

Rebecca and Michael Cornett Interview
with Abby Huggins
Hazard, Kentucky
March 6, 2018

00:02 Abby Huggins: This is Abby Huggins. I'm up on Town Mountain in Hazard, Kentucky at the home of Becky and Mike Cornett for an interview about life and growing up here and food, probably. Maybe some dance. But, can each of you introduce yourself?

00:25 Rebecca Cornett: I'm Rebecca Cornett.

00:29 Michael: And I'm Mike, Michael Cornett.

00:33 AH: Well, Becky, Rebecca, can you start by telling me about where you were raised and who your people are?

00:42 RC: I was raised, I was born in Bluegrass Hollow and my mother was Lily May Richmond. My father was Albert Roy Luntz. Now, the Luntzes still lives here on Town Mountain. This is where all of my relatives are from, here on Town Mountain. My father, which I really did not know my father because he was killed in the Korean War. So, he was killed when I was two years old. So I basically didn't know my father. I have an older sister, Jaquetta. We were Albert Roy Luntz's children. We were, after my mom, we stayed in Bluegrass. My mother, we moved several places in Hazard. We were on Oakhurst Avenue. We were on Sun Valley Terrace. But then we moved to Liberty Street. Liberty Street was a dirt road, whites lived at the mouth of Liberty Street. When I say mouth, that's when you turn up to go into Liberty Street. And right when you started in the black community, it was dirt road. But, there was Liberty High School, where all the blacks. You had the teachers lived on Liberty Street. Had Professor Perrier living on Liberty Street and Professor Walker. The principal of Liberty living on Liberty Street. There was a grocery store right across from our school. I only went to Liberty High my first and second grade. They integrated at, it was called Lower Broadway then. And my brother and I went to Lower Broadway School. We walked to school.

02:35 AH: What year was that?

02:37 RC: They integrated because I was in the second grade, so that had to be, I'm saying around [19]57-58 era or maybe [19]56, right around in there. [19]55, right in. And I don't know, I think that was probably one of the first blacks to go, not the only black, one of the first blacks to go to Lower Broadway School. My older sister stayed. Of course, Liberty still stayed. It was no longer just a high school then, it was grades 1-12, 1-8, because after that, after integration, they started going to Hazard High School. But there was two stores on Liberty Street. I come from a large family. My mother at that time didn't have ten children, but she wind up with ten children. I am the second oldest. She would, we would have, you was talking about food. Her house smelled of food because she was a baker, she was a cooker and we would get up with homemade biscuits, fried potatoes. She'd fry pork chop, chicken, anything for breakfast. She fed us all huge breakfasts because she didn't, we didn't have recess money. Now back when we were in school, when you, during recess, you could go to the store, you could leave the school ground and go to the store. Now mind you, the store was just across the street. But we didn't have money to go buy. So she fed us well so we wouldn't have to be hungry. So we played. We played until lunch time and then we knew when

school was out, when we went home, we were coming home to a full course meal. She would have our supper already on the table. So, we ate well. We dressed well. We were poor and didn't know it. We didn't want anything because we didn't see - we had everything that we needed. Her house was the house that everybody would come to because she kept it clean, she kept it as she worked, when we would come in from school, the older kids, we had jobs we had to do. My job was to do the cornbread. I had to make the cornbread. My oldest sister's job, maybe she had to do some vegetables or make a cake. Because you always had dessert. You couldn't have a full course meal without the dessert. And she would always, my mother made fudge and lady fingers, everything from scratch. Everything was done from scratch. And our house would always smell of that goodness and that aroma. So when we came in, she would then go to work in white homes. She would do their laundry and their ironing and their cooking and their cleaning. Ever she kept their house, that's the way she would keep our house.

05:39 And even going walking downtown was, because there was no cars, but you lived on Liberty Street, so you just walked. We would walk to the store and there was certain places that we didn't go in, we didn't ask to go in because we didn't know that we couldn't. We didn't ask because we were with our mom. And we know mother didn't go in there, we couldn't go. We didn't go in there. So it wasn't like we'd go downtown and want to go into the drugstore, want to go in the bus station and set in the front because mom didn't. We followed her in the back, wherever she went, that's where we would go. And it is just a - and the gatherings. Everybody that came home came on Liberty Street. Talking about blacks. I don't care where they lived. If you wanted to see anyone, talk about getting together with the dancing and the eating, you could go to any house and they would cook, music playing and you would just see, they would just come and you would just see people you hadn't seen for years because they would come to Liberty Street.

06:55 MC: That was the first stop.

06:56 RC: That was their first stop. Because they knew that's where everybody was. And you talk about - everybody somehow was related. And you had, really had to be careful at the reunions. I mean, they would tell you, "Oh, that's Lily May's daughter. Oh I know her, yeah, Lily May's my - " I thought, oh stop. Stop. Don't want to hear it. Because back in the day, they had just one big family reunion. And you would know who your relatives were and you may not have wanted to. Because it was something that they hadn't told you and you done had a relationship probably with someone. Oh, you don't want to hear that, you know.

07:49 MC: Find out it's one of your relatives.

07:50 RC: One of your relatives. That they just did not tell you about. So, that's things, and our family's mixed. Even my kids have to, even when they come in, even with some whites, we have to say, you have to wait and see, you have to see, especially in the Cornetts and the Combs and the Luntzes. It was just, but when we were all together, it was just one family. It's just so much. And downtown, right across the bridge that you come to, used to be McDonalds, Home Lumber, right there. There was, Bob Smith used to own a little pool room. So, it wasn't like blacks didn't have their own place to go. And they may not have could go to certain place to go, but they had their own places. And see, our kids, now that they can go anywhere they want, nothing, but they don't have any place to go. And even if they did, some of them, they don't go. Most of the people that we have, we were raised with, they left here because of jobs and housing. Now, I have had a lot of our friends said, "If I could find a job paying me what I'm paying wherever I'm living, and I'm

home, like I'm living, I would come back." But see, they don't have that. And Mike and I were just blessed to just stay and just work it out. He had his grandparents here, Mother Carrie that raised him and I knew he wasn't going to leave her. I would have left if he had left. So, because we started dating in high school. And that's when I probably met him, when I was in the eighth grade and he was in the ninth grade.

09:50 MC: I know a lot of the situations as far as black man, as far as having a good job to raise a family, which naturally, they would hire the white guys before they would the blacks. But the blacks, most of the time, had to depend on people knowing. Somebody in that company that knows you, you become good friends. And then they'll talk for you to get you hired. Because that's how I got my job when I first started working for Kentucky-West Virginia. I was working with the man, he was the district supervisor here in Hazard. I was working with his daughter at Sears Robuck. And he come up there every now and then, which I was a good worker, I mean, I'm probably bragging on myself. But anyway, Colleen must have talked, Colleen Moore, she must have talked to him. Talked to her dad about me a whole lot. And he's the one that come up to me and offered me a job. That's how I got started in the gas field. But that's how a lot of the blacks, to get them good jobs, you had to know someone. Sure did.

10:45 RC: You know it used to be a lot of blacks here. On Memorial Drive, under the bridge, that was all blacks. That was a black church, Mount Olive Church. And the Combs lived there. Blacks lived all on Memorial Drive. Even our church was Mount Zion, was up on the hill where there used to be the library. All that. But, [phone rings] when they were talking, we were talking about on Fridays the eagle flies on Fridays and Saturday I go out to play. And I was talking about my dad and Abraham sitting in Rita's in the front because they looked white. My mom was brown skinned. But, there, they even though they looked like their faces were black from coal mining. [Michael answers the phone in the background]. They would come in from the coal mine. I can remember them coming in. My Uncle Ed and Sheep and all of them would come in with black faces from the coal mine. Work and come in from the coal mine. They, one thing about, they would, their supper would be ready. And this is the way my family did. My mom and her sisters. And her sisters would do. When my uncles would come in, then they would sit. Their plates would automatically be, they knew the time they were getting off from work. They would see them coming in with their lunch bucket. They come, you'd see them. And sometimes you could see pictures, I don't know if you've ever seen a picture on a commercial about a coal miner and him coming home. That's what I remember. Because we used to wait to see our uncle come up with his coal bucket, mining, his dinner bucket. So, we could run and get what was left in it. That was just something the kids did. And, but, they would just barely wash their hands and but they would set down to eat with their whatever in their hands. You could see the white of their hand, the brown of their hand. And maybe just the little blackness off of their face. But they would sit there and eat before, you had to heat the water to put in the round tub. They would have their water ready for them to take a bath. Now that's the way I seen my mom and my aunties do. Because the men would go out and work. Now, my mother, you hear me just talk about my mother because that was all in our household. But now, back in the day, it was two family household. In the black community. Every one of my friends had two family household. I'm thinking that I, I think I was about the only one that only was raised with a mother. The rest of them had two family household because the man would always go out and work and that woman would stay home and work. Because they had a lot of children then. You know, back then if you had five children, they said you have a small family. Because you know it was ten and it was a lot of families then. But they would always come in. I just remember, even with Shelia, my best

friend, we'd be playing, but when her dad came home with stuff on, black on his face, their food was ready for them to eat. It just, it would just amaze me, that's the way of life, that's the way it's supposed to be. And they would make, they would go out and make the living and the wife would take care of the house and the children. But when he came in, he was priority. He ate before the kids, he ate before the children. In my friends' house, two parent household. Now in my house, Lily May, which is my mother's name, Lily May, she, we ate because we didn't have the male figure in our household. Our table was set for her children. She set her table every, it wasn't like you eat in the living room, you eat somewhere. Everybody had to set down at the table and eat. You had to eat at suppertime and we had three meals, we had breakfast, lunch, and dinner. And you had to come to the table and eat at those times. Everybody set down and she would set her table just like she was having a formal dinner. She did that so we would know, we would know that you can be and do anything you want to be and do. I can't go work in the white lady's house and have her children spread, have their table eloquent and not do that at my house. And she did. That's the way she raised. At Christmastime, everybody, Lord forgive me for saying it, but every drunk and every prostitute that was in town would come to Lily May's house because she made them welcome, she would have a hot pot of coffee on, she would have goodies to eat. She would have homemade candies and cookies and cake. She would have that turkey and dressing smelling. She's have the aroma of holiday, festive holiday. So they would come and she would make them welcome, they would set at our table, we would respect them, they would eat with us, we'd play games, we'd sing, laugh, dance. I mean, eat, the whole somebody's in here eating, somebody's in there dancing, somebody's sitting over there playing cards. It was just like that. And until it was time for us to go to bed, then people would leave. And we probably would never see those people anymore. And they wouldn't come until the holidays. And Thanksgiving and Christmas, you see those people coming to our home. And they'd knock and say, "Ms. Lily May, can we come in?" She'd say, "Sure, come on in here." And we knew, we knew as children to move aside because they were grown-ups. You couldn't sit in on grown up's conversations and you could not butt in and you better not comment. You couldn't ask them, "Why are you here?" or anything. So, it was just, it was a wonderful time then. Like I said, we was in bad situations and bad times, but we really didn't realize it because we had love, we had discipline, Lord knows. I told my mother, I said, "Mom, you know," We were then in the projects, she was in the projects, I was married with children. But we would always go to my mother's house and set around at the table, the way we're setting here. We all would tell tales. Wouldn't we Michael? We would always talk. My mother would be at the kitchen, over at the sink, just the way my kitchen is now, cooking. So I was sitting where I'm sitting now, but in her house. I said, "Mom, you know what? When we we were coming up, we could have really called child welfare on you." I said, "Because we really got whippings. We really got whippings." My mother never turned around, she kept washing her dishes. And when I was always in trouble she said, "That's what you should have done, Rebecca Lynn." And when she says Rebecca Lynn, I was always in trouble. She says, "That's what you should have done, Rebecca Lynn. And then Maggard would have got your body." In other words, I would have whipped you that you would have thought you was dying. You would wish you were dead. I said, "Oh, ok." And then we just went on to another subject. Because we got whippings. We got discipline. And I look back and I thank God for every whipping that I got and I didn't get that many. And I thought I was a perfect child, but I knew the whippings that they would get. My sisters used to say, "You're so silly, you sit there and you take those whippings." And I said, "No, you are. She whips me, gives me about three licks and she's through. You run, she about kills you because you're running." So, we just, you know I thank God for that. But now a days, you know, you can't discipline a child the way that we were disciplined with those little cane switches. You had to go get your own switch.

