

Interviewee: Marie Southern**Interview: June 23, 2010**

**University of Houston
Oral History of Houston Project**

Interviewee: Marie Southern

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Interviewer: Natalie Garza

Transcriber: Carol Valdés

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Abstract:

Marie Southern begins by discussing her education at the various schools she attended, growing up in Corpus Christi, and then coming to Houston, where she attended St. Nicholas School. Moving to Houston, Southern tells about the change she experienced from leaving her boarding school at St. Peter and coming to St. Nicholas. Southern recalls her experience as a widow at age 22, after her first husband passed and reaching out to her mother, who helped raise her children. Southern tell about her children and various grandchildren and her experience joining the Altar Roses Society and the St. Nicholas Choir and getting her voice back after she began singing. Southern then describes her enchantment with the parish and the bonds she made there. Southern tells about various members of her family, including her grandparents, and the struggles they dealt with speaking Creole, how her education was financed, and her job at Bama Pie Company. After discussing how she met her second husband, Southern tells about her children and the activities in which they were involved and their marriages. Ms. Southern concludes by discussing black priests and her upbringing in the church.

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NG: This is Natalie Garza and I am interviewing Marie Southern on June 23, 2010 at her home on Rosalie Street. Okay, can you begin by telling me your full name?

MS: Marie Teresa Gooding Southern. Teresa is my confirmation name. Okay and then I can say I was married at St. Nicholas, and I finished school at St. Nicholas. I went to there to the 10th, 11th, and 12th. I got caught in that 12th year, but it was supposed to have been the 11th, at that time should have been the senior year, but when I got over there they added the 12th grade, so therefore we got, my group got caught in that, you know, but anyhow I enjoyed St. Nicholas very very much and my parents got married there. Joseph Gooding and Lydia St. June, that was her maiden name. And uh they uh, you know, their life when we were young, I wasn't with them because of dysfunction or something in the family, but anyway my father reared us, my sister, brother, and my sister name is Edna Watson and my brother's name was Joseph Gooding. [] And uh, we were reared in Corpus Christi. My parents married here and I was christened here, but we were reared in Corpus Christi, Texas with my father like I was telling you the other time. But, anyhow we lived in Corpus Christi until my freshman year and then I told you I went to St. Peter, San Antonio at St. Peter [] boarding school- went there one year. I would have loved to remain there, but my father's job played out and he couldn't keep us there and the priest and nun in Corpus Christi were very wonderful to us and they wanted us to attend, to continue in the Catholic School because Holy Cross School at that time was just going to [] seventh grade and I, uh, when I left Solomon Holy Cross I had to go to Solomon in public school and I didn't like it, for the eighth grade. I didn't like it because I wasn't familiar with that environment over there like the Catholic environment, and so when I went to boarding school, the nuns and the priest wanted us there was two, three sets of sisters, the Morales, the Petree, and the Gooding girls. We

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were the Gooding girls my sister and I, and we attended the boarding school. One year that I went and I loved it I would have loved to finish there, but as I said, my father job played out and he couldn't keep up the, you know, payment. So what we did when my uh, when I finished the 9th grade over there, I came to live with my father's eldest sister. She had never been married or anything, but I lived with her. My sister and I came to live with her in West End. This is in Houston, Texas too, and then, that's when I went to St. Nicholas, you know, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade. I was really hurt when I had to change school because I was so in love with the boarding school, you know, I love the privacy, I love, you know, the environment with the nuns and stuff like that and the children were very wonderful too, you know, and but when I came here to St. Nicholas it was nice. I was a little shy when I got over here because, you know, when you change environment it does something to you. I don't know if everybody felt like that, but I did. Just like when I left Corpus Christi to go to the public school, that was a fear for me, you know, but I made it, you know, I made it, but still in all when you have to do something on your own and then I started realizing, you know this is my future, you know, and I enjoyed living at St. Nicholas then you know, and then when I left St. Nicholas then, what did I do? We ended up getting married, I ended up getting married and this is my second marriage I have now. My first marriage I married right after high school and my husband died because he had kidney failure. It was an accident and it shorted it up or something like that and so when he passed then I had, I was pregnant also, we were married two years and eight months, and I was almost pregnant when he passed. So I was a widow also at 22. So it was very sad and it was another lonely life for me then. He was gone and what was I going to do, you know? And so my mother and my father, who wasn't together, I got in touch with her. She happened to be living here in 5th ward

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and I got, I finally got in touch with her and she came to live with me in the project, she'd help us during the day, was where I was living at, and after my eldest daughter was born, she was born July 4th, and she was really supposed, they had her scheduled for July 8th, but she came July 4th. She gave me a big holiday present, and my mother and I said, "Oh well". I went to the store and got everything for us to celebrate the 4th of July and [] that morning I was celebrating in the hospital and so anyway it ruined my day, but still in all, it's something good came out of it after all. And after a length of time then I met my husband now I got and we've been married now 62 years. And this is the father and I got three sons and her and my eldest daughter so I got five living children altogether. I did have a miscarriage and a premature baby. I would have been the mother of seven, but I had a miscarriage with my first one and a premature with my second. I was weak the doctor said or something like that. And when you're not all that healthy either, you see. But still in all I was blessed with the ones that I have and wouldn't part with that for nothing in this world. They are my pride and joy. They are my pride and joy and I got my grandchildren by them. Anna, and I don't know if you want to look at the pictures but you can look around here and see all the pictures of my family. Anna and Joshua is her two children and we got and I'm a "gate, gate" grandma as the baby called me. And I enjoy Anna she is sweet as she can be and the other day I'm going to tell this little joke, I went over there and Anna, uh, she was crying in the kitchen or something and so Anna would say, "Come talk to grandma. Come talk to grandma." When she got on the telephone Anna could say, "Say hello to gate grandma." And she'd say, "Hello gate grandma. Hello gate grandma." I thought that was so sweet. "I love you. I love you." Oh boy that is a joy, you know, and so after that then I don't know what else I can tell you, but if there is anything is you want to ask, but at the school and the church and at the bank

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everything I was involved in uh, I joined the Altar Roses Society and enjoyed that and I joined the choir, St. Nicholas choir, and I also joined the lectars, just got out the lectars this last year. Been there all this time, and why, how I joined this was I had been ill with thyroid problem and I was ill for a good while and after I got well my first thing was going back to mass and while I was there they were just beginning to have lectars, they were just starting the lectars and when I arrived there this lady named Yvonne Nun, she was appointed to read that Sunday with another lady, but at that time they were saying how nervous they were because they had never did that before and so the lady didn't show up and I comes up there and I heard her talking about it. I said, "I'll give it a try" like that, you know, and the president of Altar Roses Society said, "Really Ms. Southern?" I said, "Yeah I'll give it a try." I said, "God has blessed me and hear me and I'm back home so I'll give it a try." You know, nothing like a try. So they said, "Oh good" she said, "Yeah, God bless you to come back there. That would be wonderful," you know and that's how I got to be the lectar and I didn't have to go through all of the lessons that they had so I was just there to take over when people didn't show up and then when they didn't show up the next day, you know, I was already involved and I loved it to death, you know, and the children can tell you I really did, and then after that, I tell you I joined the choir too and then I start started learning how to sing because it affected my thyroid and everything and just it knowing that I got my voice back that was a blessing to give God glory and they, and I started singing solos and everything. God blessed me. And I was just happy, you know, because I felt like what God did, he healed me and you know God know He give you the talent and it's what you do with your talent, you know, and not knowing at that time that's what it was, you know, but I had that eager, the eagerness to do that, you know, didn't know where it was going to take me, but my daughter

