

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.

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PERSONAL DATA

Rev. Earl Smith

26 Rock Ridge Circle, Bridgeport, CT

Born: Leavenworth, Kansas

Spouse: Essie Mae Smith

Children: None

Education: College

Profession: Minister, Carpenter Steel

Travel: Continental United States

Church: Bethel A. M. E. (Assistant Minister)

Organizations: First Secretary of NAACP

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

Interview by Gwendolyn Roberts Johnson
Interview with: Rev. Earl Smith
Date: February 14, 1984

SMITH

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JOHNSON: Now Reverend Smith you tell me that you're not a Bridgeporter, that you were born elsewhere. Where were you born?

SMITH: Levenworth, Kansas.

GJ: And will you tell me that date of your birth?

ES: September 28, 1898.

GJ: When did you come to Bridgeport?

ES: In April of 1925.

GJ: And where did you live?

ES: I lived at 107 Fulton Street.

GJ: You lived there all the time?

ES: No I was there until 1928 when I got my own house.

GJ: Where was that?

ES: Just below 107 -- 85 Fulton Street.

GJ: Now, can you describe that neighborhood for me? I know Fulton Street isn't there anymore but can you describe that neighborhood for me?

ES: Yes, it was a mixed neighborhood. At the corner was the home of a tailor named Russo whose son later became Dr. Russo of St. Vincent's Hospital. Lower down lived the Clark family, Barbara Taylor.

GJ: When you say the Clark family you're talking about --

ES: George Clark.

GJ: Who became a fireman?

ES: Yes.

GJ: Margaret Clark Gardner?

ES: Margaret Clark's father. Mr. George Clark and his family.

GJ: So it was a mixed neighborhood?

ES: It was a mixed neighborhood. Captain Hall of the Bridgeport police lived directly across from Taylor's Barbershop -- a colored barbershop.

GJ: Now you didn't go to school in Bridgeport?

ES: No.

GJ: Did you? You went to school elsewhere. All right.

ES: I went to school in Omaha, Nebraska and Leavenworth, Kansas.

GJ: How old were you when you arrived in Bridgeport?

ES: I was going into my 27th year.

GJ: Were you single then?

ES: Yes.

GJ: Where did you go to church?

ES: At first I went to Messiah Baptist Church then I went to Stratford Baptist Church. Then I went to a church on Barnum Avenue. A temporary church that Reverend Wainwright had started. Then I went to Mount Airy under Reverend Wilson. And finally I found there was a Methodist Church on Broad Street so I went back to my own church.

GJ: Oh, that's what you were originally. You were an AME?

ES: I was originally an AME.

GJ: Who was the minister when you first came? Do you remember?

ES: Yes. He was a Baptist minister in a Methodist church.

GJ: That's interesting.

ES: Things had become bad, the congregation so small, that the ministers who were sent here by the bishop wouldn't stay. So, in desperation, the presiding elder went to New York and came back with a Baptist minister who later took me into the church, baptized me in Seaside Park before a crowd of

25,000 people.

GJ: That's interesting. Where was the church located then?

ES: At 393 Broad Street.

GJ: You didn't have any family here? You came alone?

ES: I came alone. I was single.

GJ: You were single. All right. You were not in Bridgeport all during World War One you told me you were here during the Depression.

ES: No I was in the West.

GJ: You were in the West at that time. What do you remember about the Depression in Bridgeport? You say you were here during the Depression years.

ES: During the Depression men were working for \$5 a week.

GJ: Per week?

ES: And a box of groceries which were given to them by the supervisors. You had no choice as to what went into the box. The box was there. I worked at the steel mills and we were working two days every other week.

GJ: What steel mill was this?

ES: At that time it was the Stanley Works.

GJ: Oh Stanley Works.

ES: Yes. It started out as Hobbs Machine then the American Tool. Then they sold to the Stanley Works in 1926. The Stanley Works sold to Northeastern. Northeastern failed and sold to Carpenter Steel and I stayed with the firm throughout the changes. I put in 44 years with the companies.