And they'd whip you on your little legs. And you'd sit there and dance. You talk about dancing, honey, them switches would make you dance. You'd go, dancing. So, it's just, it's a great.

19:56 And church was a social life for us. Because, in the churches, it was crowded every Sunday because you got to see everybody. You got to see the boys, you got to see the girls, you just got to see everybody because it wasn't "Are you going to church?" "Get up you're going to church." And that was, that was just a way of life, even though whatever happened on Sunday, I don't care how late you stayed out, whatever you did, you're getting up and going to church. Not asking. There was just a "Get up, get up you're going to church, get up." Not demanding. And you did that. But, it used to be just a crowded place. Every, I mean every black church that was. And we had several black churches. One up Lothair. Two downtown. Two on Liberty Street. It was two churches on Liberty Street.

21:12 MC: Church on the yards.

21:13 RC: Two churches on the yard.

21:18 AH: And all full?

21:18 RC: And all full. Now that's how many black people that used to live here in Hazard. That's the reason when we were growing up, we knew that discrimination was going on. We knew, but you were with your own circle of people. You never left outside that circle of people. And even when we started going to high school and we started having white friends. Of course, where my mother worked in white people's homes, their children, she would take me to play sometimes with their children, whoever she was working for would have children my age. And I would play with them and then I would go home. But even when we were in high school with, even with our white friends, we still had our own circle of just blacks. And you interacted with the whites and we talked with them. We just knew or we just separated, just separated.

22:28 MC: Well during that period too, as far as black and white relationship, Hazard being a small town, the people in the community didn't want to accept it. It slowly come in, you know. Every now and then you see a white and black couple together, but it took a long time for them to accept it. But now, don't pay no more attention, it's just about an everyday thing now. But years ago, they didn't want to accept it.

22:53 RC: Well, you just about had to sneak, it was just you had to sneak around. But we were looking, now in our school, in fact I was talking with my sister the other day. I said, "How many black children do we have in school?" I'm talking about black mother, black father. I think it was two families. The rest of our children in school are mixed. All the children now are mixed. I say that because, going back to the gathering and at the family reunion, everybody found out they were related. So, what did they, when you started dating, where did you have to go? But now, they had babies by white men and white women, you have so now have to be careful and ask about the relatives there. Because that's the reason you found a lot of mixed couples because they couldn't date any of the black girls. We couldn't date any of the black guys here. Mike and I were going to date. So, I take Michael home. Now I didn't know Michael until the eighth grade because he was dating my best friend. That's another story. But, my best friend Shelia outgrew us.

24:26 MC: She was my first girlfriend. So called girlfriend. I was too young to know what the heck I was doing.

24:30 RC: But you know, and she said, oh look at my cute boyfriend. And I waved at him on the bus. But anyway, she outgrew us. We were still little and she became grown. But anyway. We were, so when I met Michael, we started dating and someone had said that we were related. So, I asked my mother, right? I asked my mom. Mom said no.

25:02 MC: No, I don't know if it was your mother or somebody. We went to searching it out, and then they connected, but it was way down the line.

25:09 RC: He went, so he goes, no you go to Columbus to talk to your grandmother. He goes to Columbus, say ok. But what I'm saying, we had to really try to search it out to make sure that we wasn't related. Now, here's a clinger. You find out that your last names are not really your last names. You find out, he's really not a Cornett. You find out his daddy is somebody else.

25:52 MC: My daddy's daddy was someone else.

25:51 RC: Yeah, your daddy's daddy was someone else. So, therefore -

25:55 MC: He just took the name Cornett.

25:57 RC: So, when you're looking at relatives, he's really not, but you can't go around and say, "Well he's not a Cornett." Well anyway, you really can't go out and just say these things because older people didn't tell you this and that's how you were grown up and raised. You thinking you are who you think you are and you're not. And so that's the reason a lot of people think that you're related when you're not. But how you going to explain to them that, "Oh I'm not really related to him because he really ain't a Cornett." But how am I going to tell my kids? You ain't a Cornett no way. But our children know because just like my mother believed in telling us. You remember I told you about the stories and when they really wasn't nice, the way they told them that they made them sort of humorous, they told us the truth. They told us the truth, regardless of how ugly it was, they told us the truth. And that's the way that we were raised, to just tell the truth. Now, it's not pretty. People get hurt. But it's the truth. So when people want to really think that we're related, and we know we're really not, I'm not going to sit there and try to explain to them how we're not. Because I have my last name and he has his last name. All I know for sure, my mother was born in Virginia. So she didn't know nothing about no Luntz. So, all I know is I am Richmond and Luntz. So, I tell my kids that. We've also told our kids about his father. We had to because my girls started going to college, meeting, your father's people were in Louisville, Kentucky. They started meeting other people and other guys that we had to tell them. But I'm saying this, a lot of people were not told. And it goes on more than what you really actually think. And it's not, they say, "Oh, they married cousins." No, you don't know the story, you don't know the history, you don't know who's really. So, I don't say just because they have a last name and they married or they think they're related. Now, around here, you have like Town Mountain, I may be jumping, but on Town Mountain, you had four, three sisters that married. Three sisters same last name, married three brothers same last name. They're not related, but they married brothers. Their kids are double first cousins. Their whole family, their whole family, because these three brothers started dating these three sisters, you going to find out a whole lot here in the black community. Because, like I said, it was big families, and one big brother came and started

dating one big sister. They'd tell that brother, "She's got two of the finest sisters over there." That brother is going to come look at that sister. And that's what happened. That's what happened. Like I said, a lot of them just moved away. My mom and them did say that because I would say, "How did so-and-so get here from Alabama?" I would ask my mom, "How did the Fraziers move here from Alabama. They're from Alabama, how did they wind up here?" She said, "The railroad." See everybody thought mining. But the railroad brought a lot of blacks to this community. According to my mom. And how they fed was with the commodities. They used to get, oh my goodness. The commodities, the cheese, the peanut butter, the, what was it, the ham. You would get, just everything you needed in a commodity box. And that's how my mother raised us, on commodity food. Through the government.

30:41 MC: Giving stuff out to poverty areas.

30:43 RC: And they would raise us with the commodities and then my uncle, over here on Town Mountain would have a garden. And we'd come over here and pick our own beans and corn and tomatoes and cucumbers. We would, us kids would be out there working our little selves to death and they made us think that we were having the best time of our lives because they'd say, "Come on we're going to go out in the garden this morning. And we're going to plant." And they'd have that old mule, you remember the mule they'd have in there? And we'd put those things, "Let's see how many you can get over there. Did you get your row finished? I bet she done beat you. She got your - " And we're running, be tired.

31:29 MC: Competition thing to make it get done quicker.

31:34 RC: But they made it so much fun. And then when you went home, we were out there with the men, my uncles, and when you went home, the women would have those beans broke up, washed, vegetables washed. And there's a pressure cooker, an old fashioned pressure cooker. They put them green beans in, finished in no time with new potatoes on them. Fresh tomatoes and cucumbers and onions on the table. Those corn, fried corn, boiled corn. And you'd sit there and the aroma, Jesus, the aroma, goodness. It makes me want to just fix that tomorrow. Cornbread, milk, and we would just feast. And you heard me, I didn't say nothing about no meat. We didn't have no meat. We didn't miss any meat. Vegetables, we ate vegetables. Not saying we didn't have meat, but when we got through in the garden, they would just automatically fix those fresh vegetables. And that was what we would eat. Because they killed hogs, I seen a -

32:40 MC: I was going to say that people, a lot of times where I was raised up Lothair, you remember right there next to the riverbank? That used to be lined up with hog pens.

32:49 RC: Mmhmm, they stink too.

32:50 MC: And actually, actually we raised a hog or two. You know, my grandparents, they put it in there with someone else and go out there and slop the hog. That's some of my chores, back then when I was growing up. Yeah, but that was a lot of, your vegetables, like I said, your fresh meat and whatever, they did it all. Because, you know, people just didn't have the money to spend in these grocery stores. And plus, like I said, had large families. There was one lady up Lothair, she had twenty, well over twenty youngins.

33:22 RC: Oh, you talking about the Walkers? Mmmhmm.

33:24 MC: Had over twenty babies.

33:25 RC: I seen them wring chicken's necks. When we did have our, and then I would see Uncle Ed come in with rabbits. We said, he would come in we would, and my sister and I, we'd say, "Ugh, we would never ever eat that." Because you know how they would carry them. I said, "Uh-uh, I won't eat that, I won't eat that." My aunt Mary Lou said, "Oh you're not going to eat that Rebecca Lynn?"

33:53 MC: Mother Carrie used to get out there, they took them by to buy fresh chicken. And she'd get out there, take that chicken by the neck and wring his neck. And she'd, her and my grandfather forced me to do it one time and I couldn't stand that feeling. They had a time getting me to wring a chicken's neck.

34:07 RC: I said I never would eat that stuff. They say -

34:09 MC: She liked her fresh vegetables, that's the way she'd get her fresh chicken.