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and them can tell you. It took me a good way and I just thought that the lectar was last year and the singing was just last year and I'm 85 years old. I think I did wonderful for God, you know, and they hated to see me give it up and everything, but I would not have given it up, but the robe, you need to wear the robe and with my condition, I have osteoporosis so it was kind of complicated at the end, you know, but I went a long way, and so, this is my part and then the altar ladies work part was to clean up the church and clean the altar and have our little own money saved so we could buy vestments and stuff for the altar and the communion, you know, for the priests, and everything that the church needed we had the money, at that time, to do it with, you know. Then after so many years then it stopped and all the money went straight directly to the parish and then the pastor took over, you know, the what is it, the the, St. Nicholas had a large, a large crowd run wild, you know, church was full and then all of a sudden when this integration came in, well, people started moving out buying homes and stuff, and after they did that well it sort of diminished a little bit, but it was really fantastic around that time, you know, and so then over the years we used to have mass on Saturdays and it went for a few years too, but it finally diminished because the people, you know, weren't coming in, you know, so you know how that is. So father just had everybody to come to one mass, the 9 o'clock mass, and then, that's about at the time, but when the church was packed they used to, uh, the ushers used to have to put chairs in the isle. It just shows you it was already full and then with other members coming, you know, it was so beautiful, you know, to see all those people there and so when Father Desmond now we have, he's gonna get us back together because he is a working pastor. I just hope the Lord will let me live to witness that, you know, because I can see how he loves St. Nicholas, you know. All the priests that were there, they love the parish, all of them. I just, I was

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attached to all of them. I was just, because I came up with them when I was a teenager and I just fell in love with all of them, you know they just beautiful, friendly, to me they was family. That's how I looked at it. It was family. With God's blessing, you know He's still got us here at St. Nicholas and one time they were talking about closing it, but I don't see no door closing soon. See the door widened and now we having guests, visitors coming in to see us and everything, and they stand up now and introduce themselves, you know, you've probably been a guest there at St. Nicholas's so, so you know what it is and make us feel so good when we see new faces, you know, and we say, "It's another angel, it's another angel" and I just feel like God is working with us, you know, and I love St. Nicholas to death, and Miss Vivian Reed and I were very close. She's the beautiful, motherly image that I always admired in her. She's 91, and my mother and father wasn't together and I missed that motherly love coming up, so with her I got attached to her, and it's just one of these things that you never forget, and I've always shared that three times that I could have been gone, but God wasn't ready for me. With the thyroid I had, had a hemorrhage, and, uh, what else I had? A hemorrhage, the thyroid, and I had something else that uh, added to three. My thyroid, and I have suffered now with osteoporosis. I've always had a problem with my limbs, you know, hit me with my, hit me in my leg, and I took care of my aunt, the one that took care of me when I came here for school. She died at 95 and I took care of her and, uh, just give my love and brought it back to her for what she did for me and my sister. Come to find out that when she passed I had another aunt that lived in California and her name was Blanch, and she was the baby of the family and my elder aunt that took care of me she was the elder, but it was a big family. I think it was about nine of them in the family, and then come to find out when my aunt passed I was glad that my children know I used to go over there and help

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my mother take care of her. Her name was Louise Gooding, and my mother name I told you was Lydia St. June before she married, and that, that's just about it for right now that I can think of, and my grandchildren, my first grandson by my eldest daughter was Sean Page and he passed with MS at 22.

Unknown person: He just graduated from high school. He got a full scholarship, academic scholarship, and an athletic scholarship. Full scholarship to Sam Houston and the coach noticed that he didn't have the speed that he had when he was, you know, in high school and he started complaining about his vision and having headaches so when my sister took him in, you know, to have, to get him checked out to find out what was going on because he was blacking out, you know, having blackouts too and that's when they found out that he had MS. Then they got a second and third opinion, and but, he stayed in school until it became unbearable, you know, because he wanted to go to school and he ended up transferring and he went to Texas Southern for a while and University of Houston for a while, but it got to the point that he couldn't hardly drive because he was so, it affects your nervous system and everything so. It, it was sad because he was so smart and intelligent and he had just got accepted into the, he was going into pharmacy, that pharmacy program, and his condition just started deteriorating and before he died he was paralyzed, partially blind, he really couldn't do anything for himself and, uh, and it was sad, you know, and that was my sister only child, you know, so she took it pretty hard losing someone that young.

MS: He was 30, years old when he passed?

Unknown person: Yeah.

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MS: Because it hit him when he was 22. Right in the prime of his career and he always said, "I know grandma I'm going to make it in that pharmacy" because he wanted to take care of his mother.

Unknown Person: Mom, you can talk about your background, like your granddad.

MS: Well, my granddaddy, I didn't, my granddaddy was in the army. My daddy, I don't know about my granddaddy, but my father was in the army, and but I don't know about this, I don't know how long he stayed in the service, but he didn't like it he said because, I guess back then, how he was treated in the service, you know, and like he said, he was Creole, you know, and they was born in Louisiana and he couldn't speak good English and it sort of hurt him when he was drafted for the service and, like he said, it was alright, but he did his part, but he said they didn't treat him very well, you know, because they couldn't understand good English, at that time, because it was Creole, talking that Creole language and how he said that they would just push him and, you know, kick him around like that, you know.

NG: So he had been drafted?

MS: And shipped out there, uh-huh, because he had his uniform and everything. I think I had that pic, but it's all faded now.

NG: Um, was your mom Creole also?

MS: Yeah, they come from Louisiana.

Unknown person: Mom, you couldn't speak English, right?

MS: Yea, right when I was there. I had to 'cause that's all they communicated with us was the Creole, the kind of broken Creole and I had to, my brother and I had to when we left here they put us back when I went to school in Corpus Christi because of my grammar and stuff, you

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know, and the nun had told my father he said, "Now Marie you tell your daddy not to speak that broken Creole to you because it would be hard for you all to understand English, you know and through her, the principal, I repeated to my daddy, but that's all he knew at the time, you know, so he to start talking to us in broken English and stuff like that and we would try to, what we would learn and then we'd try to help him, you know. But it was sad because, but after a while we got to learn that English real good. We had to go to summer class and stuff like. It was private, you know. My sister, my brother and I, we were the only one from here that they had to do that for because people didn't realize that when they saw we had a thick head of hair and stuff like that, my sister and I and my brother and they had never seen us with a lotta hair like we had and so I used to tell them I got it from my grandmother, you know, whenever I started speaking good English, you know, but I can't remember now that I spoke that Creole broken English because after so many years it faded out of my life, you know, and now it look like to me, I didn't speak that kind of language back then because the way I speak now, you know. But, I did have to go through that. I was talking with that to one of the ladies at the church the other day, we were discussing language, you know. But after a while my brother and I, but my sister named Edna she lives in California and, uh, but she came right up at the right time for everything, her grade, learned how to speak English, you know, she was right in with the, how would you say it, yeah, as she entered school she entered just like the children are going to school now and learning, you know, she fit in that category at her time. But my brother and I, you know, we were put back and all that stuff.

NG: So your sister was younger?

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MS: Yes, she's the baby. My brother, he's passed on. He died when he was 40. Yeah, I the oldest of the crop, and so but we love, my sister and I we are very, very close. We never had a argument or anything. We all, I loved her so much 'til, anything with, if it was disagreeable or something I didn't do nothing I just took it, you know. That's just the way I was because I loved her so much and I felt like I was the eldest because when my father and mother weren't together I was like the mother in the house anyway. So that made me get closer attached to her and my brother. When he passed I was celebrating her 10th birthday and my aunt called me and they were so happy that I was having a party and they didn't know how to tell me my brother had passed, you know, they went on laughing and everything "Oh, that's nice for Alicia. Say, that's good. We wish her a happy 10th birthday," you know and come to behold when they had to break the news to me they said I went out like a light, you know, and they had to take me to the Riverside Hospital back then, and. I didn't know, because I had just spoke with my brother two weeks before then and with his conversation he said, "You know sis," he used to call me "sis", "you know sis, I just wanted to talk. I just feel like talking," you know. Then he was talking and talking, and I said, "Oh Joe, this is long distance, you know this is long distance." "That's alright, it's on me, you know, I just want to talk," and different little things he was telling me what he didn't like as we were growing up, you know. He didn't like that I had to wash and iron, and cook at such an early stage, you know. He was angry with my mother because he felt like some kind of way she should have worked her way back into our lives, you know, and I said, "Well Joe," I said, "that was before our time, you know, it's nothing that we could have done with that. We were nothing but babies ourselves at that time, you know," but he said, "She could have found her way back to be there with us." He let me know that he didn't appreciate my