GJ: So it was Stanley Works at that particular time during the

Depression years?

ES: Yes.

GJ: Did you still live on Fulton Street?

ES: No. I moved from Fulton Street to Lexington Avenue where I lived until ...

I was the last one to leave Lexington Avenue area where the Green homes are at present. They tore down all the houses but mine and they made me watchman over that area and the pipes and things were in that area. Rather than give me a house. And I wouldn't sleep in the street. So we compromised.

GJ: [Chuckles] So you were made watchman. Speaking about Depression years what about employment? You told me about this. What about your friends? Where were they working and what were they doing?

ES: When I first came here there were specific places and specific jobs where Negroes were employed. The American Tool, the Aluminum Company, the fertilizers.

GJ: Fertilizer company?

ES: The Fertilizer Company.

GJ: They made fertilizer?

ES: On Howard Avenue, yes. Malleable Iron which was on Railroad Avenue the south side of the railroad tracks.

GJ: What was that?

ES: Malleable Iron.

GJ: How do you spell that?

ES: M-a-l-l-e-a-b-l-e.

GJ: Oh, Malleable Iron.

ES: Malleable Iron. There were various construction companies that would hire you. The Bridgeport Brass Hepenstall The Bridgeport Rolling Mills and the Slaughter House.

GJ: Where was the slaughter house?

ES: Up in the upper part of Bridgeport.

GJ: Oh I see.

ES: There were very few employees. There were girls that ran elevators in various stores. There was one bank employee. I've forgotten his name but he lived with Dr. Bradhill of Highland Avenue. The only neat looking employee that I ever saw in the bank at that time. But later on that year the legislature passed an equal rights bill making it unlawful to discriminate. Prior to that you couldn't go downstairs in any of these theaters -- the Leary, the Strand, the Majestic, the Palace, the Globe, the Park City, the Cameo -- no matter how much money you had or how finely dressed you were, your ticket was upstairs.

GJ: You had a special section?

ES: We had a special section.

GJ: Can you tell me something about people's ingenuity in trying to survive during this time?

ES: Yes. Those who couldn't get on the WPA some started to simonize cars. Various other odd jobs I had myself to make up the difference in what I was earning in the steel mill. Learned to simonize cars, to fix oil burners. Some people went into the service. But very few people had steady jobs. Things were really tough. Eggs were ten

cents a dozen. You may not believe it. You could buy porterhouse steak very cheap. The higher cuts of meat that were no good on the shelves, so you could buy them at a reasonable price if you had money.

GJ: And money was scarce?

ES: Money was scarce. Things began to change. There was a socialist candidate named Jasper McLevy who had tried to become mayor for several years. After several attempts, things had gotten so bad in Bridgeport that they were paying off in script, they didn't have any cash. Baron's -- who ran a market.

GJ: I heard about it.

ES: Who run a market down on Fairfield Avenue ... He was riding around in a chauffeur driven car. And the city paying off in scripts. Finally the people of Bridgeport gave McLevy a chance and McLevy came through.

GJ: Do you remember when he first became mayor?

ES: Yes, I remember when he first became mayor.

GJ: About when was that?

ES: Oh, I don't remember the exact date. But he came in --

GJ: Was it during the Depression years? Or the years following the Depression?

ES: Let me think. I'm not sure about it. But at any rate at the end of his first term there was plenty of money in the city treasury and things had begun to look up.

GJ: He was mayor for a long time wasn't he?

ES: People were so impressed with Jasper that he was mayor for

20 years. Twenty consecutive years. That's how good a man he was. World War Two.

GJ: Could you explain medical care? We're back to the Depression years still. Can you tell me something about medical care?

ES: Medical care?

GJ: Did women have children at home or did they go to the hospital? How did people fare at that time since money was so hard to get?