34:12 RC: Kids couldn't stay in the house when we were coming up. If it was pretty outside, you had to go outside. You couldn't stay in the house, you couldn't look at TV. Of course, if you had a TV. We had one, a little small black and white television. But you couldn't stay in the house, so kids had to go out and play. While we're out playing, and when they called you, that means supper was ready. So we would have to come in and wash our hands. And we'd sit down to eat and I would eat, you would eat anything that was on the table. You couldn't say you didn't like anything. You ate what was on the table. You ate whatever they put on your plate. We would tear that fried chicken, oh man, I ate. They said, "What do you think you're eating?" I said, "Chicken." They said, "That's rabbit." Then they said, "What do you think you're eating?" I said, "Chicken." "That's squirrel." So I had to quit saying what I wouldn't eat and what I would eat. Because I ate it all. I ate it all because it was so good. But you know, we just, that was just - and I, it sounds like that we had laughter, laughter, but it wasn't. I tell about the good times because that's what I can, I relate to. There was awful times in there too. Bad times. Now when I say bad times, not with us kids. My mama had ten kids and she protected us from that. Don't ask me how she did that. She did. But it was some bad times. My mother went through some bad, awful times. But, that was, she always said that, "We're grown, you stay out of grown folks business. You can't get in grown folks business. You don't ask questions, you just go along. If I'm taking care of you, that's the way it is." But all the times I'm talking about how good it was, there was some bad times, bad, bad, bad, bad times. But, in my mind, it's always, like I said, my father was killed in the Korean War. So, that lets you know that I had to have, there was other men in my mom's life. But I was never mistreated nor abused by any of them. In fact, they protected me from my mom. I'd say, "Help me, help me. She's getting ready to whip me, help me." But we would always walk to my grandmother's. Lived like you were going over there to Town Mountain Lane, is that what it's called now?

36:48 MC: Right through there.

36:48 RC: That's where my big mama lived. That's where my grandparents lived. You would go right under the hill, well we walked from Liberty Street where you were, we'd walk in that area,

right on Liberty Street, all the way over to my grandmother's house where you went over to Town Mountain Lane. And then you had to go under a hill to my grandmother's house. That was our summer vacation. Spending over there with my grandmother with fifteen or twenty more grandchildren. But that was our summer vacation. And over there, we had homemade bread and syrup for breakfast. And any, maybe a, I don't know, fresh vegetables because they kept a garden. That's how she fed their kids, they I mean, and all her grandchildren. How about, they sent all the grandchildren to my big mama. Quett and I were the only ones with two because our father were killed, but I'm talking on my father's side, the Luntz. But everybody else had eight and ten children. Quett and I were the only two. We were always sort of separated. Again, people thought, we thought, that's the way mom raised us. She would, Big Mama washed everybody's clothes. We would take our clothes and iron them. And wash our own little undies out. We'd do that because that's the way we were raised. But you take having twenty kids for a summer vacation, that was our summer vacation. I think about it. And we would walk, and when [phone rings] it was time for us to leave, when it was time for us to go, we'd walk back to town. Because it was so [recording paused].

38:55 RC: As I was saying about my summer vacations consisting of going to here on Town Mountain, over in Lick Branch, which is right down around the street and down the hollow. It insisted on maybe fifteen to twenty children using an outhouse. You had an outhouse. You had to go, carrying a lantern from the house to the outhouse. And, whenever anybody had to use the bathroom, can you imagine getting up out of the bed, rolling, going over people to try to find the something to light to go to the outhouse? But there was always a designated older person that you had to wake up to take you, especially the small ones. You know, you just didn't get up and go out by yourself. Whether you realize, there was snakes, God knows what else was out there in the outhouse or around the outhouse. And so, we all shared that. And with all that, we had so much fun. Now that sounds awful. Taking baths, they had one pot belly stove in the middle of, I guess it was considered the living room, but everybody slept because everybody, when everybody was there, you had to find places to sleep. In the middle of that room, and you had to heat water in a little foot tub, they called it a foot tub. And you would heat the water to, for one to take a bath. Ok, Quett and I, my oldest sister and I, we would bathe in the same water. Same water. Because it was just two of us. You can't empty out that water just because. So, it was just two of us, and we decided we going to bathe, it's going to be me and her. So, she's always been protective, she's always been a mother figure, anyway, of all of us. We would take our, and we always made sure we took our baths first. Out of all those kids, we made sure we took all our baths first. Now, I say all that. That was because of Lily May's raising. That was because of Lily May's raising. We had just as many siblings as they had. We were just Luntzes and my brothers and sisters were not. But we had, mom was our mother. She raised us all together. And, but we went to the Luntzes, our grandparents' house. It was just the two of us. They were over there with all their siblings. The ones that were old enough to come. So, it was just the two of us. So we did as Lily May, my mom, taught us. Not that we, when it was time for us to do, everybody had to take turns doing dishes and had to do different things, cook or whatever we had to do. We cooked the way Lily May taught us to cook. When they came to eat what we cooked, we cooked the way she taught us to cook. Not saying that my Aunt Maddie and the rest of them hadn't taught them to do the same thing. I'm saying, it was so many of them. It was so many of them that they had to make sure that their siblings were taken care of and Big Mama. Everybody had, she did what she was supposed to do, but you had to take your [phone rings] responsibilities and do what you had to do also.

42:55 MC: I was raised at Lothair and it's a mining camp. And that mine that they worked at was called Algoma. The name of that coal company was Algoma. And then there was a big tippel. And a lot of those guys, the Garrison, do you know? Neil Garrison and John Henry Walker and Uncle Willy and all those guys. Like you were talking, come up the railroad track, have their lunch bucket. Covered with coal dust. But I remember those days very well. And, like I said, all those houses up there were mining camp houses. Just about every house up through there built in the same style. If you know what mining camp looks like. I wasn't here during the [19]57 Flood, the '57 Flood took several of them out. But, which I was raised right there on, well, I was coming up, Mother Carrie and Abel had that house right there on the end as you go toward Jerusalem Church. Well anyway, after that flood, they got that trailer, then I was [inaudible] And then there was another flood that went through was the '63 Flood. And then that was a mess too, but it wasn't as bad as the '57. But anyway, this was the period, I was there. I come from Indianapolis, right around 1961. I believe it was '61 when I started. And I was just starting into the fifth grade. Me and my sister come from Indianapolis and attended school there at Lothair Elementary. Only two blacks in the school. And, which we had our little problems there when we first started. But after we spent maybe our first year, whatever started developing friends or whatever, it became a better place to go to school and whatever. Developed a lot of friends. But anyway, from there, got on, finished that school there and then we had to bus to Hazard High School. Which, actually at the time, when they was getting ready to put us at Lothair Elementary, Pam and I was wanting to go to Liberty Street because it was all black school. There was no blacks up there, but we couldn't do it, they wouldn't let us do it or something. I guess it was out of a district, different district or something.

45:12 RC: You were at Lothair.

45:13 MC: But anyway, I had to bus on to Hazard High School. Here's Hazard High School, '64 and '65 I believe. And graduated in '68. But that was during the Civil Rights Movement, like we was speaking a while ago, a few discrimination, we had few, a little discrimination going on around here in Hazard. No major race riots, but every now and then, you hear a racial tension build up different times. Nothing real big.

45:42 RC: You know what really helped with the race relationships? Sports. Sports helped a whole lot. Like I said, back in the day, there was so skeptical to come together. Back when we were in high school in the sixties, so many blacks lived here. And they had big families with those big families, big guys, big men, young men, tall young men. In high school. So, that made sports playing basketball, when they started integrating, playing basketball.

46:27 MC: Hazard High School integrated in '55.

46:28 RC: And then when they started competing with these other schools, nobody could beat Hazard High. Because they had integrated and had all those black athletes. When they started becoming friends with the white students, with the white athletes, cheerleading, everybody just - and when you're yelling for one team and you're sitting there all together, you're one. You're one. You're blue and gold Bulldogs and you're one. And that's when everybody just fought and you just fought for your school. Now that helped the race relations a lot. But then, it also brought on another type of discrimination or race discrimination because then the girls and boys started looking at each other. The blacks and whites.

47:24 MC: That's the dating situation, that's what I was talking about. They didn't want to accept it.

47:29 RC: And that's when the problem started coming in. It was ok for me to sit there and yell with you, but now, you couldn't go out, you couldn't go out with me or I couldn't go out with you or he couldn't go out with a white. You know, it was ok for us to be hand and hand and hugging and everything at the ball games, cheering for our team. But that's where you leave it. You can't take it, you can't take it any further. Well, little do you know, girls and boys, I don't care, feelings are feelings. And that's going to happen. And you got race tensions there. And then that's when you got the sneaking around and everybody just ducking and dodging because, Lord, we've been in situations, I know I have with some friends. That I thought I was going to be killed because although I didn't have. About all of my girlfriends had white guys. Had white boyfriends. But they could not go out with their white boyfriends. So if we went out, we all had to go out together. And it was just like, "Where you going?" "Oh I'm going to be with Sheila and Jack." "Oh, I'm going with Becky." So, all were saying that, but you're going really to go with somebody else. You're just a decoy. But you still had to go. You still had to be there. In the times we had, oh my gosh, Jesus. But, you know, now, kids don't worry about that any more. Even when there are tensions or things going on, it doesn't bother them. And our kids really don't want to hear. You try to tell them about you think you've made it over and you haven't because it's reversing. You're regressing, you're going backwards and you don't even realize that. See, I tell my kids that. I tell my grandkids that. Don't think you made it over, you haven't. You're not there. You're not. Right when you think you have, you cannot. Look, feelings are feelings. The way people are are the way people are and that's not going to change. You're going to have those that's going to be prejudice. You're going to have those that's going to be militant. You're going to have those that says we're all one and we should live together. That's life. But you can't relax and thinking that just because the world's society says it's ok for you to do this that you're going to be able to do it. You still got to be 100% better than anybody else. You've still got to give 110 when someone else may do 99. You still have to do over and beyond what you are capable of doing. That's just facts. That's what I tell mine. Don't never think you're on an equal playing field. It's not. That's not realistic. You know, you say, the time, and you're younger, so you're probably saying, no, I think we're all on an equal playing field, board. But it's not. It really and truly is not. I'm talking about today now. I'm not even going back. I'm talking about now my little twenty-one year old grandson that's getting ready to graduate from college that's going into criminal justice thinking that whatever he is doing now is not going to affect him when he doesn't get a job later. When he starts putting his applications in, he's going to see his score is going to have to be a little bit better. They took out affirmative action. Now that had pros and cons. Really, everything has pros and cons. Affirmative action has good and bad. It's good because it's the only way some of us would have got to do anything at all. Bad if they just want to put you in there because you are one. I don't care if you put you in there, as long as I'm qualified, I can do it just like you can do it, I'm just as good as you are. Don't put me in there because you need one. But if that's the only way I can get in, put me in and I have to show you I'm just as good. But see, we have to tell our kids. Well, they took that. But now, we have to tell our kids, even when you go get a job and going back. I know I told you I jump. Another thing my mother would not allow us to do is come home and tell her "They did that because we were black." My brother was a militant in his heart. They called him Black Moses. If there was anything that anybody got into any situation, there he went running to rescue them. Eric was running, Black Moses to rescue. I seen, because I'm two years older than him, but we were in the same class in high school. I would see that Eric, they would do something to my brother and they only did that because the way he wore his hair. And he'd have an Afro comb in