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daddy's having us to work like we had to work, but wasn't nobody else there to do it so daddy had to teach us. He had to teach us himself how to do a little thing and he wasn't all that fast and stuff either, you know. But uh, and he would do our cooking and everything, you know. We had more beans than anybody ever had in their life, but that's all he could prepare, you know. So, but, uh, that's what he was telling me. I didn't think nothing about it that he was close to death 'cause it was just two weeks later, you know. Then another thing he told me, which I have regretted until this day, and he said, "You know sis," he say, "I would like to go downtown and shop and buy you a negligee set," you know. I said, "Oh Joe I don't need no negligee set I have old grandma gowns", you know. That's how 'cause I have old grandma gowns, you know. He laughed, he said, "No, no, no, I just wanted to do that for you," you know. I said, "Don't spend your money like that. When my brother died about the first thing that hit me, how about the negligee. I would tell everybody, "Anybody want to give you something, accept it," you know, because that's their way of showing love. That hurt me till this day that I didn't let him buy that for me. But that was his way of showing how much he loved me and he...

Unknown person: Ya'll talked, what, pretty much every week?

MS: Uh-hmm.

Unknown person: Every week he would call, every week.

MS: Checking on me and my family.

NG: Where did he live?

MS: California. He was in the service and uh, see he too got caught in when we was going to school in Corpus Christi, he didn't want to go to no public school, he definitely, when he found out I didn't like it, he didn't go. When I was in boarding school he joined the service. He put his

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age up and he joined the service and he stayed there, hmmm, about maybe 8 years, you know. Then when he left the service he moved to California. He live with the aunt of mine and she, uh....

Unknown person: You could tell them how all the family when they ended up moving to California. The whole family, the one that was named Blanch, the aunt that moved first, when she got settled, then the other family members started moving to California and they just, you know, they helped each other out. So a lot of our relatives are in California.

MS: Just to think that when, back to my brother and he said, at the end he said, "You know sis, I love very much and the only thing that hurt me, again, I want you to know I liked my mother, but I don't love my mother." You don't say that because we don't know what happened you know. When I did find out what happened I tried to explain it to him, but he still didn't accept it. He said," She should have found some kind of way." And he'd been young. I didn't know he had took it so hard, you know. He took it very hard about how our life was without a mother. So he was kind of like I was, he wanted the motherly love, you see, he missed that, he missed that just like I missed it and I cried 'till today about it, you know. That's how come I got so close to Ms. Vivian Reed. She's had that mother image and stuff, you know. And uh it's sad, it's really sad, but through love and life and God love us all, through God working through all of us, doing our little activities and stuff for the church, working with the children and everything, and that's how it kind of fade away, but it don't die. It comes back. I got a thrill helping my daughter when they had the king and queen contests at St. Nicholas before they closed the school. They made it just in time before they closed the 7th grade.

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Unknown person: We always, you know, like my mom went to St. Nicholas, my grandparents went to St. Nicholas, we all went to St. Nicholas up until my older sister went to what the 11th grade and then by the time I came along it stopped at the 8th grade. Then I ended up going to Incarnate Word Academy downtown that's a Catholic school just for girls and I went there one year and ended up going to a public school my sophomore year, just like my mom said when she went to a public school, oh my God, that was just a big awakening going to a public school. The girls, I mean, the people they were wild.

MS: We wasn't used to wildness, you know.

Daughter: Yeah, but it was a shocker. But my mom always put us first in everything. My mom, she made sure that we had everything. She put herself like she did without so we could have. So now we tell her it's payback time now because she deserves the best. She should be treated like a queen. She deserve the best. We love her dearly.

MS: Thank you sweetheart. That's what I was telling her. I'm going to spend the night with my daughter. Yesterday I went to get my nails done and Mr. Huan and I say, "Mr. Huan," I said, and they so nice to me, you know, the Chinese people and I said, "I'm going to spend a few days with my daughter in Crosby, Texas, you know." He said, "That's nice." I say, "I come here for you to fix my nail pretty and my toenail." He said, "Okay, okay." Then when he finished and everything he said, "Have a good time. Have a good time. You a nice lady, have a good time." They were happy for me too, you know, and every time I would go somewhere I let him know. If I had to have my nails done, "I'm going there, I'm going there." "Come right now. Come right now. Come on and let's go take you over there." They take me right then, they don't want me waiting on the other, so, ooh Lord. So I call just in time all the time. And Sweetheart that's just

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about it, I can't think of nothing else and I bet when you leave I'm going to think of something else and that's the way it go, but I want you to know my love was for my family and my children. That's my pride and joy.

NG: Well, I have a bunch of questions. You were saying that your parents were from Louisiana. Do you know why they moved to Texas?

MS: Yes, because of hard times. Times were hard.

Daughter: Like the depression?

MS: Uh-hmm.

NG: Do you mean, no job?

MS: Right. They came here for a better living. That's what I was told, you know.

NG: Do you know why Texas and not anywhere else?

MS: Oh, it was just here. They moved down to here. That's all I know of that, you know. Then like my daughter was saying, they called that, that time when the lot of people was going to work in California, see a lot of them did leave here to go to California for another life, including my father, he was in there, but his sister was the one sent for him. So they did have another life from here to California. Not my mother, but my father. So they used to call that the "Gold Rush." Going to Gold Rush. That was the name of it.

Daughter: Because back then, jobs, they could find jobs easier.

MS: Like my aunt that passed, she told me even she had a elementary school education, but then when she went to work over there, just to work in the desert department, you know, you know where the bake, the bakery where they have food and stuff, she had to go back to school and get her high, I didn't know that.

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Daughter: Aunt Blanch?

MS: I know she told me she was going back to school, but I thought maybe she was just going back to further her education, but you couldn't get a job there if you hadn't finished high school. So she had to go back for three years. They, it was three years and then she succeeded then that's when they hired her. So it was tough even here for them. They had a, they had good jobs here, but it wasn't a good paying job, but when they heard about the Gold Rush in California all of them went to California, you see. My aunt, what she did, her and her husband they got a great big house, but they did to keep the family together. I had never heard it, but she explained it to me, great big house and her and her husband lived upstairs, you know, they had their little private area, but downstairs the living room and the dining room, and it go the hallway, what they did they divided it in sections, put long sheets there, you know, and rent a certain section of the room for you to spend the night, to sleep there, and everybody shared the kitchen and the powder room. But, the sleeping quarters they had to, you know, short little area, you know, but she did that to help them because they had nowhere to go. They came to California, but it wasn't what they thought it was. They thought that could just go and get a house and stuff, but it wasn't like that. It was very expensive over there too. But my aunt, bless her heart, she helped all her relatives-sisters and brothers, you know, my father included, to go over there, and when they got on their feet [] until they could get on their own feet and then that's when they left her, you know, and then she had still, her and her husband still kept their little house so when other people would come in and they would share it with them too. God bless them because they died wealthy, but they helped the poor people. They wasn't selfish. They, I was even left in the will too. Because my house was going down and looked like I was in the will for the, at the right time

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to fix everything up because my health had got bad, you know, my husband had done retired, and all that stuff, came in handy see God is, God takes care of His children and I was in here crying, “Oh how am I going to do this and how am I going to do that and please God help me help me help me.” My prayers were answered. I had, at that time, I needed a roof, I needed wiring, this was a old house, you know. She was born here. I was carrying here (daughter) when I moved over here. So that show you how old the house is for when she came here, then how the house was before I moved in it, you know. So it was time to get it remodeled. We got it just, I was telling about Aunt Blanch left me in the will and how I got a chance to put it back livable again. Thank you Jesus, thank you Aunt Blanch, thank you Uncle Jasper.

NG: Can you tell me when you were born?

MS: December the 21st 1923.

NG: And you mentioned earlier that people would comment on your hair and you said that you got it from your grandmother?