ES: There were hospitals here. I didn't have any occasion to go to the hospital at that time. But I knew of people who did go to the hospitals. The prices were very low. Ambulance service was practically furnished. Bridgeport Hospital was a small hospital then. St. Vincent's was also small. Park City was very small. Patient care was very good. But I can't remember the date when the first Black nurse was hired in Bridgeport Hospital.

GJ: Who would you say that was? Do you remember?

ES: I don't remember exactly whether it was Mrs. James Smith or whether it was --

GJ: It could have been Margie Hamilton? Margie Collins?

ES: It is Margie Collins. It could have been. Margie Collins was real fair. But I think Jamie Sims --

GJ: Jamie worked there too.

ES: Jamie worked there just when the change came.

GJ: They all worked there very early.

ES: When the change came they hired a few. And for a long time there was only one undertaker when I came who would handle

colored bodies.

GJ: Who was that?

ES: That was Bishop. He was near the corner of Broad and Fairfield at that time. He handled all of the Negro bodies. Then Turner came.

GJ: Turner came before MacDonald Isaac?

ES: Yes. Turner came he was on lower Main Street and finally he went to Stratford Avenue where his place is now. But he was a very good undertaker.

GJ: Who was that?

ES: Turner was a very good undertaker. So much so that the white undertakers hired him to do their bodies. He was reconstructing. Person involved in accident where the face or -- you know -- some physical part was destroyed Turner could restore it from a photograph. So he was in big demand and he soon got a footing and became the leading Black undertaker. Then I think it was along about 1934 -- I could check with Isaac's daughter to find out the exact date -- but I think it was in 1934 he opened up the place at 985 Stratford Avenue. And then came Willie Wilson. I don't know what happened to Wilson.

GJ: He's no longer in business.

ES: Then Morton came. Morton and Reverend --

GJ: What church was that?

ES: At Mount Aery, Reverend Bass.

GJ: Reverend Bass.

ES: Built his place. I saw them. Morton's place down on Currier Street. I saw them build it from the ground up.

Reverend Bass was a very good carpenter. And they built that place from the ground up. And Morton became a prominent undertaker.

GJ: He did. Now you were still in Bridgeport during World War Two?

ES: Yes.

GJ: You didn't go to service. You told me you didn't go to service.

ES: No, I had to register, but I had reached the age where I was no longer useful for military service.

GJ: That's right because you were in your twenties when you came to Bridgeport.

ES: But I saw --

GJ: Did you have any friends that were involved in the war?

ES: A few. I can't recall their names now. There was James Baker. I remember James Baker. He went. You know

. But there were a few that I knew that went. One of the Clark boys went. Alan Clark. He became a lieutenant

GJ: Yes. What do you remember most about this period? About World War Two in Bridgeport? What stands out in your mind?

ES: Changes began to occur. Jobs began to open up. When the younger men were taken out and with the need for military materials and the need for workers, the colored ban was done away with. You could work where you were needed. When I came here I put on a boxing exhibition at G. E. and I had to go through Barnum Street door to get in. And come out the same way. No Negroes there.

GJ: You were telling me something earlier about you were able to move up yourself after the war because although you had a good education you were given very dirty menial work to do until after the war. Tell me about that.

ES: When I went into the American Tool they put me first on the cutting machine and when I asked for more money they put me on what was supposedly a bonus job where I could earn more money. But the work. Sometimes we'd have to take 450 pound coil off a raised machine where the coil had been opened up for thickening. But I learned a way to take them down without hurting myself. I piled 165 pound coils higher than my head. But Jack Conners who was superintendent --

And things weren't going the ways he wanted to go. So he called in an efficiency expert. Everyone had to write how he could improve his job. Well, not patting myself on the back but Mr. Conners said I had the best of all the office help and the other employees. He said mine was the best. So I then became acquainted with the general superintendent. In the meantime a product that they were dumping into the Sound when they pickled the steel the scale contained many things that could be reclaimed if you knew how. Well I'd had so many different kinds of chemistry and I hadn't been away from school long enough to have forgotten. So I started to produce things I knew could be produced from the waste products. I brought several things in that I'd made and I showed them to the superintendent of the mills, Mr. Marker. And he wanted

to know, "Well how'd you make them?" I told him, "I'm not going to tell you. You can't do anything for me. Bring somebody over here that can give me something and I'll tell them." So he brought Mr. Connors over. Am I making this too long?