his back pocket. And he would walk militant. I knew that he was being picked on because of who he was and his color. I knew they would kick him out of class because of who he was and because of his color. So, I would get mad and tell mom that "That's what they're doing to Eric. Eric's not doing what they say he's doing, he's doing his work." And I said, "but he's not doing what they say he's doing. And sometimes, he may not move when they tell him to do something. But he's not doing everything." She never would let us just say that. She would always say, "You're going to school to learn. They can do anything they want to you, but they cannot take your learning. They cannot take your mind. They cannot take your learning. You're there to obey what they tell you to do and learn." Well, little did we know, that even though all that complaining that we were doing, Lily May was going to the school talking to them. She never let us know she was up there to talk. She would go up there and whatever we told her, we thought, Mom, you're not even listening to us. She thinks that we're - "I'm tired of doing this because you're black," No you go up there to learn. If you were doing this and this they wouldn't have no reason. But she would go and talk to the principal. That's the reason that they put my mother, they didn't have a site base, I don't know if you know, remember that in school, they had site based that parents would sit on the board and see what's going on for what was good for the school. Different parents. And, but she would go, like to the PTO [Parent Teacher Organization] meetings. She would go, we never knew that our mother was doing that until I started working for Social Security. And Faye Merrill was my manager. Faye Merrill's daughter and my sister Mary was in the same group, same room. And she started telling me all the activities that she and my mother did. She said, "Me and Lily May," she said, "Oh, I know your mother very well." I said, "Oh, you know my mom?" And I thought, yeah she's worked in white people's homes over there, sure you know my mom. No. "Yes, me and Lily May, we went to the FHA meeting and we set up this, we had a da-da-da-da." I said, "My mom did all that?" She said "Yes." Because even though we were complaining to her, she was going up there talking to them. So therefore, they would bring her in the school and see. So, in my mother's house, skipping again, ten children, you either had to go to school or work. If you decided that you were no longer going to school, you couldn't stay in her home. My oldest brother Eric decided he was going to drop out of school. She said, "Either you go to the army, go to work, but you won't stay here." He left and went to the Job Corps, because you cannot live in the home, back them, with all those kids, in my mom's house, Lily May's house. It wasn't no perfect house, but I'm going to tell you the way her house was. He went to the Job Corps. He stayed a year, he wrote and told me he just didn't like it. I said, "Well, you better tell mom. You ask mom could I come back." Mom, yep, he went on to school, my brother graduated. Because she did not allow him to quit school and just lay around. Face forward to this day and age. Parents ought to quit letting their kids decide they want to lay around in the home. That's what they do. That's what they do. They won't get out and work, they won't go to school. Because we allowed our children, I say we, to lay around in our children and not work. I told you back when I was coming up, there was two parent households. Everybody said, well you know in the black community, the dad leaves. And when I was coming up, there was two parent households. Those dads, all my friends had fathers. I didn't. There wasn't a man in our household. Lily May was man and woman in our household. Man and woman. But that was a unique situation and therefore, we were sort of shunned. Because of the situation. But yet, still, we were sort of shunned but we were also sort of, they thought we was, thought we were better because of the way we were raised and what we had. Didn't have no more than nobody else. What she had, she just took care of it and fixed it up nice. But that's the way we were raised. Fast forward to this day and age, you have single parent households. You have grandparents raising grandchildren. I'm talking about in the black community. You don't have these, you have these boys that will not get out and work. Now not in all situations, not in all situations. I'm talking about, when we were coming up, these guys worked. Everybody worked.

We worked. Everybody worked. And everybody in our generation, just about everybody made it. When I say made it, they married, had a family and a house. I'm saying made it. I'm not talking about money. Because you can make it and not have all that. You have your basic needs.

58:53 MC: And then during a period of time, those younger adults, you know, in the early twenties, between mid-twenties and up to the thirties, that's during the period of time of coal booming. There was a lot more jobs here.

59:07 RC: Yeah, all the coal mining was booming.

59:08 MC: Strip jobs and everything. Everything. You had a whole lot more work around here then. Oil and gas companies and whatever.

59:16 RC: All our friends made money.

59:17 MC: That's the reason a lot of guys had jobs then because of that. And they were making big money in those mines.

59:24 RC: We had a home. Think about partying, you know how I told you I skipped partying and eating. Our friends lived in Letcher County. You know where Letcher County is, Whitesburg, up through there? Beth-Elk Horn, Bethlehem Elk-Horn was the big coal plants, right? Like I said, Friday the eagle flies on Friday. And Saturday we go out to play. On Friday, when those guys would get paid, they'd come to Hazard. Guess who's house they would be at?

59:58 MC: Be at ours.

59:59 RC: Be at mine and Michael's. I neither, like my mama, I neither drank nor smoked. But I'd get in that kitchen and cook. Fry fish, chicken. They'd be in there having a ball. My house would be rocking. You would have thought it was a night club. We had the best. My little girls, Coco and Missy were babies. They would just give them money. They had money in their little piggy bank because first thing they would do, they'd come and we'd play Big Whiz. Black people play Big Whiz.

1:00:32 MC: That's a card game.

1:00:33 RC: That's a card game. And we loved to play it. And you'd have maybe two games going. Now I'd just fry, we'd just have the food and we'd play cards. And the music. My little girls would be dancing to the music. And then they'd put them two or three dollars in their little piggy bank. I mean, they stayed rich. But those, that, now that was the best time ever. You had friends to come down. And I wouldn't, if any of them got drunk, they didn't leave my house. They'd sleep on the floor, on the couch. And when they were able to leave, they could leave my house. Everybody just respected one another. And you best believe, I don't care how, what happened that weekend, Monday morning they was back home going to work. Them guys went back to work, didn't they? If they brought their wife, their girlfriend.

1:01:24 MC: All of them but Larry.

1:01:25 RC: You always got one. But he hung in there. But they made good money. They brought

their wives or girlfriends. That Monday morning, everybody went to work. I was at work on Monday at Social Security and he went back to Kentucky-West Virginia Gas like nothing had happened. Our house a wreck. But those were just good, that's how we celebrated. And so, therefore, we didn't want to go any place that somebody says that you can't come in. You see what I'm saying? We had house parties. We had house parties. We'd travel all the way to Letcher County to a house party, a house party. Wouldn't we?

1:02:12 MC: Yeah.

1:02:13 RC: And we made our own activities. We didn't go any place where they're saying "You're not welcome here." And believe it or not, some of them came and joined us. Like my mom, anybody I welcome, I seen no color because I was raised with no color.

1:02:31 MC: A few of these joints around or whatever, a lot of time when they did go, these little clubs, there'd be a big fight. Black guys be after the white girls. White girls want black, white guys, whatever. Next thing, you've got a big fight. Big brawl.

1:02:46 RC: That's how come we started the midnight club. We just got in our cars.

1:02:50 MC: Keep from being bothered with.

1:02:52 AH: Explain what the Midnight Club is.

1:02:53 MC: Drive out Town Mountain Road, go out there to a dead end, got a big wide area, park your car and turn the music on. It's party time.

1:03:05 RC: You go out there, one car, you'd circle, and all of a sudden, you'd just hear a bunch of cars and all of a sudden, you'd just have a circle of cars. And then somebody would start a fire, right there in the middle of it, start a fire. And you'd just have the music going and sitting on top of the cars and dancing. In dirt.

1:03:29 MC: There's hardly ever any fights out there.

1:03:30 RC: Hardly no fights. Laughing and talking. Laughing and talking. And then you'd have your dirt. We'd be dancing in the dirt, our feet be all dirty. Our shoes be dirty.

1:03:40 MC: That was another thing I was going to say about the dirt. You know whenever you said, you had to walk from town coming over to

1:03:47 RC: Right, Big Mama's.

1:03:47 MC: That's when this road here was all dirt. And a car come up through there, buddy it would take five or ten minutes for the dust to clear.

1:03:54 RC: Yes, you couldn't see, yes.

1:03:58 MC: You look like you come out of a coal mine whenever you get to where you're going.

1:04:02 RC: Our hair, when you mentioned that, I just remember, because we walked. This is the road we walked. Right over here. Right where you pulled in. We'd walk there, like he said, they wouldn't be going that fast. But they would go and the dust would just flow. You remember Mama Timps. Was right over the hill. We would go to Aunt Timps. And back then they had well water. She kept a big bucket of well water on her thing. Now, it's a dipper. This day, a big old gourd dipper. Now this day in time, people won't do that. You know everybody drank out of that same gourd.

1:04:43 MC: Out of that same dipper, yeah.

1:04:44 RC: We thought nothing about that. Of taking, like we standing in line. Because we be hot walking across, and then from Sunday School too. Sometimes because we would go to Sunday School over here. Because if you went, if you stayed with Big Mama, you had to go to church out here, every Sunday. So we'd go down Mama Timps, we called her Aunt Timp, Mama Timp.

1:05:04 MC: That's Abel's mother.

1:05:05 RC: I didn't know that.

1:05:07 MC: Yeah, that's Abel's mother, that's my step grandfather's mother.

1:05:09 RC: That was his step grandfather - I didn't know that. I didn't know him. I was a child myself. But we stand in line, again, it sounds like Quett and I, but me and Quett would always get in line first. You know why? So we could be the first ones to dip in that water.

1:05:29 MC: Put your lips on the dipper.

1:05:31 RC: And it sounds - but that's just the way Lily May raised us. I couldn't help it. You know, I'm sort of like that today. I just can't drink after, no, not even my kids. I just don't, that's just me. Because that was just the way we was raised. But we would all stand in line and Quett would make sure, because she's the oldest. But she would make sure I'd be pushed. Right there. And she'd keep it. And we'd get our water. But that line, you know how long that line would be with kids. My goodness. You think about all the kids that live on Town Mountain, plus Big Mama had about twenty over at her house. And back in the day, Mike, it had to be fifty, sixty kids. It may even been more.

1:06:19 MC: A lot of times they be lined up like that because I was up Lothair then. Abel would bring, we'd go up there on the weekends.