MS: Uh-huh, my grandmother had, ooh and when I saw her picture I didn't know her though, I didn't know her. I really was named after her. Her name was Maria, you know, Gooding. I don't know what her maiden name was, but it was Maria Gooding. She had a thick, thick head of hair. And that's...

Daughter: Looking at my mom, all her other pictures, she got them all put up, but when we would look at all her pictures when she was younger, her hair was just so long, black, and wavy. She really, she looked Hispanic. My mom, she really did. She looked Hispanic.

MS: They said, a lot of people said that.

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Daughter: Her mom was Indian, but she looked at my grandfather, her parents, they looked Indian because the high cheek bone and tall and slim and just looking at those pictures....

MS: We did have Indian. We had Indians in us because my grandfather had Indian in him, that's my father picture up there and he looked like an Indian. You see up there, there it is there, up there on top of the []? At least, I think my [] pictures up there in that little corner where Nate got his folders together, right in that little corner. Say, I think it's in there. Yeah, that's my

NG: When you, when you went to Holy Cross, that was in Corpus?

MS: Holy Cross School, yeah, Corpus Christi, that was the name of the school, Holy Cross School.

NG: Was it, were they black Catholic schools or was it...

MS: It was a integrated school because they didn't have integration, you know like when I came here, they were saying that at St. Nicholas, I couldn't believe that, but come to think about it, that uh, you had to sit in the back.

Daughter: At St. Nicholas?

MS: See, we, I didn't know anything about that. Thank God it wasn't like that when we came back. But in the beginning the blacks had to sit in the back and the whites sit in the front, right here at St. Nicholas.

NG: But, in Corpus it wasn't like that...

MS: It wasn't like that at all. It was integrated you know. That what made it so nice because when I came here they were telling me that I just couldn't believe it I said because it wasn't like that in Corpus Christi, you know. But our school it was just, it was just nice.

NG: What about when you went to boarding school in San Antonio?

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MS: Uh-hhm at St. Peter Cleburne. Yeah, it was very nice too, you know, that was a new environment for me so I was just there a year so, but I loved it. I hadn't gotten attached, you know, because I didn't want to go back to no public school and I didn't know I was gonna come here and live with my aunt. So I didn't what was going to happen to me, you know, and knowing my daddy had lost his job and he wasn't in Corpus Christi anymore, my aunt had sent for him to go to California. And so I didn't know what was going to become of my sister and I and boarding school. But, the Petree girl they, they finished. Their mother owned a restaurant so the two Petree girls remained there. The Morales girls, they came back home too. They were Spanish. They were so nice. We were all got along like sisters, you know. They did call it the six sisters from Corpus Christi.

NG: So then the St. Peter Cleburne was integrated also, or was it...

MS: It was, uh-hmm, it was just all of us we were black I didn't see any white or nothing around there at that time. It was just integrated.

NG: Except for the Mexican families.

MS: Right, 'cause they just took in, you know, they were just welcome there was home, you know. I was just there one year so how it was before I got there and after so I can't vouch for that.

NG: How common was it though in Corpus for black children to go to a Catholic school?

MS: It was fine, no problem.

NG: No, but was it common? Were there a lot of other...

MS: Other children?

NG: Other black children.

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MS: Oh yeah, all of them were black children in Corpus Christi, the Catholic school. All were black. It was very nice. You felt homely, you know. And we sure hated to have to leave, you know.

NG: How was your education paid for?

MS: Who paid for it? My father had to pay, you know, tuition. He paid for tuition. And then when I came here my father lost his job, but we had to go to work, you know, when I came here and we started working at a, taking care of white folks houses, you know- babysitting. Fifteen dollars a week. And I worked for a lady by the name of Ms. Smith. She had three children. And then, after awhile, her and her husband broke up so then I ended up working for another white couple. This lady had one son. And the year I went there he was ready to go off to college, you know, and then, after then she told me she didn't need me, you know, because I think she could do it herself I guess, I don't know. But I was a teenager at that time. Then we got a job at Bama Pie Company. You know the Bama Pie they used to have sell Bama Pie? I don't think I know that many more people that know Bama Pie. But that's where I got my social security working at Bama Pie Company making fifteen dollars a week. And that, that's my, I'll never forget that. I said that's how I got my social security card. 'Cause you had to have it to work in the, you know, 'cause that's how it was and it was really nice and it wasn't hard because the people, the elderly people would do the pies and the crust and stuff like that and all we had to do was put it in the oven and stand by the oven and timers when they would get done, when it would be ready to take out and open the door and take them out and put it on the table. That was an all day thing. Then from lunch we would have pie and milk or pie and juice. That was our lunch. It was very nice. The people we worked for were very nice. And this lady that owned it she fell in love with me

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because she said, "You know Marie Gooding," she said, "The lady that worked for me is ill and I was watching you," you know how I worked and everything, "I'd like to know if you would come and work for me," and with she leaving I had to leave there for fifteen dollars and I got twenty-five when I went over there, to take care of her house, you know. "Yes 'mam!" "Nine to five?" "Yes 'mam, I've got to tell my aunt though." I worked for her until we, you know, we left and when I got married and everything. I hated to leave her, but that's what happened. I got twenty-five dollars and I thought I was a millionaire. I don't know if we could think a millionaire back, I don't know what's a millionaire back then, I just had a lot of money. Then I would give, when I got that little ten I gave it to my aunt. I kept the fifteen and gave the ten to my aunt. Because daddy couldn't take care of us anymore 'till he got back on his feet and he had to learn the waterfront thing all over again in California, it was different that he did in Corpus Christi. But we all survived and made it by the grace of God. I took care of my father before he passed. I took care of my mother, and I took care of my aunt and I said [] and broke down and I took care of all my family, I took care of all of them. My daddy died at 71, my mother died at 79, and my aunt died in her 90's. I think she was 95.

NG: Were they living with you when they died?

MS: When they died? Well my mother, we had to put her in the hospital. My father, he died in the veteran hospital, but I was keeping them while they were ill, but when they got, you know, deathly ill then we had to put them in the hospital. My daddy was in the service so he went to the veteran hospital. My mother, she went to Ben Taub.

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NG: What about your aunt?

MS: She went to, she was in a nursing home. She went into the nursing home. Then she, you know.

Daughter: It got too much for my mom to do, it was too much for her.

MS: I had ended up with phlebitis and had I been a diabetic, the doctor told me I would have lost my leg, see 'cause I wasn't trained to lift her and my cousin was a nurse and she would come over to the house to show me how to handle her, you know, but how she did it, it wasn't nothing for her to do because she was a nurse and she knew how to handle it. When I would try to do it, it was a strain on me, you know. But I did it anyway because I loved her. I wanted to tell you something funny about her. I don't know Lisa if I told you all of this. She was, I had suggested that they get a hospital bed and put her in the living area by the window and instead of sleeping in the large bed and she would have accidents so that's a lot of work. So they got the, my aunt got the hospital bed for her, okay, so she was comfortable and I slept in her bed and so this time I guess I was so tired and I didn't hear her calling me and so she was saying, when I did hear her voice, what I did I had the door kind of closed so the light wouldn't come in my room [] in the living area for her and when she was calling me, I didn't hear her. And then when I did she said, "Marie!!!" She was doing, "Marie!!! That's who she called me "Marie". I said, "Oh, ok and I jumped up, you know, ran right into the door, forgot the door, and I went, "Oh [] I'm hurting" and she was in there crying, "Oh, I'm hurting." "I need to be changed." I said, "Well Auntie I don't know how I can do that now because my arm is hurting." We laughed about that for the longest and she was crying, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry." Oh Lord Jesus. That was a, that was something, but you know, we amused ourselves for there for a long time. I jumped out that bed

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so fast and ran right into the door. And she was crying for me because she was hurting, I had to turnover. Oh boy, but that was love. We had a lot of fun, though. And so I did, I said, “[], I’m not sleeping in your room anymore. I’m going to sleep on the sofa because I be the...I had worked so hard that day, I guess I was just tired and worn out I did not hear her calling. Any other time I would hear her calling. But that was too many times I didn’t hear her. I dashed out that door, running, rushing to her, ran right in the door, forgot about that door. And she was crying and I was crying. That was a show for a second I tell you. That was show for us. When I did get to her and I say, “We got to take our time.” I say, “ Because I can’t work with your heart. Just relax and I’ll help you. You just got to go along with me.” “Okay. Okay.” So I say to her, “Turn, try to turn over.” “I can’t turn over.” [] “I can’t use my arm that way.” It was a show I tell you. My cousin Teresa said, “Well, Marie you should have called me and I would have came over to give you all a hand.” But we did okay. It was the longest change for her that day then we ever had experienced. It took about a whole hour and a half. And we laughed about it for the longest, we laughed. So I didn’t sleep in the bed, I slept on the sofa. So when I slept on the sofa I could hear her calling me and I was right there, bam! Oh, what a lesson you learn and the price you pay. But it was wonderful. She gone to glory now. All of them gone to glory. She, my mother, my father, my aunt, and all of them gone to glory. All I loved was the family.