GJ: No, go right ahead.

ES: Mr. Connors came and he remembered that he had told me that I had best the essay on how to improve my job. "Now you've come up with something else." He says, "I'm not a chemist but I'll send you to New Britain to our head chemist, a metallurgist. Saturday morning you go to New Britain." I went to New Britain.

They took me around. They introduced me to all the important people. Blowing me up. Getting me ready for the kill. I met from the general superintendent on down to the foremen. They wined me and dined me and got me ready. Then they took me to the metallurgist to discuss how I could save the company money. In New Britain they couldn't dump the waste pickling acids into the stream. Because it was forbidden. They had to do something else with it. And if they could use my process it would help the company. But thank God there's some decent people in this world. I went into the office of the metallurgist. I was ready to talk. He told me, "Sit down awhile. Look around. See what you see and ask some questions." I picked up several inventions and I said, "Who made this?" He said, "I did." He stayed working with having invented something that was making the company millions. And he's

still at the desk.

GJ: [Chuckles]

ES: He let me walk around until -- well -- he saw something in my eye that told him what he wanted to know. He said, "What did you come here to tell me?" And I told him "Nothing." I got the point. He knew that if I were as intelligent as they said I was, that if he, being white, had produced all these different things and was still working, what would I get? So I shut up like a clam and never did open up any more.

GJ: That's interesting.

ES: Thanks to the work of a decent man.

GJ: So what did you end up doing for a job? What did you do?

ES: I stayed with the company. They didn't fire me.

GJ: But your work did change some after the war didn't it?

ES: Well the war took all of the younger fellows the older fellows didn't know how to keep records. They didn't have the necessary skills to do the jobs that were open. So they put a pencil in my hand. And when I got that pencil --

GJ: You didn't let it go?

ES: I didn't let it go.

GJ: [Chuckles]

ES: I said, "Here is my chance to let them know that Negroes have the capabilities to do anything." And every job I was on -- and you can verify it if you doubt it -- every job I was on they would call from the front office and have the foreman in charge to call me in the office and congratulate

me on the neatness and accuracy of my work.

GJ: Yes I believe you.

ES: That opened the door. And now any job you can do -- in carpentry, steel -- is open. All it takes now is ability not color.

GJ: Yes. Yes. Do you remember anything about the people who came into Bridgeport at that time. I was understand there was an influx of people into Bridgeport?

ES: There was an influx of people from everywhere. South, west, north. Some even came from far up in the New England states because this was the fellows who made the materials for the war. You know like the powder and the guns and the things of that. Winchester and all those people.

GJ: Were here?

ES: Were here. And they opened up buildings that had been closed for years. And put in makeshift factories. But the sad commentary on some of the things -- you know where the firehouse is down there on Middle Street now -- I saw recruits drilling with broomsticks. Didn't have guns. That's the condition the government was in at the time. Drilling them with broomsticks down there where the firehouse is. Bridgeport has come a long way.

GJ: How would you compare Bridgeport before World War Two and Bridgeport after World War Two. Because I understand there were just so many people here that there was hardly space for them. That many people rented out one room to three

different people.

ES: Well, during the war I have known friends of mine who had rooming houses. You'd sleep in shifts.

GJ: Yes that's what I heard.

ES: It's the truth. Your bed was for eight hours. Then you moved out and somebody else came in.

GJ: And if you got sick I wonder what happened?