1:06:27 RC: Mainly because people had eight and nine, ten kids. Well, everybody, the oldest one, even if the smallest ones would stay at home, you still had five or six older ones there. And again, because I'm talking about Luntzes, I'm talking about on my daddy's side, Quett and I were the only two in our, in my family. My brothers and sisters didn't come. So, she made sure, and that wasn't nothing but mom's teaching that we would be the first in line, start dipping out of the water. Because everybody drank out of it. And you didn't think nothing about it. You took your drink and then you had, there was a smart aleck boy that would sling water all over you.

1:07:13 MC: And that water, it was ice cold.

1:07:16 RC: That's the best water ever. Best water. But you was talking about walking when the cars was driving and hearing my mom, hold mine and Quett's hands. Now, mother would walk us over to Big Mama's house. Have us by our hands. And the dust would be all over, we would stop over at Mama Timp's and she would get that dipper water sometimes and she poured it on mine and Quett's face.

1:07:44 MC: Get the dust off. Yeah that dust sure did cover you up.

1:07:46 RC: It would get in your eyes.

1:07:48 MC: It would be that thick, real fine powder.

1:07:51 RC: And it took it forever to leave. But see, it would get in your eyes too.

1:07:56 MC: Yeah, it would get everywhere. And a car go by there and it seemed like it take ten minutes to clear up, especially if there weren't no air stirring.

1:08:02 RC: She'd have us our little white socks. We'd have our little short outfits on and our little white tops and our little white shorts. She'd dress us so cute, everybody used to say, "Lily May, how do you dress those kids so cute?"

1:08:16 MC: Another thing was red dog powder used to burn down there. That red dog, that bad smell of red dog, yep. I never will forget, every time you come by there.

1:08:25 RC: Yeah, you could smell it.

1:08:28 MC: You know what red dog is, don't you? It actually looks like, it's coal slate that's on fire.

1:08:33 RC: I was going to say, it's like slate that burns all the time. You ever heard of slate?

1:08:36 MC: It puts off an awful odor. That's what it was. And actually, that slate, when it burns, and it turns red, a lot of people in these muddy roads, they use that stuff to fill potholes and stuff up. They call it red dog. But anyway, that's what was down there. And you go by there, every time you come up the hill, you go by, you can't miss it. But actually, it's still there. It's not on fire anymore. But that red dog pile is still there. When you come up through town, you know that first curve, that first curve you come up just right above Gorman Holler, and then you see that wide place, they got a gate there. You remember, the power company has got a gate there. That right there was that red dog. That's where the red dog pile was.

1:09:15 RC: Well let's see, when we came over, when we walked, before Junior, you know Junior was a taxi driver and that's who my mom would get to pick us up. Twenty-five cent. Junior, we'd all pile in the car. Well, we thought he was our personal driver. Because everywhere mom, everywhere we would go, over to Big Mama's or over here, because my aunt Lena lived over here too, over the hill. Mom would get Junior Earl, call Junior Earl, and we'd all pile in Junior Earl's car. And sometimes she'd have twenty-five cents and sometimes she didn't.

1:09:52 MC: Yeah, he took credit.

1:09:52 RC: But sometimes, I'd hear her say, "Now Junior, now Junior," We'd get out of the car, she'd say, "Now Junior, I don't have no twenty-five cents for you today, but I get my check the first of the month. I'll pay you your twenty-five cents." He'd say, "Alright Lily, alright now, Lily May." And turn around. And she'd say, "Junior, come back here," We had to be at the top of the hill at some time. She'd say, "Junior be up here at - " I don't care what we were doing. Fifteen, twenty minutes before it was time for us to be at the top of the hill, because we had to walk all the way up to the top of the hill to meet Junior Earl. We had to drop whatever we was doing, get everything straighten up and leave my auntie's house to be on top of that hill. When Junior Earl pulled up there, we was ready to get in the car. She just -

1:10:44 MC: There was a lot of people depending on Junior. His last name, what was it, Roberts?

1:10:48 RC: Earl was his last name.

1:10:49 MC: Oh Junior, oh ok.

1:10:51 RC: And his name, I don't know his first name. We called him Junior Earl.

1:10:55 MC: Earl was his last name?

1:10:58 RC: Herald, Herald. H-E-R-A-L-D.

1:10:58 MC: They called him Junior Earl, wasn't it? I thought it was Junior Earl. I was thinking his last name was Roberts.

1:11:03 RC: Because you know, you remember, you know he had his, you know Laurel, he had a son and a daughter. We went to school, Eric went to school with his son and I think his daughter graduated with you.

1:11:19 MC: I can't remember. I can't remember anyway.

1:11:24 RC: Like I said, those are good memories I had. I had a good childhood. Not all of it was good. I don't want to even like, they just - no, it was not, it was not. It was not all pretty. It was ugly. But, I choose, I choose to speak of the good. Because the ugly is ugly. Very ugly. Very ugly. And it was sometimes it was ugly. Now, when I say that, not to us, not to the kids, not to any of us kids. But to my mom. To my mom. It was, but, Lily May kept it moving. She kept it moving.

1:12:17 MC: I remember when I was a young fellow, which like we said, as far as discipline about this that and the other, about kids. I was raised by my grandfather, step-grandfather, actually. My grandmother, my mother's mother. But, he made realize what being a man was early as far as responsibilities and things like that. I mean, I started as a young guy and I was responsible, do this and do that. Let's see, well, when I first come around, I guess eleven or twelve-year-old. You know, back then, like I said, we had pot belly stove. You had to bring in coal, take out the ashes. And I was responsible for keeping grass cut. Run the brown dirt, I had to run the cans out, keep the yard cleaned up. I mean, I was just a young guy, real young fellow. But, there was a lot of things I was responsible to do. At that time, I didn't like it. I didn't like it when I had to do it. But

then after I got grown and started working, I don't dread anything. If there is something to do, I just dive right in there and start doing it. But, I got there from my step grandfather. At that time I didn't like it, but I sure appreciate how he raised me. I had responsibilities and whatever. He made sure I did them. Like I said, I didn't like it, but I sure appreciate it.

1:13:34 RC: You know, our house on Liberty Street, we lived in that gray house. I think, I didn't know you then, but do you remember when we lived - ?

1:13:43 MC: Yeah, that two story gray house where I beat your brother up that first time. First time I ever met him. I didn't know her.

1:13:50 RC: If we knew you'd beat up my brother, I wouldn't have married you. I would not have married you.

1:13:54 MC: Me and your brother got into it.

1:13:56 RC: I wouldn't have married you if I'd known. My brother knew him before I did. I didn't know he had beat up my brother. But we lived in this gray house. And every bedroom had a fireplace. That was our only form of heat, except in the kitchen, had that one pot belly stove. But, the fireplace and the aluminum, linoleum - linoleum, not aluminum floors. Linoleum. My mother would shine, when that, she kept a fire. My brother's responsibility. We lived on a hill and my brother's responsibility, the coal, they would buy a ton of coal. And back then, the coal truck, I don't know. Some guy would haul coal, you had to buy your coal. They would just come and dump it.

1:14:46 MC: Dump it and then you had to take a bucket and pack it up to your house.

1:14:49 RC: My brothers was responsible for packing the coal up the hill. I don't care how cold it was, how late it was, I don't care what time, anything. If my brothers had forgotten to bring that coal up the hill, Lily May go and snatch that cover up, "Get up. Go, you didn't get that coal up that hill." If I didn't do those dishes or do something or mop the floor or something before I went to bed and I was supposed to, that cover, "Get up, get in there and get them dishes done." We had no choices, they didn't say wait until in the morning. Or, "That's ok, I'll do it." There was no, when you had a responsibility to do something, they held you accountable at ten years old. Ten years old. You were held accountable for me to get my baby sister or my baby brother up and make sure he got ready for school. Make sure my other sister's hair was combed. Make sure my other sister was sitting there eating. You're ten and eleven years old yourself.

1:15:59 MC: I know you remember the story Pam used to talk about when we was up there. That was before I even come to Kentucky. But, my stepfather George. Pam and I wasn't eight, ten years old. But as far as washing dishes, he had to put a crate or something up to the sink high enough where we could reach in there and wash dishes. That's what we had to do. He made us wash dishes. And plus, sometimes he would write up old bull jive excuse to keep us from going to school in order to stay home to babysit my two younger sisters. That's the way me and Pam had to come up. But there, whenever those dishes, he got a crate and whatever we had to get up there, reach high enough to where you would be able to wash dishes.

1:16:43 RC: We had to, Quett and I had to -

1:16:46 MC: And if he come in there and they are not done or whatever, what did he do? Get an extension cord. He used to whip us with an extension cord. And he whipped us, whatever chores not done.

1:16:54 RC: See, I would have called that abuse.

1:16:56 MC: Yeah, it was abuse. That's the reason I left. That's the reason I left and come to Kentucky. I know we was getting abused.

1:17:00 RC: Well when I was telling my mother that she abused us, I was talking about her not playing.

1:17:07 MC: That's the reason I left Indianapolis.

1:17:07 RC: We'd have welts on our legs. We'd have, you sit there and dance, well I would. My others would run and she'd just keep whooping them. Them little sting things. That's the reason I said, this day and time, you can't send your children to school with welts. You better not. But honey, everybody, I went to school with they had welts on their legs. Because they got whippings. It didn't hurt them. There is difference in being abused. I was trying to explain to my mother but she wasn't listening. She wouldn't turn around. She didn't listen to me. My thing was, the way you whip children then, you can't whip children now. "Oh yes, I can. Oh yes I can. Yes I will." And she got my kids the same way she got me. She would just do her grandchildren the same way. But we just didn't, we just knew, you was talking about the standing up on crates. See, I don't remember standing up on anything doing the dishes. I don't know, I think we were old enough. I don't think that we were that young. That we had to do dishes and cook and stuff like that. I don't think at that age that you and Pam. We were more or less older to do it. Been able to stand up to do things. But I don't know about you but we, what do you call the water that was in the house and it was just the water pipe that was in our house.

1:18:53 MC: What? Just the water spigot?

1:18:54 RC: It was the water spigot in our house. In that gray house. We just went over there to the water spigot and turned it on and caught our water and put it on the stove to heat up for baths and put it on the stove to heat up for, because there wasn't no hot water, there wasn't any hot water. And we had an outhouse.

1:19:17 MC: Yeah I remember us getting back to Lothair, you know those coal miners and whatever. Myself, I've taken a bath in them many times. Called the number two tub, a wash tub. Oh I bathed in them several times.

1:19:28 RC: That's the only thing we had.

1:19:29 MC: Well that's what we had up there at Lothair.

1:19:30 RC: That's what we had.