NG: You said when you first moved with your aunt that you were living in the [] home?

MS: Oh, at that, I had not with my aunt. I had got married and I was living in the [] home.

NG: Oh, okay. Where is that located?

MS: It’s across from Texas Southern.

NG: Okay.

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MS: Beautiful []

Daughter: I don't even know if they still call it the [] home.

MS: I don't believe it is because they'd remodeled it and everything. It is beautiful. Daughter:
It across from Texas Southern University.

MS: Beautiful, it's beautiful.

NG: Can you tell me what it was like there at that time?

MS: At the [] home? Oh it was very nice and everything was for low income, you know people and because we were young. I just made it out the school, you know, I didn't have nothing so it was very low income and all you had to do is follow the rules in order and you would stay there and then if you start getting a raise or something like that every year you had to go in for, what would you call that?

Daughter: Another []

MS: Yeah, every year and every time you got a raise you were supposed to report it, you know, and it went to a certain amount and when you get to a certain amount then you have to move. When I got to the certain amount then we had to move. I stayed there nine years.

NG: When you moved where did you move to? To this house?

MS: Uh hmm. Uh hmm. Then she moved here. I was carrying her when I moved. Been here ever since. This is home and it's paid for, this mine. I finally got something for me.

NG: So when you moved here what was this neighborhood like?

MS: Oh, it was real nice. It was real nice. Lot of the people done passed on now. It's kind of going down now. Yeah, it was very nice. It was a nice neighborhood. There would be people have gardening, you know, they took care of their yard very nice.

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Daughter: They looked out for each other, you know, like the older people disciplined us. You know, if they saw us doing anything wrong, they didn't have to get permission from mom or dad, you know, they could discipline us. Everybody just got along. It was just like, what I remember, it was just like one big happy family. The kids, everybody played in the neighborhood, everyone knew each other, and it was, it was nice. Over the years, you know, people started moving out, and then, and it's started changing now, you know, it has really changed now.

NG: What about businesses in this area?

MS: We had a little grocery store right there, but it's gone now. Then they got a store back here.

Daughter: As far as us, doing like grocery shopping we had to go to Globe. That's where we did a lot of our shopping. That was off the Gulf Freeway. That's now there anymore, that's been gone. It was like a big supermarket or either go to Weingarten and they...

MS: That's gone too.

Daughter: It's not, I just don't think it's the Weingarten anymore. Then, we used to shop downtown, used to be the place, they didn't have malls like they have now. So we had to catch the bus to go downtown. They had Foley's, well, Macy's was still there, but it was Foley's, Palais Royal, Three Sisters. All of the stores were downtown and that's how people used to shop back then, you know.

MS: They had little neighborhood stores because my husband used to work in the neighborhood stores. He was a butcher there. And they, it deteriorated down too. Then he ended up working at Grocer's Supply for thirty, thirty something years and retired from over there.

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NG: How did they, how did you used to get around, like, when you used to work in people's houses or ...

MS: I walked. I was in West End at that time. That part of town was called West End. It was off of, what's that highway?

Daughter: 59, I guess 59. It's like going towards Memorial, up in that area.

MS: Yeah, Memorial, that's where I was trying to get, Memorial Drive, going out that way. We walked, everything we did we walked. Wasn't too far, even to the Bama Pie Company we walked.

NG: And what about when you went to church? Did you walk, used to walk to church?

MS: No, you had to ride the bus to St. Nicholas, you had to ride the, from where I lived. And to shop you had to ride the bus, you know. 'Cause West End was kind of like a country area. Boy it's not no country area now.

Daughter: No, they building all these high rises, it's changed.

MS: Oh, it's beautiful. You would think I lived there, once lived there, beautiful.

Daughter: But on that street though where my mom was talking about all our relatives lived on that street. Clove Street, and that was nothing but family on that one street. But when we would go and visit and play with our cousins. Everyone was there, it was just like a reunion.

MS: All of them gone now, all new people out there and a lot of white folks is out there now. A majority of white people buying it up.

NG: So when you moved to Houston you started going to St. Nicholas, you were paying for your own tuition?

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MS: Nothing. The priests in Corpus Christi was paying for all the tuition for six months, you know to give daddy a start, you know. Then the other six months it was on him. Then after that happened then he lost his job. He was working at the waterfront and they went out of business.

NG: Was your dad educated?

MS: No.

NG: Why was it so important for him that you all had an education?

MS: I tell you what he told me, "I want you all to" in his accent, "I want you all to know how to read and write so nobody won't make a fool out of you." That was his advice for us. "If you don't do nothing but know how to read and write so nobody won't make a fool out of you." I'll never forget those words. And that's what we was doing and I wanted my children to get a good education more than I did. I just had a high school education 'cause he couldn't send us to college anyway, you know. And my sister, when she went to California and she finished, my sister was in the right track for everything because she was the baby of the family, she went to school at the, I think Aunt Edna graduated at fifteen.

Daughter: Yeah she graduated early.

MS: 'Cause she was at the right type for everything. She didn't have to be put back or nothing 'cause she was the baby. It was two years difference in our ages, two years. I was two years older than my brother and my brother two years older than my sister. She just had a birthday. So she's 81. She just had a birthday on the 16th. She got two children and her son, her youngest son Jaycee should be in his 50's, or close to 60 now. And he had the same thing my grandson had.

Daughter: Multiple Sclerosis.

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MS: He's still dying of it and it hit him at 35, it hit him at 35. He was at, she called and told me he was at the breakfast table in his apartment and she said, "Jaycee called me and told me, Marie, he can't walk. I don't know what he talking about."

MS: I said, "Well, I don't know, you know." She said, "He said, 'Mom I wanted to get up and I couldn't get up. I could raise up but I...' he couldn't walk. So she said, "Well, what can you do?" She lived upstairs. "She said, "I'm gonna call the ambulance and how would you get downstairs?" He said, "I don't know and I have to give them the keys to get in." So she say, "Jaycee, can you crawl over to the window?" So he threw himself down, you know, he threw himself down. And I don't know how he worked to open the window. So when the ambulance people would come so he could throw the keys out the window for them to come in, you know. So he was in bad shape then and he was working genius on that computer. And it hurt him so bad, you know, at that age 35, you know, and he had one son. My sister had two children, a daughter and a son. And she taking care of him now and she sick herself. And her husband dead about seven years now. She was married three times, but her last marriage was fantastic, thirty, no forty, fifty, almost fifty celebrated almost 50th anniversary, close to it. She married very young too. I think she married at 17 or 18. I married at, I was 19 ½ because I was put back in school so instead of me coming out at 17, I came out at December made me have 19 ½, you know. My birthday wasn't just a happy, kind of mixed me up. And so, but she did very well and she still, she's not well herself, that's right, 'cause she be looking for a report. She's got tumors on her brain. She got two tumors on the back her neck and two on the top her head. So we waiting on a report from there to see after six months had it grown. So I haven't spoke with her since her birthday. She supposed to let us know when she hear. That's worrying us too. Really

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worrying. 'Cause we talk on the phone just like, when her husband was living he said, "Lord have mercy. You'd swear Marie was here in California and swear Edna was over there in Texas." Every time he turned around we were on the phone. He was comical. He was a principal of the school. Yeah, he was very comical.