ES: Well.

GJ: I heard that.

ES: It's true. It's very true. I know it to be a fact that in many rooming houses that they slept in shifts.

GJ: After the war do you think that people had enough money to change social status?

ES: Many did.

GJ: Economic status?

ES: The frugal people, the people --

You see I have a theory about wealth. You can take all the wealth in the world and divide it equally among all the people of th world and in three years the wealth would be back in the same hands it --

GJ: [Laughter] That's interesting.

ES: Because the fellow who has it knows how to get it and keep it. And generally the fellow who has nothing if he gets it he throws it away. So the thing is not what you earn it's what you do with it.

GJ: Did you see any change in race relations after the war?

ES: Yes. Yes. After the equal rights and all was passed

gradually we began to go to the lower floors. We had the money.

GJ: What do you mean the lower floors?

[end of side one]

ES: Then you could sit wherever you wanted to sit. There was no longer any restriction.

GJ: So that happened after the war?

ES: After the war things begin to --

GJ: And economically Blacks were better off, you think?

ES: Better off because jobs that had been white only were for people. I wasn't the only one that got a better job. Your qualifications began to tell. The man with the superior intelligence got the better job.

GJ: Now tell me something. Would Black neighborhoods stay the same after World War Two? Were neighborhoods still mixed on Fulton Street and on Beardsley Street? Or did you get more neighborhoods becoming more Black?

ES: Well that is a tough question because when the projects came they supposedly were to be mixed but that was a supposition. You all lived in the projects but there was not too great a mixture. And various sections of town were ... NOW the West end used to be Hungarian. The Hollow was Italians. The east side was Polish and Italian. That is around East Main Street in that area. Then the lower east end became predominantly Black. A prominent Negro lived over in that section. You know there were those who had money enough to buy into the better neighborhoods. More expensive houses.

And they were accepted. But everybody didn't have that kind of money. But the law stepped in. I don't know whether you remember. There used to be an accepted practice even in the courts where they had restrictive covenants where if I sold you a house I'd put in there you couldn't sell to a Jew or a Negro. But they stepped on a Black man's toes somewhere out in the midwest or the west and he said, "I don't believe it." And he went to the court and the Supreme Court struck down restrictive covenant. You see the NAACP had done marvelous things.

GJ: Tell me some of the things. Because I know you told me you were first secretary of the Bridtgeport NAACP. Tell me some of the things that were done.

ES: Yes. And I'll tell you something else. I sold the Crisis in 1910 in Levenworth, Kansas, when it first started.

GJ: You were with the NAACP for a long time.

ES: Sometimes I didn't belong. Other times I did. But I've been rooting for it if I couldn't contribute financially.

GJ: [Laughter]

ES: I have been rooting for the NAACP. Now this interracial marriage. There was a couple right outside of Washington, DC, that married. You know an interracial couple.

GJ: A mixed couple, yes.

ES: And they kept hounding them and hounding them until they got tired of it and they went to court. And all restrictive laws concerning intermarriage were outlawed by the Supreme Court. I remember reading where some

Negro in Jackson, Mississippi, when he found about it he had a white girl and he took her down to city hall and got a license and married her. And they searched his records from the day he was born until they found something they could put him in prison for.

GJ: Very interesting. You know what I wanted to ask you something about. You were talking about the NAACP. Were you involved in the NAACP in the '60's?

ES: '60's?

GJ: Yes. When they were picketing the plants and that type of thing. Or do you know anything about that?

ES: No I didn't do any picketing. I didn't do any picketing.

GJ: Were you aware of any of the social upheavals that were taking place in Bridgeport or in the United States during the '60's?

ES: Oh yes.

GJ: Was Bridgeport a part of that to any great extent?

ES: Well it takes a lot of thought to talk about that I'll tell you that.

GJ: Do you remember them participating actively in the Freedom Rides and that kind of thing?