1:19:33 MC: You know Mother Carrie that house, like I said, we would go up to the church. Didn't have a bathroom, didn't have indoor. See years ago, which you're probably not old enough to remember those kind of days.

1:19:44 RC: She don't.

1:19:44 MC: Yeah, I figure she don't. But the way they look -

1:19:47 RC: I do.

1:19:45 MC: When they had all those outhouses whatever, the way the old people used to think is you don't eat and poop in the same dwelling. That's the reason they had the outhouse.

1:19:57 RC: Right, they didn't want that scent. They didn't want that scent.

1:20:03 MC: In order to bathe, they had these round washtubs. And I bathed in them many a time when I was a kid.

1:20:07 RC: And when mother would wash, that wringer type washer, our responsibility was - because she wouldn't wash her clothes in the same water. She wouldn't wash. And Quett and I said, why don't she use the same water? She would not. If she washed, because back then, our brothers work them old Levi jeans, blue jeans, that she would wash them and the water would turn all blue. We'd have to empty that out and then you'd have to go out and hang them up on the line. Then she'd have to heat the water up for the white clothes. She'd wash, wash, then have to wring them through the wringer. Then you'd have to go out there and hang them. Washing day was all day long [clock chiming]. It started very early in the morning and you did not get finished until late that evening.

1:20:57 MC: Hanging clothes on them lines.

1:20:58 RC: Because you had to wash, hang up clothes, empty water, wash, hang up clothes, empty water. And she's doing all the washing and stuff, but see you had to get and make sure. So, we all played a part in doing everything. Kids now a days don't. They won't even go in there, they won't even go in there and put a load of clothes in. I mean, you know, we just, I don't know what's happened.

1:21:23 MC: Kids they don't do nothing like that now.

1:21:24 RC: But I, oh, I thank God for the way I was raised. I do. I thank God. The bad times, the good times. But I honestly I can tell you the good outweighs the bad.

1:21:35 MC: Oh yeah.

1:21:36 RC: The fun and everything that we had outweighs the bad. I always tell my girls, you can always find bad in anything. I mean, you can pick and find that. Find you something positive to dwell on. I don't care what you - just give me something. Just like when I was told I had cancer. He said, "I got good news and bad news." I said, you tell me the good news, I know the bad news." You give me one good thing to think about, dwell on, and that's my positive and that's what I'll

think about. Because, I don't care what you go through in life, or what you do, there is good and bad. You already know the bad. Don't nobody have to sit there and tell you. Nobody has to tell you. Just like when my kids and my nephews are doing, I'm not going to sit there and say, "You did this, this, this, this, you know better, you shouldn't have done that." You already know. You know the bad. You just chose to do it. Now you don't need me to tell you the bad. Like I never did want to hear the bad. Of course, I'm the biggest chicken in the world. I just don't want to hear anything bad. But don't think I'm that naive that I don't know. That's what I tell my sister. Don't take my goodness for my weakness. I know. I just choose not to say or do because you already know. You know when you've been mean, you know within yourself when you're doing something you ain't got no business doing. I knew, did it stop me? No. It doesn't. It doesn't stop us. So, I don't need for you to come and tell you what I did. Because I could actually tell you what I did. All we need for people to do is just own up to what you did. Just own up to it. That's the hardest thing in the world to do. Like I said, I could go on and on and skipping. Because when you start talking about one thing, it makes you reminisce on something else. So it just makes you go, "Oh yeah, that's a good one." So, I don't mean to be all over the place. But, it just gets your mind thinking. And first, it gets me thinking about, gosh, where I came from. Realizing that I'm not there yet. I'm not there yet. I'm retired and happy, thank you Lord. I'm in a house that we built. We lived in old home that his grandmother had given us that we remodeled and raised our children in, small. And everyone that came in from town, my family, they were right there in my house.

1:24:32 MC: Actually we started out downstairs of it.

1:24:34 RC: Yes, with two rooms.

1:24:33 MC: Then these people finally moved out then I went up and redid it and whatever.

1:24:37 RC: Two rooms, two rooms.

1:24:38 MC: Yeah, we only had two rooms and a bathroom. That's all we had. That's how we started out.

1:24:43 RC: And everybody would come. I'm saying what makes a home. It doesn't matter the space you're in. Everybody would come home. I would be in that kitchen cooking. You couldn't get in my front door because people would be in the front, in the back, all over because it was a small house.

1:25:01 MC: We had a bedroom.

1:25:04 RC: It was just all right here together. Everybody was just right here. And when they came in town, didn't nobody stay in no hotel, they stayed right there. God blessed us and I thank God every day, when it was raining, snowing. I said, God thank you for the roof over my head. He blessed us with this home. Now my people come in and they want to stay in a hotel because we don't have room. Tell me how can you stay, now this is what I'm opposed to some of them. When we lived on Jordan Street, nobody didn't care how they slept as long as they slept. Because I say, I can do anything for a weekend. It wasn't like they were there a long - it was a weekend. You find you a corner somewhere. Get you a pillow or a blanket. We used to make pallets on the floor all the time and just sleep, sleep. But all of a sudden when you come in now and if my girls are home and my grandchildren. "Oh, you don't have enough room." Ok. You know what I say now? Ok. I

had one bathroom, I have three now. But I don't have enough room. You know, the Word says be thankful over a few things and many will be added. So I was thankful over that little house, that one bathroom that everybody just had to take turns, washing. The hot water would run out. If you didn't get in there first, you didn't have no hot water because of who was in there first. And regardless of what, and how do you tell people, "Now don't go in there and run up all the hot water, save some." Some will go in there and take a bath and out. Take a shower, out. Take a shower. Then you have those that will go on and on and on and on and on and on and on. But nobody complains. Everybody is laughing. One ironing board. And back in the day, you had to iron everything. So you had to wait until one got finished to iron their clothes. Nobody never said anything. Now you can take the ironing board any place you want. Up in the loft, anywhere you want to iron. But nobody has. The difference, I don't know of kids, they're just raised different. We were raised different than our mother. Our kids are raised different from their kids. And everybody is just raised differently. Generations are just different. And if we live long enough, our great grandkids generation is going to be different. So that's just the times, the changes.

1:27:44 MC: Well, people spoil their kids now a days too.

1:27:46 RC: Wanted them to have what they don't have.

1:27:49 MC: Well they whine a little bit and they go run out and buy them anything they want. Because I remember coming up, while I was playing basketball for the elementary school or whatever. And, the shoes, the tennis shoes I'd have to wear because my grandparents bought them for me. Like I said, they were used to coming, well, they came up during the Depression years, they didn't spend a lot of money. And, but anyway, on the gymnasium, the shoes I was wearing, you couldn't hardly stand up. A little dust on them, you slide all over the place. And, the, well the, like I said, I was up there with a lot of the white guys. They had, the parents had a better job where they're wearing Converse. That's my favorite tennis shoe. Well, you know, myself, my grandparents buy my tennis shoes or whatever. US Keds or something maybe \$1.99 or something a pair. But anyway, I'd go up there, be practicing ball with the team. And it got to where I could hardly stand up because of those tennis shoes. And I come back and complain to my grandmother. I couldn't talk to my grandfather. I know he wouldn't spend it. But anyway, I said, "Mother, I need me some Converse tennis shoes. I can't even stand up on these things." And she said, "Well, how much do those Converse?" I said, at that time, "They're about \$7.99 a pair." "Boy, I ain't spending that much money on no tennis shoes."

1:29:07 RC: That was a lot of money.

1:29:07 MC: That was a lot of money back then. \$1.99 or \$2.99 Keds or something or other she'd get me, I couldn't stand up in them things. And, so I never did own a pair of Converse until I get out and earn me some money and bought my own, you know. But, that's where I said, my grandfather, he told me about different things. He said, "Boy if you want you some money," he went and bought a lawn mower, you know. Lawn mower and he had rake and shovel, he said, "You want you some money, buddy you get out here and earn you some money." And from that point on, I picked me up a few people in the neighborhood to cut their grass, rake leaves and whatever. Shucks, I kept me some money in my pocket. And a lot of times, me and Becky, we was dating, I get to town, I pick her up, we go to movie show or whatever. And I'd leave with fifteen, twenty dollars in my pocket.

1:29:53 RC: I would work at Watson's.

1:29:57 MC: Yeah, she worked at Watson's.

1:29:57 RC: I'd get out of high school and Mr. Hatfield was the manager at Watson's Department Store. And, they always told me how mean he was. He always had a frown on his face.

1:30:14 MC: He always had a real frown. Mean looking man.

1:30:15 RC: He would let me clock in, I would get out of my last class and run down that hill. All the way in town to the department store. Department stores would stay open until about 5:00. I would try to get at least an hour in. Whatever time that I went in to try to work, he would let me clock in at that time and work until 5:00. And on the weekends, he would stay open to 9. On Fridays, he let me work 5 to 9 on Fridays. And let me work on Saturday. Seeing all that, I missed out on a lot of activities. See these kids won't miss out on anything. I missed out on ball games. I missed out on Homecoming. I missed out on a lot of parties because I chose, and because mom didn't have money to give me the way I would like to dress, what shoes I wanted to wear. And I bought clothes for my brothers and sisters. I worked at a department store and back then, you could put stuff in layaway. I had more layaways than anybody down there because I had all them baby brothers and sisters. And I'd say, "Oh so and so would like this." And I'd put it in layaway. So, one time, they got paid, it was Saturday. I wanted to get my payday. And the young girl that was in there, oh, she started laughing. She said, "Well, one thing about it, he ought to be able to make you work next week. I said "Why?" She said, "Because you owe." I had bought so much for my brothers and sisters that I didn't get a pay day that I owed. So I had to work. So that meant I wouldn't hardly get any money the next week because you got paid every week. And, that I had to work. But that didn't bother me at all. As long as I took something new home to my mom and my brothers and sisters. My oldest sister was the same way. She started buying food. My mother didn't no longer have to worry about food. My mother no longer had to worry about. He knew, he knew how I was. When he started dating me, he seen how I was with my family. If he couldn't have handled that, he couldn't have stayed with me. Because I was going to buy for my brothers and sisters and my mom. My oldest sister would make sure that our rent was paid and our light bill was paid. And I'd make sure that my brothers and sisters had clothes when they went to school. So, they went to school looking good. They didn't realize how hard it was for them to look good. So, they didn't realize either that they didn't have money. They lived in the projects, but they didn't realize they didn't have any money. Because we provided, my mother had a sister that didn't have any children and she helped my mom. So, we were blessed, that's the reason I said, when we didn't have it rough as some people, we were poor and didn't know it. Because we were blessed to have people in our lives to give and to take care of us. To help my mother. When we got older, we started helping my mother. So, my family, my brothers and sisters can't tell you about a time they didn't have food. Or the time they didn't have toys. Because our house looked like Christmas. Oh my goodness, my mother could decorate. She had one of the, oh during the Christmas time. I just want to - her house, Michael, you've been at my mom's house on Christmas. Her tree and the presents would be all over because that's just the way she was and my oldest sister and I made sure that my younger sisters and brothers had stuff under the tree. I mean, even when we were coming up, you know what our gifts were? They give you a bag of fruit with nuts, a pair of panties, socks, and a doll. That was the best Christmas ever. You would have thought, and we all had our own little bags. You always had to get your panties and socks. My mother believed in clean panties and socks. And them little white t-shirts. You remember those white t-shirts you