NG: The first time you were married did you get married in St. Nicholas?

MS: Yeah, when I married my first husband we had to marry in the rectory see 'cause he wasn't Catholic so you couldn't marry in the church. So we married in the rectory. My second marriage was in the church.

NG: How did you meet your second husband?

MS: I met him, he was working at a grocery store, when I saw him working at the grocery store. Then I used to see him at church.

NG: Oh, so he was Catholic already?

MS: Uh-huh, which I didn't know. Which I didn't, you say my first husband?

NG: No, the second.

MS: No the second, yeah. 'Cause Clifton didn't, that was, I don't know was uh, I don't know what you call that, infatuation, love, yeah 'cause how he said he met us when my cousin and my sister and I would ride the bus to go to school, you know, and he said he saw all these young ladies getting on the bus and he said he was sitting on the back, the long seat in the back, he didn't pay us no mind in the beginning 'cause he and some fellas were talking, and then every time he say he would get on the bus we would get on the bus, you know, and we would just rattling off, I think we would stop at that store to get soda water, potato chips and we would have fun and then, you know, they had the pickles and stuff. We had a lot of wonderful good dill

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pickles. We would get pickles and stuff like that. That was our breakfast. He said he watched us for a while. The man wasn't in the back that time and he watched us. Then he said the next day, the following week he say he saw us again and the man was on the bus with him and he say, "You see that young lady right there?" He say, "She gonna be my wife, but she don't know it." I didn't know that. We didn't see him back there. We didn't even know he was back there, but he was watching all of us running our mouth, you know, laughing and happy going to St. Nicholas, you know. So he says one day he saw, he knew a girlfriend that worked at St. Nicholas and he had her to call, he had her to call and talk to me to tell me that he was gonna come by and see me if I wanted to see him and something like that. I said, "What he look like?" you know. She say oh, he tall and handsome, good looking. I was always liked tall handsome men because I admired my father. My father was tall and handsome and when he wore his clothing he looked real good, you know. Then my father had a limp on his feet because he got a worked at the waterfront and a bale of cotton fell on this ankle and broke it. So when it healed it left him with a limp. And when I, when we would go to church my father would have his suit on and had that hat on and had that limp walk and we tease say, "Daddy sure look good, don't he?" And I admired men from father. That's what I liked. And he was tall and good looking too, but uh the trouble with him was when he did come to the school and this lady did come to talk to me and I said, "Okay then, okay." So she said, "Oh, you gonna like him. He's tall and good looking." I said, "Oh, that's what I like" you know. Never had no boyfriend but that's what I was sayin I liked. And so come to find out I was looking, when the school was out I was looking for this tall, handsome, good looking guy, you know and I didn't see nobody. So I guess he couldn't make it. There he was leaning against a pole, you know. We had a pole, he was leaning against the pole. I

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heard somebody, they done told him my name, "Marie Gooding?" I turned around and said, "Yes?" He said, "I'm Clifton." "You who?" That's not what that girl told me. He say, "Excuse my appearance I was cutting my mother's yard and I forgot the time and the time came so quick." Took off to the bus. Left him there. And my cousin them teased us all the way home, "Oh, Marie got a boyfriend, cutting yard," and all that stuff. We were looking for a tall, handsome, dressed up guy and everything and he looked a hard working man. Then when we got home she went to my aunt's and said, "Oh, [] you need to meet Marie's boyfriend." I cried, I cried, they gave me a bad time. That's who I ended up marrying. When he did come to the house dressed up, that night, when we went to my cousin's, the one that was teasing, cousin Maybel's, teasing me so much, you know. Then she had a party at the house and we was invited and so he had done got dressed up and I guess he went to my aunt house and momma said, "Well she not here. She at the party." So when he got, I guess knocked at the door, and Maybel answered the door, you know, and so, and I was in the back in the kitchen with the other girls and so he said, "My name is Clifton Lockhart. Marie auntie say she's over here." Maybel say, "You the Clifton we saw at the school?" "Marie come here. Come here Marie, come here." I thought something had happened. I was running through her house and everything. "Girl that's Clifton, that's Clifton." I stood there. That's how it got started. Boy, what a surprise, but they gave me a time, they gave me a time. But that's how it got started. But I was disappointed 'cause he wasn't Catholic. But he had told me, "I'm gonna become a Catholic" and all that, "make your daddy proud of me" and all of that. But it was difficult. We were just married two years and eight months. I had one year, we just had one year together and his mother surprised us with our anniversary and see and, uh, then the second year I left him and when to California. I was

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leaving him and went to California. Then, I came back and my aunt say, "You don't leave your husband. Give him another chance. You don't just leave one time, you give him another chance." So I did that, but I didn't want to come back, you know, 'cause I missed, when I saw my sister and then I wanted to stay, and so she talked me into coming back. I did, and I got pregnant with my daughter and he got a job, see he wasn't working at the time, see he was sickened and a whole story between that. Usually I don't talk about it because it was a lie and he just, I was, it seemed like to me I was tricked into it, you know. He wanted to marry me so bad, but he didn't tell the whole story. And my aunt was an attorney.

Daughter: You know what too, listening to the story again, if you hadn't of came back you wouldn't have met Danny. He wouldn't have been born.

MS: That's right, then like, that was Clifton I had left, you know, and like I said, like my aunt Blanche said, "You see, something good came out of something bad" you know, 'cause with Clifton did here, you know, and I was working, I don't know if I told you I was working and he took all of my money. I was selling records and stuff. And back then they made some good, and I loved that job. I had made \$500. I didn't know what that \$500 looked like I was swinging [] couldn't believe it 'cause done never, all we had was \$15. And then I, you know, took my money. And then the Mr. Crown who I was working for he said, "Well" I was Lockhart at the time, "Ms. Lockhart why don't I ask your husband if he would deliver the clothes in the project and I would pay him \$30 a week." And so I mentioned it to him and he said "yes." So Mr. Crown he hated to see me give up the thing, you know, 'cause he knew I was doing good for the business, you know. He did good for four months. He was a gambler and I didn't know it. So for four months he did good and then that Saturday I was waiting for the money to come in and he

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didn't show up with the money and Mr. Crown was there and he said, "It's 9 o'clock and I have to go." And my paycheck had to go to the company. I worked a whole week for nothing. I must have cried, but I was still responsible for the other money that he didn't turn in. So that's when I decided to leave. I left.

NG: Can you tell me a little bit about what St. Nicholas the school was like?

MS: Oh, it was nice. It was, I had no problems with it, you know. I just went three years and it was good for me. I was still in the shell, but I got out of the shell in my senior year.

NG: Were there a lot of students there?

MS: Oh yeah, lot of students when my children was going to school there. When they had king and queen contests and stuff I put them in it....

Daughter: When you were in it, when you were in it.

MS: Yeah, but see I didn't know a whole lot back then. I just went three years, you know, and I didn't live in the 3rd Ward area. I didn't know that much. All I had to do was get off to school and catch the bus and go home to West End.

NG: So when your children were going to St. Nicholas you were very involved?

MS: Oh yeah, oh yes. I wanted them in some of everything. 'Cause when I was in Corpus Christi with the Catholic school, the nuns kept us busy. We was always performing and school closing and stuff like that. My sister now even play the piano. I didn't take music and I couldn't keep it up because it was running \$5 a lesson and my father couldn't keep that up. I could just see myself playing that now. You probably heard of 'Chopsticks'?

NG: Yes.

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MS: That's what we played for our class performance. And I played the old, old, rich lady. They had me all in black. It was beautiful, a black dress and they had to put all that powder in my hair. I was a rich lady in the play. You know Catholic schools believed in performance, kept you busy. I learned that and I kept my children in things at St. Nicholas.

NG: What kinds of activities did you have your children involved in?