ES: I remember this during that area there was a --

You know until the civil service came there was one Black man in police headquarters and he cleaned up. His name was Baker. And I think commissioner Wheeler said, "As long as I'm commissioner there won't be a Black policeman." And there wasn't. The first Black policeman name was Piper.

GJ: Billy Piper?

ES: I don't remember the first name. Piper I remember. He was the first. George Clark was the first Black fireman. They put him in the firehouse over on Newfield Avenue. And he stayed there until he retired.

GJ: I remember him.

ES: At first he was ambitious. He became a lieutenant. Then he stopped. He never got above lieutenant. Men came from under him and went over him. Why? I don't know whether it was lack of interest or what it was. After the lieutenantcy I think he was the only Negro who has ever held a lieutenantcy or an officer in the fire department. I know they had some people that worked as mechanics. I think the McCallah's worked as mechanics. But the fire department and the police department was off limits.

GJ: For a long time.

ES: For a long time.

GJ: Very interesting. Do you think that the civil rights movement might have caused a change in Black and White attitudes?

ES: It did. It did I think in this way: in the South there have always been people who felt akin to Negro. They call you uncle, aunt. They wouldn't call you mister.

GJ: You're talking about whites?

ES: But those very people when the 1954 decision was rendered was the first people to obey it -- the integration. They had less trouble in the South than they did in the North where look at Boston. Supposed to be the heart of --

Look at how it is now. You see in the South you knew how they felt. They didn't mask it. In the North they'd grin in your face and stab you in the back.

GJ: So in the south you knew what to expect?

ES: Yes, you knew what to expect. I didn't know. See I'd never been south. And where I came from we didn't have these problems. There wasn't too many--see the smaller places it's not so pronounced. It's in the bigger cities where there's competition for jobs and things of that kind. Now where I came from was a small place and the expenses of having separate high schools -- they'd rather that everybody go together and have one.

GJ: But there probably were not that many Blacks in Kansas.

ES: Well you know Kansas was on the borderline. It was a borderline state. They fought and bled to find out is it going to be slave or free?

GJ: Oh I know that. Kansas Nebraska Act - I know that.

ES: Now in my home I could cross the Missouri river -- I'm in Missouri.

GJ: But you still didn't have many Blacks I don't think did you? Because I lived in Missouri - in Jefferson City and the Black population was about two percent. Very small.

ES: You see when I was in the west, when I was in Kansas City I was younger and I didn't pay --

GJ: You didn't pay any attention.

ES: That much attention. One thing I do remember--there used to be districts. You stayed in your district or you got your

brains beat out of. See. They used to have a -- I don't know if they still have it now -- the Parade something like the Mardi Gras in Kansas City, Missouri, and the kids would follow parades. So the parades went into all different neighborhoods.

GJ: Yes. I see what you're saying. Now listen as far as ----. I'm going to ask you one more question about the '60's. Because I want to know what your feeling is about the government programs and subsidies and poverty programs that came about in the '60's in the Bridgeport area. You know anything about that at all?

ES: Well, I wasn't too deeply involved, you know in those things because I was steadily employed. I've always been a home type of person see I wouldn't be out mixing and circulating to find out what was --

I'd read the papers but as far as getting out and running into these problems I didn't do it.

GJ: How did the Vietnam conflict affect you? Do you remember anything about that?

ES: Well I can remember the protests. But I personally -- the only fault I found with the Vietnam affair that they went into it half-hearted. They didn't go to win. I feel about war like I felt about being in the prize ring. I went into the ring to win. If my brother was in the other corner, I didn't put him there but I tried to take him out. I didn't go there to play. I went there to fight. And they went there to

play. They get people killed. They could've won. When you're in a fight for survival, anything goes, see. Now if you're going to get into a boxing bout and you can't hit above the chin that's no fight. Anything above the belt is fair in war anything that'll kill a man to win, that's war. But they didn't fight that.

