They got their Master's together. She had moved up New York State so they needed a guidance counselor up there in the school up there. They had never had a Black guidance counselor. She told her to send in her resume. She sent them in there to that school, and she got the job. She stayed there until she died.

When she died, they planted a tree outside the school gate in her honor. They had a special ceremony for her and planted this tree.

So she married Al Hibbler, the singer. That's how she did so much travelling. She stopped work for a while and travelled. Then she went back to work after -- that's when she got interested in the history, teaching. Then she went on back to work.

FJ: Mrs. McAden, thank you very much for inviting me into your home. This concludes my interview with you.