had to wear under your clothes? We all had to get a pack of that and then you would have a toy of your choice which would be doll, dishes, cap guns for my brothers. So, yes, we were rich. Rich in more ways than one. Didn't have much, but we were rich. In every way that counts. You got me thinking, you got me going all the way back and oh my goodness, it was wonderful. Wonderful. Yes. Not that I would want to go back. No, I don't think anybody should say, "I wish it was like it was back." No, it's always better. People might not think. "It was better back then than it is now." No it wasn't. If you actually think about it. It wasn't. And, each day you get to live is a better day, is a better moment, a better day. I guarantee you can look back on today and it was better than what it was yesterday. Because you're going to find something that was better today than it was yesterday. And each day, I think that's the way we were meant to be, that God created us to take this moment right now, right now. And then, as this moment passes, you take the next moment, right then. But don't look back and say, "Oh man I wish I could - " Because you can't go back. Enjoy what you're doing right now. Make now what was then. So, I try to tell, I try to tell my kids that, and my grandkids that doesn't work. But that's ok. That's ok. It works sometimes. We're blessed to have three daughters. My mother said, "My prayer is," both of my brothers went to the service, two brothers to go the service. And she said, "My prayer is that I live, that all my children can take care of themselves." She lived to see every one of her children take care of themselves. Now, mind you, my baby sister and brother was still in their twenties. They had rough times. But, they were old enough to know that they had to work. That to take care of yourself. That's what I tell my girls. I said, "I don't have sons, I have daughters. Even if you marry, make sure you can take care of yourself." Because it's, I had to tell him, I was not raised with a man in my family. So all the girls were dominant.

1:37:13 MC: Well I knew that anyway. I'd been with you so long. See, we'd been together since about the eighth grade.

1:37:21 RC: I didn't hear my mother says, "You wait until your daddy come home. I'm going to tell your dad." Now that's what I heard my friends say. I heard my friends' mom say. "When your dad comes home, I'm going to tell your father on you." We didn't have that. It was Lily May. And everybody in the holler knew Lily May. Because when she started walking up the holler, they'd say, "Miss Lily May's coming. Miss Lily May's coming. Miss Lily May's coming." That meant for us to get in the house and to see if we had the dishes done or the floor was swept or the kids setting in the house. We had to make sure everything was right because Miss Lily May was coming. Everybody knew how Miss Lily May ran her house. Because, guess what? In the end that night, Mama was going to have games and popcorn and everyone in the neighborhood was going to come watch our little black and white TV, whatever was on. Everybody was going to be up in our living room, watching TV. And Miss Lily May was going to be in there making candy and popcorn and that's just the way she was.

1:38:30 MC: Yeah, she was a dandy mother in law. I don't care what I did, regardless of what I did, she was always on my side. I know when I was somewhere messed up, Becky come jumping on me, whatever, she'd get Becky off of me.

1:38:43 RC: She loved Michael.

1:38:44 MC: I don't care what I did, she was always on my side.

1:38:46 RC: But you were good to her too. You seen, you were good to our family. That's the reason my brothers and sisters, I got a sister right now call him Bub. Because that's her brother, you know. And sometimes, we have to be careful. And she'll say, that's my brother and that's my sister. I said, you've got to tell them that's your brother in law. Because you know people already think. Don't say that's my sister and that's my brother. But you know, like I said, there is good in the bad and I choose to talk only about the good because the bad, when it's ugly, it's ugly. And things, some bad that some kids don't need - my sisters and brothers don't know any of it. But my older sister and I know a lot of it. And sometimes, it's just best not to even talk about it. You know, we talk. But it's not, it's all over, it's done, over with. Not, like I said, we were never used nor abused. I can honestly say no guy, no man ever used us or abused us. No, no. But children had to get here someway. Children had to be here, and I had eight more sisters and brothers, siblings. But I never, like I said, I never heard my mother curse, smoke, nor drink. She took care of her family who she fell in love with is who she fell in love with. That's one thing, stay out of grown folks' business. You could not even comment. You couldn't - they used to love to play Big Whiz. If we were coming in the house and they were playing, you had to leave back out. You could not be in the house when the music was going on and all the partying. They would just be playing cards and the music and laughter and talking. You could not be in the house, you had to be outside playing. Now, when it's time for us to come in, they cut it off. It was just so weird. It wasn't like, it just stopped. It's just so weird. When Annie and Uncle Ed, they used to drink beer all the time, just beer, that's all I seen sitting around was beer. And we just stopped seeing it, we just stopped. They said when we got old enough to start recognizing, they didn't realize we recognized it anyway. They just stopped. All they did was go to work and come home and we didn't see. We still seen the card playing, we still seen the music going, but nothing else. You didn't see nothing else, it stopped. I'm not staying they stopped. I said that we stopped seeing it. That's just the way it was. That's just the way it was. Kids stayed in, you stay in a child's place, that's what they tell you. They wouldn't hesitate to tell you that. If you question something, you stay in a child's place. Mothers now say you can't say, "Just because I told you so." We heard that all the time. You better not come over there and say why. You couldn't ask them why. When I tell you to do something, I mean, I'm telling you one time. I mean for you to do it. I'm not telling you a second time. They meant it after that second time, you're getting a whipping. They didn't tell you no one, two, three, four, five times. They told you one time. If they told you to do it, you had to do it. If you did not do it, they didn't tell you to do it again. They just whipped you. Because you didn't do it the first time. My mother whipped us and said I'm going to whip all of you. And I know it because we wouldn't tell on each other. I knew that my brother Eric would have done it. I'd say, "Please Eric." I'd be crying, I'd say, "Just tell Mama you did it. I know you ate it or you did something. You broke that or you did this." He wouldn't. Mom said, "Now somebody got in that refrigerator and did so and so. And I asked who did it. But nobody's telling me. So I'm going to whip every one of you. Then I know I got the right one." So, me, I'm the biggest chicken of all of them. I'm asking everybody, "If you did it just own up." Nobody would tell. Nobody would tell. She said, "I'm going to whip all of you until you get -" How many whippings did you get? Because of somebody else.

1:43:20 MC: I didn't get any.

1:43:22 RC: We got whippings because nobody.

1:43:27 MC: That was just me and my sister.

1:43:27 RC: We got whippings because nobody would own up. And we, now that's one thing we wouldn't do. We wouldn't tell on each other. Me knowing Eric's the one did it. But I wouldn't tell on him. But he wouldn't own up to it either. So we'd all get a whipping.

1:43:43 MC: When I was the guilty party, they knowed it was me.

1:43:45 RC: Another thing, if they tell you, if she told you you were going to get a whipping and they was doing something and maybe she got cooking or maybe doing something, one of the baby kids. Because she always bathed us, we had to take a bath before you go to bed. She would wash and her, back then you just had white sheets. And back in the day, they call them bedbugs now, but they was chinchies.

1:44:11 MC: Yeah, that's what it is, chinchies, bedbugs.

1:44:11 RC: She would strip her beds and go over down the crease of them with Clorox. Clorox. That's the way she did. Every one of her beds. There was no fitted sheets, they were all flat sheets. But they would be white, there was no color sheets. Her white sheets would be as white as snow. She would make sure we would have to take a bath every night before we could get in to those white sheets. Now, I'm telling you, a mother with ten children, what she would do. But, that's the way she was raised. That's the way she raised us. And when she worked, that's the way she did the people she worked for. So she brought it home. And that's what we did. Like I said, perfect, no. Don't sit up here. No the family was not perfect. Functional, yes. In a good way. In a good way. We just had, that's just the, you know, it's just the truth. Like I tell my kids, you tell the truth, that's as far as it goes. It don't meant they're not going to get into trouble, consequences is behind what you do. But the truth, you can't go no further than that. May hurt, but the truth is truth. You can't add to, you can't take away, that's the truth. Leave it.

1:45:53 MC: When you lie, you've got to prop it up with another one. You got to prop it up with another one. You start lying, you've got to keep lying.

1:45:58 RC: I got in big trouble over that. I didn't think that lying and not thinking, and that's another thing she would do. How did she have the sense to know that you were lying? Because she would just, she would just trace it down. Well, Rebecca Lynn, I knew you were lying because you said so and so and so and so. "Now I went and seen so and so and they told me you didn't - " And I thought, she did all that to find out I was lying? She don't do that with me, she did that with all her kids. Now, how did you know to go? Like she had radars. And not that she did, but it's just knowing your children too. It's knowing. I remember her telling, "Eric Ray, I knew you lied. First of all, I looked at so and so and look - " She just, common sense. And then she would tell me, "Rebecca Lynn, common sense will take you a long way." Because sometimes she said we act like we didn't have common sense. Back in the day, they just thought you should use good old common sense to know better. If you had X, Y and Z and wanted to do something, you should have known better not to use X, Y, and Z sitting up there looking better. So, they just thought that she would tell me, "Rebecca Lynn," because I would do something stupid, whatever. She would say, "Common sense will take you a long way. Everything is not drawn out for you. You can't read the direction. Everything don't have a direction. You have to have common sense." So, I tell mine that, don't I? Say common sense will take you a long way. It will. So honey, I can go on and on. I go on and on.

1:47:58 AH: That's ok. Anything else you want to say?

1:48:00 RC: No, I could just go on.

1:48:02 AH: Well thank you, it's been fun listening to your stories.

1:48:04 RC: I said, Lord, we just went on, just bounce back and forth like a basketball.

1:48:09 AH: That's ok.

1:48:09 MC: Yeah, the more you talk about your past -

1:48:12 RC: Gets you to start reminiscing. And I thought, Oh God, I remember that. And it brings back the bad times too.

1:48:20 MC: Yeah.