MS: With the king and queen, and then a program they would have.

Daughter: We had all types of programs at St. Nicholas and at church, during all the holidays, we all grew up in the choir, my brothers were altar boys. We helped out a lot at the church too. The church used to always, the school used to always have a bazaar and that was, that's what they were called back then. It was like a big []. We all had to put, pitch in and work there. We just, we just did a lot at the church.

NG: What were the king and queen celebrations like?

MS: I had dinners and stuff with tickets...

Daughter: We had to sell dinners. Whoever sold the most dinners would be queen.

MS: The one with the most money turned in. I worked hard, but I wanted them to, when I saw before they were king and queen, when I saw that I said, "Oh yeah, I got to work for my children, my girls." And I worked too. I was downtown. I was at all them stores downtown and they would buy tickets to help the school. And I raised some good money for St. Nicholas. But she was queen and my oldest daughter was princess. And my sons were court in the uh, what was it, the, they were courts. They would march in with the escort the other girls. Yeah, that's what they did.

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Daughter: I guess it just seemed like the same way my mom was brought up. I find I brought my kids up the same way 'cause my kids, well I got married at St. Nicholas, my oldest sister got married at St. Nicholas.

MS: All of them got married at St. Nicholas.

Daughter: Except Anthony. And my kids, my children were baptized, they made their first Holy Communion, confirmation, they participated in all the Christmas programs and plays and everything that they had their, CCE Programs, um, it was just busy at the church.

MS: And they had dinners that they would prepare for the children and the parents would help cook dinners for the children. It was very, it was very, very active back then.

Daughter: It was family oriented too.

MS: Yeah, it was all involved. It was [] church, you know. And what happened sweetheart is when, when integration came along people just started moving out, you know. And when they moved out that decreased the members in the parish.

NG: Did you ever think of moving or have your kids ever asked you to move?

MS: No, yeah, they wanted me to move because of the neighborhood was going down, but I said that this was mine. I paid for it, this was mines.

Daughter: She didn't want to move.

NG: I noticed that the people that I've spoken to at St. Nicholas, many of them don't live around the neighborhood anymore, but they drive all the way to come to St. Nicholas.

MS: They move out. That's the younger generation.

NG: What do you think makes St. Nicholas so different or special from other churches that people keep coming back? How is it important for you?

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MS: It's because the warmth and love of the parishians, the pastor, the nuns, you know. I love it now we see a few nuns coming back now, you know, and that just dressed the church completely. I call them angels. When they come I called them angels, God sent us angels. It feels good to see a nun in the church. 'Cause that's how it always has been, you know, nun in the church. They all did, we all did everything at St. Nicholas. It was just fantastic. It was just beautiful.

Daughter: It was more of, the way I came to describe it, it was more a family because when I got married and I was still going, attending St. Nicholas church and then when I had my kids, you know, like I said they were baptized, made their first Holy Communion, and then when we moved I started visiting other churches to closer to where we lived but it wasn't like St. Nicholas. We would make that drive and come back, and that's what we did until my children, you know, made their confirmation, I wanted to make sure that, and they wanted to come back because it was just different, St. Nicholas church was, maybe because that's all we knew, it was more like home, everyone was friendly, it was just the warmth and the love that was there. You don't to me, 'till this day, you don't, you still don't see that that much at a lot of other churches. It's just something about St. Nicholas. A lot of people that I've talked to, they're still don't care how far they live, they make their drive and come back to St. Nicholas.

MS: 'Cause they come back home.

NG: What do you think the important...

MS: It's the warmth and the love honey because you just feel at home and it's no, you don't hear no arguing and a fighting or nothing, you know.

NG: What do you think the importance of it being the first black Catholic church in Houston?

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MS: Excuse me honey?

NG: The importance of it being the first black Catholic church in Houston.

MS: Well, that, that's the only one I've ever known, you know, from being young and everything, to me, it's just St. Nicholas and it's just the mother's church, you know.

NG: Well I was reading that it used to be that in churches that you would have to sit in the back of the church...

MS: Yeah, I heard that.

NG: But at St. Nicholas it was never, I don't know, I don't think that it was ever like that because it was founded...

MS: Yeah, they say, but that's before my time when I came here. They would tell you they had to sit in the back. The blacks had to sit in the back. That was a long time ago though, you know what I mean. Maybe, way before my time because when I came here I was shocked to know that about St. Nicholas. 'Cause they didn't do that in Corpus Christi, you know, I didn't know that Catholic church, you know, made a difference, you know. But they didn't do that in Corpus Christi and they didn't do that in San Antonio. Now I don't know why they did it over here 'cause that was, that was before my time because I didn't know about it until I got here. And they still talk about it occasionally sometimes, you know how that used to be. You know why they say that because a lot of people still sit in the back instead of sitting in the front, you know. Me, I like to sit kind of in the front because I was brought up, you know in Corpus Christi like that in boarding school and it's still hard for me to believe that because I never witness that, you know so, it's hard to believe so I don't even look at it that way, you know. Because I didn't witness nothing like that. Had I witness it then it would have been different, but I didn't witness

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that and my children didn't witness it, but we used to rode a bus, you know, you had to sit in the back on the bus, you know, we knew that.

NG: Also, I was noticing that the majority of the priests had always been white priests.

MS: Yeah, way back yonder.

NG: Do you think it makes any difference to people that there are black priests now?

MS: It took me a while because I was brought up with white priests. It took a while 'cause I didn't know how it was going to be, you know and so far I have no complaints. They nice and friendly. You got to kind of get to know them because you wasn't brought up with black priests, you know, and African preachers. But to me, they like family too, you know. Father O' Connell stayed with us a long time and he was white and he was a very good priest. Father Don, Father Wagner, you know. They all scattered around now, but I'm talking about the they were, Father Don was black, Father Wagner was white, and Father O'Connell was white and Father, some have gone now, one of our priests we know has died. It was Father, Father Wayne. I hadn't seen him in a long time. He wasn't a priest at that time, but he became a priest later with Father Wayne, Father Wagner I mean. And there was Father....

NG: What about uh, I've been in church....

MS: Right there that picture of Father, he died too.

NG: So there have been people from the neighborhood that have become priests or from St. Nicholas, because I've been there before when I was told that it was Ms. Dorsey's son.

MS: Yeah, yeah Rita Dorsey, her son is a priest. He was, I was here, but I didn't know at the time 'cause when he went off to school and everything and he would always say it when he was ordained, he wanted to work in the poorest, poorest part of town for the Catholics. He wanted to

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be in the poorest, poorest town and Jamaica was where he went. But I hear know that he done went, they done transferred him to somewhere else, Father Dorsey. Very well black priest. The only black priest, the only black priest from St. Nicholas. The only one that became a black preacher from St. Nicholas. That's an honor. That's an honor for St. Nicholas if you stop and think about it, crowned, crowning, yeah, and so now he's stationed elsewhere. I don't remember now. But he used to come [] when he would come visit his mother. He would come and say mass. Everybody would be so glad, so glad to see him. He was fantastic. But, other than that, he was the only black priest so far, that I know of.

NG: So you said with integration that people started moving away, do you think that was like, you know, in the 70's that...

MS: Something like that.

NG: ...that the population started going down?

MS: Right, because they would buy, the white people was moving out and our people was buying their homes.

NG: Well, the neighborhood around St. Nicholas has changed a lot.

MS: Oh Lord have mercy, yeah, they don't have no homes, they used to have houses and stuff around there. It's like a secluded area now. Now you see, if you ride around, that you going to see they done built a lot of other homes now, townhouses and stuff there. But no, they used to have a lot of houses when childrens was going to school you know. There's a lot of houses around there, but over the years they just changed, you know, tore the homes down and people had to move. They were called rent houses at that time. The back of the, in the back of the the [

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] well they still got a few houses there, but when you brought that there, it used to be crowded.

The bazaar was fantastic.

NG: Do you think the bazaars were so popular because of the neighborhood that was, that used to be there?