GJ: I have to ask you something. How do you reconcile that with your principles as a minister?

ES: Well I figure it this way -- if you can talk a thing out -- do it. Be reasonable and fair. But when you can't talk with a man you can't reason with a man and his rights end where mine start. When he gets over to my territory he's wrong and I'm going to get him out of my territory. How I get him out I -- [laughter].

GJ: [Laughter]

ES: But I'm going to get him out. Now you can take it from there. That's how I feel. All through the Old Testament you will find where there's wars where God told them to go. Has that changed? Did the coming of Christ do away with wars? There's still the wars.

GJ: Now I'm at the end of this interview and before I stop I would like to know if there is anything that I have not asked you that you think is important and that you would like to tell me about?

ES: Yes. There's a few things I'd like --

And I hope a lot of young Negroes hear this. One of the chief troubles with our people in business and

other things you let friendship come before quality. You take in our lodges. I've been in one. When you have people at the head that you know are doing the wrong things when they come up for reelection they're your friends, so you vote for them. You know better. Now, you take in this church I'm on the board and I'm going to get off.

GJ: In this..?

ES: In this co-op I'm on the board. I've been on it a year. The futility, I can't deal with it. When you know something is wrong and you're handicapped and can't do anything about it why stay in it? I'm for the right. And when I know that you are not going to do the right thing and you set things up so no matter what one fellow thinks the majority is going to outvote him, what's he going to do? If he had any sense he'd get out. Because when the deal goes down and when people talk they say, "the board." Maybe you didn't have a thing to do with it. But you're on the board. So you're one of them. See? And so many of our businesses why do we fail? Because we have plenty of competent people. For any kind of business any kind of job that needs to be done. But say here's a guy over here I don't like him. Oh yes, he's smart. He's honest. I don't vote for him, I don't like that -- But that's what he says. I don't vote for him, I don't like him. My vote don't count. Look at in this election when Mrs. Morton won by I think about nine votes. You remember she was voting against --

GJ: Yes.

ES: You remember. You know who helped her get the nine votes?

GJ: No.

ES: I did. In my church, I was in Georgia that Sunday. I didn't have to let her talk. I didn't have to talk for her. Out of our church we got two or three

in that election. So we must have had some voting power there. Besides that we have Heater, Timberlake. They're from my church. I spoke for her. A lot of people like me and believe me. She won but by nine votes, see.

GJ: Nine votes were for her at that time.

ES: Does she know anything about me? I live right in the area. Half the time I don't pay any attention. I don't speak to her. You see. If she's qualified that doesn't stop me from voting for her.

GJ: You're saying that we need to stick together and work together and so forth.

ES: I may not like it but if you're going to do something for the good of the race I'm going to put my dislike --

GJ: Aside.

ES: Aside and put you where you can do some good. Because you may dislike me but you don't dislike everybody. Why punish everybody because you just don't like me. That's the way I feel about things like that.

GJ: Well this has been a very interesting interview and I thank you so very very much.

ES: Well I still didn't get to tell you about the important

people but that's alright, you've got enough.

GJ: Who'd you want to tell me about?

ES: Well here's the people -- now this is off isn't it?

GJ: No, it's still on.

ES: Oh well -- I -- [chuckles]

GJ: Go ahead, tell me.

ES: Look, now you take the Messiah --

GJ: Tell me these people.

ES: I'm going to tell you these people.

GJ:

ES: You know Messiah is a million dollar church.

GJ: Yes.

ES: The people who put the foundation there who you don't hear anything about -- I know about it see I was here -- Wiley Johnson, George Clark, Dan Gennett, Maverit Taylor, Hill...

GJ: Well I saw these names I've saw these names. I've done some research in the history of the church. This Mr. Maverit was Mrs. Holly's father?

ES: I don't know who he was, but I know of him.

GJ: Yes he was Mrs. Holly's father. I also interviewed Mrs. Johnson, Willey Johnson's wife.