1:48:21 RC: But the good out - I don't know about you, I know you had a rough childhood because you was, you were really. What's so surprising, as long as I was with you and knew your mom and dad, beautiful mother and handsome step, they didn't look like parents, that's how good looking that couple was. And you know I'm not lying. Your mother was absolutely beautiful and he was a fine looking, your step dad. They even looked like, they were in Indianapolis. But they didn't even look like - but as much as I was dating you and then you went to Indianapolis and we had Coco. I didn't even have an inkling that you went through what you went through as a child. Now I was with him all them years. And we he started coming out and telling me, Michael was abused. And that's when I told you, that's when I knew how blessed that we were. Even with a single parent. And back then, it was bad, you know it was bad for a woman to have all those kids. It was labeled, labeled. That's just the way it was. And I told you I was the only one with a single parent in all of my - wasn't no divorce because them men got out and worked and took care of their family. But we were labeled, my mom was labeled. And although she had married my father, but my father was deceased. So, even with all that, as a child, growing up with, we still, I guess people just looked for us just to be, I don't know, and we wasn't. Seemed like we got elevated. When I say, not above everybody, but everybody that had a house, mom and dad in the household, our household was the best. When I say that, not meaning we were better than anybody else, we lived good. And all those kids come to us, come to Miss Lily May's house. And, I thought, when I met him, that, you know, I said, look, they got their own business, his grandparents. I just thought he was a little bit, you know, I thought, well, I knew he wasn't better than me, but I thought, because Mama said, "Rebecca Lynn, ain't nobody better than you, but you ain't better than anybody else." Things that she taught us, she just taught her kids that and she had to do that. She's a single parent. She was a mother in that age, time, raising kids by herself that didn't have a man, a stable man being around. One in and out. She was in and out. He's a rolling stone. But, you know, like I said, he was good to me and Quett, but he just wasn't good to my mom. So be it. But I thought, and because we wasn't abused. One thing about Sheep, he wasn't good to my mother, but he was good to me and Quett. We was the only two that wasn't his. And he was good to me and Quett. So, you know, I didn't look at him. Well, I knew he wasn't my father because I went to my Big Mama's house over here. So, I knew that. Because you know, I didn't know my father, my father got killed in the Korean War, so I didn't know him. But, I had no idea. I thought he had the perfect family. I thought he had the perfect. When I say perfect family, he was with mom and dad and they,

George just was so good to him, I had no idea, he called George dad. I did know George wasn't his father, I knew it was his stepfather, but I said, what a relationship that you have a father, you had two fathers. Because David loved you.

1:52:25 MC: My dad, yeah, my real dad.

1:52:26 RC: I knew that David loved you. But we don't know what goes on in people's houses.

1:52:29 MC: Speaking of my step-father, like she had brought it up there. I knew that me and my sister was being abused whenever I left. But then after I got grown -

1:52:40 RC: Oh my God, I didn't know we kept this child here this long. I'm sorry.

1:52:46 AH: Go ahead and finish and then we can wrap up.

1:52:47 MC: After I got grown, you know I got me a job and I had my own family and working every day and whatever. But, mom and my step father, they come down and visit us, you know sometime during the summer. But anyway, he come down this period of time, and I think we went downtown. You remember we all went downtown. Him and some of the others. But anyway, the way I took it, like he was picking my brain. Back when I was childhood, whatever, he was picking my brain. The more he talked about it, the madder I got. So anyway, he picked my brain then I blowed up on him down there in town. I said I whole lot of harsh words I'm not going to repeat all that. But, anyway, he was wanting, "Just take me home." I said, "I ain't taking you nowhere, catch you a cab." And, so we went up to my grandmother's. Mom was already at my grandmothers. So I went on up there, he got up there, somebody brought him there, a cab or something. But anyway, I got up there and brought it up again. And, I blowed up on him. And, said a few tough things to him. And I said, "I remember when you used to beat my mother." Because you see he told me, I was just a child. He was beating on mom one time, I had a big truck with a cannon on it. I took that thing and slung it real hard and it him in the shin with it. I know it hurt. And he talked me, tried to run me down, "I'll slap your G-D head off." Or something like that. I said I remember, I quoted every word he said. He couldn't believe I remembered. But see, he picked my brain, brought it all back to me. I quoted every word he said. I said, "I'm a grown man now, you come and slap this head now." And, he'd start crying a little bit. But anyway, I was mad enough, I knocked a hole in my grandmother's wall. I hit that wall so hard, I knocked a hole in the wall. But, that's how mistreatment goes. Whenever you're younger. Kids get mistreated. You might think they forget, but they don't forget. I know that from experience. A child will forget a lot of the good times, but he won't forget the bad times, because I know that from my own experience.

1:54:54 RC: See, I guess I can relate more to the good times because there was no mistreatment. You heard me say that there was no mistreatment. And that's the reason I can, although there was bad times, there was no mistreatment on the kids part. On my mother's part, yes. He threw the turkey in the creek. They started calling my mother Turkey in the Creek.

1:55:21 MC: And I'll mention another mistreatment thing. It's not from my stepfather, which there's others. But, this was from Abel, my grandfather. I told you about that one too. He's my step grandfather. And, you know, back when I was small, he was lovey-dovey over me and Pam all the time, but you know, Pam went back to Indianapolis after she graduated from high school and

I stayed there. But anyway, when I was a child, I was still old enough to pull trucks around in the dirt with a string. Wasn't old enough to drive or anything. I guess I might have been thirteen, maybe. And, me and Ronny Blair, playing out there in the dirt. Like I said, I always had to keep my chores up. But anyway, my step father, I mean my step grandfather. He decided he wanted to wash his car. So he hollered and me and took me away from me out there playing to help him wash his car. And me a young fellow, I said, I didn't get it dirty. That's just what I was thinking. But anyway, I was wanting to play with my friends and you know how a child is, not wanting to do something, real slow. Because I don't want to do it anyway. All of a sudden, bam. Buddy he hit me upside of my head. He knocked me into last week or something. I was just a little fellow. Because I wasn't washing his car fast enough. Like I was really wanting to do it or something. That's when Abel mistreated me too a few times. And then, come to think about it, after I got old enough to work, I think I was working, well, I started working with Sears, a little bit, maybe the time I was going to high school.

1:56:46 RC: I didn't know that.

1:56:48 MC: Or a little bit after I got out of high school. And, I still do my chores around the Derby. Stock boxes, take the coal in, ashes out. Mop and sweep the floors and all these other things. And then I got my job at Sears while I was going to school. And whatever paycheck. Whatever check I would draw, he would take half of it for room and board. To stay in his trailer. And all the time I was there, he never did let me make a key. Whenever I come from visiting Becky, spend the evening with Becky and whatever time of night, he wouldn't give me a key where I could open up, and not, to keep from disturbing them. The reason he did that was because he didn't know what time I was coming in. But anyway, we fell out about that too. We fell out about that. But I was getting to something else, and all of a sudden I went blank, braindead. I went braindead on what I was going to bring up. Where'd I get to?

1:57:49 RC: Well, maybe you don't need to because I didn't know all that.

1:57:52 MC: Oh yeah, I was old enough, I'd be paying room and board to stay there in this place, I stayed in the place with him. And something happened that he didn't like what I done. I think at that time I was about twenty-two, twenty-three years old. I might have been twenty-two, twenty-three. But anyway, he come, went back there in the back, come out with a great big thick, mining belt. Me twenty-two year old, doing all these chores and he's going to whoop me. I mean, he was a big man. I looked him right in his eyes, I said, "Buddy, you ain't whooping me no more." I said, "Taking half my check to stay here and I'm doing all of these chores and whatever and your'e going to whoop me?" I said, "No. You don't whoop me no more."

1:58:32 RC: What's he going to whoop a twenty-two year old man for?

1:58:33 MC: Because something I did, he didn't like what I didn't do, or something. I don't know what it was. But anyway, made me pay room and board and take half my check to stay there.

1:58:42 RC: Used to be back in the day.

1:58:45 MC: Abel give us some mistreatment too. But I said, "Buddy, I'm not taking no more butt whippings."

1:58:50 RC: No, I got to honestly say, I have stories to tell, but there was whippings that we deserved and discipline. But it was no mistreatment. I'm even, even in the neighborhood where there was a lot of kids and a lot of people on Liberty Street. Because it was all dirt and all you did was you had parents fighting because kids is fighting. You have parents fighting each other because the kids are running around and saying something. But I never heard of child abuse. I never heard that. I never heard of abuse. Have you heard of any? Well, I didn't know that.

1:59:38 MC: I went through some.

1:59:39 RC: Well, I didn't know that. But I'm talking about, but you weren't raised on Liberty Street, maybe that's where you should have been.

1:59:46 MC: No, I wasn't raised on Liberty Street.

1:59:46 RC: Everybody fought, but it wasn't no abuse.

1:59:49 MC: Now, my real father, which dad was an alcoholic, but, dad never even whipped him.

1:59:55 RC: There was a lot of fighting, but there wasn't no abuse.

1:59:58 MC: Yeah, dad never did whip me or Pam either one, which, we didn't spend a lot of our life around him.

2:00:05 RC: It was a fight on Liberty Street every day. It was a fight because you'd think, how many kids would you say, it was over two hundred kids on Liberty Street. That's how, I mean, it was so - and that was just, now this is the black population on Liberty Street.

2:00:20 MC: Plus there was a gun fight on Liberty Street too. You ever walk over [inaudible]. There was a big gun.

2:00:28 RC: He's talking about my uncle, they was drunk.

2:00:29 MC: Yeah, there was gun fighting on Liberty Street.

2:00:31 RC: They was drunk.

2:00:33 MC: Yeah, it used to be some good old times up through there, years ago.

2:00:37 RC: Like I said, it was the place, now that, just think about it, we didn't know all the people that lived on Memorial Drive, all those blacks. All the blacks out in Backwoods area. The black population was, I mean, it was a lot of just - and a lot of black businesses. And all that just faded because after people lost their jobs in the mines. Well the railroad, they left the railroad and went to the mines. And then after the mines shut down, everybody migrated out of here. And you know, most of them went to the auto industry.

2:01:13 MC: They went north to the auto industry.

2:01:14 RC: They started hiring at that Ford Motor Company.

2:01:18 MC: Ford and General Motors.

2:01:18 RC: General Motors. And a lot of people, they was used to making good money in the coal mines, so they all took their families and moved out in Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Milwaukee. They all moved and still to make big money. Now this is two parent households. And the black population just started leaving. And then after one family would leave, the next family. Like I said, I would have gotten out of here, but he wasn't going to leave his grandmother. I didn't have no clue that he went through. We were married forty, going on forty-seven years. But abuse is abuse. So, abuse is abuse. I'm so sorry, we didn't know. You shouldn't have got us talking. You should not of got us talking.

2:02:09 AH: No no no no no. It's good. It's good. It's good. Thank you.

2:02:11 RC: I hope you can use some of it. I hope you can use some.

2:02:12 AH: I appreciate you being open to sharing. So thank you.

2:02:17 RC: You get us to- would you like some more cookies? Get you some more cookies.

2:02:21 AH: Ok, I'll stop this.

2:02:22 [End of Recording]