ES: George Clark --

GJ: Yes, that's a fireman.

ES: No his father.

GJ: His father.

ES: His father was Dan Gennett.

GJ: Some of these names I recognize as having looked through

the history of the church and I think Mrs. Holly talks about her father. So maybe we have touched on it already.

ES: I know about it because I was here. They laid the plans. They bought houses and things that later on when Congress Street development took over, they got property in that. They bought property in other spots. So that when --

GJ: Messiah.

ES: When Messiah got ready to build they had plenty of money. And they had men there who were men. It takes men to do things. If you get a bunch of pantywaists that will move with every wind. No pastor rules me. I'm my own man. He can kick me out. He's the boss. But he can't tell me what to say. I tell him what I'll want him to know. I stood up in the annual conference. They were talking about the young people and what they was going to do about the young people. And I asked the bishop at the end -- see I wasn't on the program but I was in there -- I said, "Is this an open discussion?" And he said, "Sure. Say what you want to." I said, "This thing didn't start yesterday and I don't care what you do it's not going to end tomorrow. All these things that you say are the fault, I know different. The fault is in the home. When you took mothers from the home where they are giving care and instructions, I don't care what else you do afterwards, because if he didn't get it in the home you're not going to give it to him in the school.

You can put him in jail. But he's still ruined. He's no good. You instill principles in a child at the mother's knees. If you don't get him in tow and get him to think and write by time he's six, forget it. You can beat him while he's small. And when he gets big you he'll curse you to your teeth. And going to do what he wants to do."

My father died about the age I am now. But the last day I saw him he still was boss. I could have whipped him. But I had too much respect. Too much ingrained in me to love and respect him for what he had been. I wouldn't raise a hand. He might be wrong but I'd get into it -- why? -- because I had been trained from birth.

GJ: So you think that's what we need to do with our children?

ES: Nothing ever is going to stop it. Nothing. I don't care how much money you spend. Now you take the schools for instance. You know what's wrong with the schools? They don't give the kids the basics.

GJ: Do you think the parents have any responsibility to see that they get the basics?

ES: I blame the board of education because they make up the curriculum. All the parents do is send their kids to school.

GJ: Do parents have a responsibility to see that their children study?

ES: Yes, but I say this. I know from personal experience. You can instill in a child so much respect for the things that

you want him to do that he'll do them. I'll take for instance. The principal in my school -- I'm at the Sumner School -- was B. K. Bruce. He was I think a grandnephew of the B. K. Bruce that you know was a senator. That man he could tell me to jump off of a building. I would've jumped. Because he had instilled in me principles that I'll never get over. But he got me when I was young. He had me read books that would be conducive to the things that he wanted me to do. But to begin with he taught me my ABC's. The sound of letters. The diphthongs. Things of that kind. The necessary things for the construction of words.

Do you know Mildred Geter?

GJ: Yes.

ES: Mildred had a ...

She went to Wheeler School down on --

She came home one day crying. Bad marks. Couldn't read. She'd come home with her books. Look through the lesson. Tell it to you. So one day I had her reading and somebody interrupted and I stopped. And I said, "Go ahead." She went back to the first. That gave me the clue. I knew what troubled her. Why didn't the teacher know it?

GJ: What was the problem?

ES: She was doing this. Having the type of memory she had she

didn't know one word from the other.

GJ: She was memorizing lessons?

ES: She would memorize a whole lesson.

GJ: [Chuckles]

ES: I went over there to that school and I jumped down that teacher's throat. I said, "You blamed the kid for something that's your fault. Either you or somebody below you is guilty and responsible for this child not being able to read. She has memorized her whole lesson and doesn't know one word from the other. That's the problem." Had she known the sound of letters -- now it's been a long time -- but you pronounce a word that I've never seen before and pronounce it distinctly like you should and just from the sounds I can nearly spell it.

GJ: I don't think you'll find --

[end of side two, tape one]