MS: Uh-hmm, and that was the way we raised money for the church. Our way of raising money for the church. And the people were very active around that time. They all gone to glory now, those working people gone to glory, and then the other younger generation came along and they gone to glory. I don't know how many people really lived in that used to attend St. Nicholas, you know, but they all scattered at St. Mary, Mother Mercy, you know, they some maybe like my age bracket, you know, they all scattered. But, then a lot of them is in a home or stuff like that. 'Cause in my altar society, we started off, we had about, mean I was the president, I'm still the president of altar [] society, we had ninety-seven members, now we got eight, eight active, and then, we don't call ourselves active, we just fell like we still here to do a little something. We can't work like we used too, but we still do what we can. Ninety-seven was a large crowd to eight, eight active. It's about fourteen in all, but they're sickly-the others, you know.

NG: But the cleaning of the church, does it happen as often as it used to?

MS: Yeah, um, you know we spoke to Momma Reed yesterday?

NG: Uh-hmm.

MS: That's her son that keeps the church up.

NG: Okay.

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MS: Preston Reed, he keeps the church up, and the yard, and the hall. See 'cause we used to do it and then when I had this sick leg I couldn't do it anymore. And a lot of other people had other ailments, arthritis real bad in their hands and stuff. And so I ended up having to tell Father O'Connell that we couldn't do the church anymore, you know, 'cause it's a lot of moving and moving around and we couldn't do that 'cause I remember the kneeler fell on my foot and I like to had a fit, you know. 'Cause see when I had that phlebitis there all around my ankle, see how this is black? That's how it was around there. That's because I was lifting my auntie and I bust those blood vessels. It was black, black, black, black as that. And I had to elevate my foot and I couldn't do that walking. Had to get out of my heels and everything 'cause I couldn't wear no heels then. Couldn't wear my heels then! Here are all my pretty shoes in the closet. When they have a bazaar or something, or a garage sale I'll gonna cry, I'm going to give it to them, I'm going to cry. Don't do me no good. So I just donate it to somebody so I was pretty []. So we did the church for a long, long time, the altar society 'cause they had somebody else before me, you know, that was running all of that and as they passed on then the next generation came along. See I was never took another order, but then when the head passed and the others passed, and passed then they had another election and then I volunteered.

NG: Were you ever involved with the uh, what is it called, the organization, any other organizations in the church?

MS: That's me.

NG: Oh this is you?

Daughter: I can't find the other picture. She's probably got it in her cedar chest.

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MS: Lord have mercy, [] celebrated all of that. And then with this they had [] I was 78 when this hit me.

NG: The tape has stopped, but you said you celebrated your 25th wedding anniversary, 50th, and your 70th birthday.

MS: Uh hmm and my 50th and my 70th birthday. Uh hmm, I was on the ball. Yeah, I should have put that in there early, huh? Yeah, I should have put that in there early.

NG: Is there anything else that you wanted to mention about St. Nicholas?

MS: No, that, all I know now is that we are hoping to that it end up continuing being.... I had to look at that again. That looked nice huh?

Unknown: Uh-hmmm.

MS: In my late 20's. But we, father and I wanted us to get some of these chairs, you heard about I was trying to get the chairs and things and so with the altar ladies society we were supposed to turn in \$260, made to go. The other organization I don't know, but we...

NG: So you're still working hard for St. Nicholas?

MS: Uh-hmm. I tell them I can't do what I used to do, but I get on the telephone and call around and get, and I'm a good seller for the bazaar booths and stuff when they have it. I just get on the phone and 'cause, a long time ago, we used to have to go to people's houses to collect the money, but I can't do that no more so. I found out it was easier I said, "Well, it's easier to call on the phone then." Then I go pick it up or they come bring it to me or meet me at church, you know. Oh yeah, I still do my part. On Sundays we turn out the first Sunday and I recite the rosary every first Sunday, recite the rosary for the altar society and the congregation. And Ms. Riola she recites the second Sunday, just the two of us. I was doing it all the time, but I had a fall, that's

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what set me back now. I had two falls. I had a fall right there in the kitchen. I had just finished doing the communion towels and I had just brought them, put them on the dining room table and I was going back in the kitchen to disconnect the iron and some kind of way, I don't know what happened, I was going down, but when I fell I was on my back and I said, "That's the where the guardian angel protecting me" 'cause I done broke my glasses and everything, and right there in front of the stove. But I didn't hurt nothing, thank God I didn't hurt nothing. But then the second time I fell, although I had this sickness, but the second time.... Tape cut out.

MS: Yeah...

NG: On Holy Thursday.

MS: Yeah, yeah, Holy Thursday just had a beautiful service, we had made a Holy hour, Father said, "Be quiet, walk out the church quietly" and came home and went into the back and in some kind of a way, I don't know, this leg gave away. I went down and my husband was parking the car and when he came in I pulled myself up and that's where I made my mistake. But I walked from there to my bedroom, you know, I walked from the back bedroom to there, I was going in there for something and I walked and went to bed and everything, got up the next morning and couldn't walk. He was getting ready to go to work, I found out I couldn't walk because I was going to the restroom and I couldn't get up to go to the restroom. "You can't go to work, I can't walk" I said, "You can't go to work, I can't walk." "What you [] ? "I don't know what it is." They called the whole Salvation Army, my children. The whole Salvation Army and they all came and we met at St. Joseph's hospital and sure enough that's the thing. I had bruised my hip and that's why I couldn't walk, I bruised my hip. The doctor wanted to check with me to operate on it, I told him, "No, I don't want you operating on me." I said, "Because I'm gonna be okay."

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He said, "How old are you?" At that time I was 79, 79. No I was older than that 80 yeah 80, yeah I was 80. He said, "No [] to put you through some tests and stuff." I said, "At first you didn't tell me that." 79, that's what I was. I was 79, I said, "You told me that you can just go ahead and operate on me and everything would be all right." And I said, "Now, told you I was 79 and now you tell me you've got to run tests on me." I say, "You know what? My heavenly Father is my physician. I put my life in his hands." And I suffered though, I suffered for about a whole year with this hip. I never gave up reading my lecture, I never gave up doing my communion towels. I still do the communion, I like to stay active. I still do the communion towels, I still recited the rosary and I still attend the novena on Tuesday and first Friday. That's my activities. That's it and I love it, you know, but then I went down and that sent me back. But all, I was telling her my Salvation Army came when I fell, talking about you all. All you got to do is just tell one and bingo. I didn't have surgery. I was telling her when I fell, you know.

Daughter: Yeah, she was very active until she started having problems with her leg.

NG: It sounds like St. Nicholas has been a part of your life on a daily basis.

MS: It has. That's all I know. That's true. You put it just right. You put the icing on the cake.

Daughter: But still as old as she is it's still....

MS: Tuesday novena, first Friday, you know, the first Friday.

Daughter: And even when they would keep, when my parents would keep my kids we had services like at 5:30 in the morning Sunday so we all to get up and go to service, 5:30. If you could go out and party, you could get up and go to church the next day.

MS: Right.

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Daughter: Even when my kids, they participated in the novenas and well, they would spend the night...

MS: With me.

Daughter: They knew the routine.

Daughter: My, her baby boy, when Father was doing the holy water, you know, they come to bring you the holy water and our, Josh was a little baby then and Father forgot to do him, you know, and he hollered there, "Father you didn't do me. Father you didn't do me." Father turned around and sprinkled the holy water on him. As little as he was he was sitting around there "He's doing everybody else, he didn't do me. " He hollered, "Father you didn't do me." Father just laughed and turned right around and had to come back and sprinkle him with the holy water. You never know what's going to come out the babe's mouth. That was so surprising.

NG: What is the novena mass?

MS: Well you just, you know, it's your prayers you know, just a lot of prayers.

Daughter: To St. Theresa.

MS: Because we have the novena prayer at the St. Theresa and I have it, but it's in my bedroom, that we prayer, you know, and we wait an hour, you know, and we just have, after the novena mass a prayer, then we have the mass. And first Friday it's a holy hour and we read for the hour before the mass starts, you know, take a whole hour 'cause when we finish reading then we pause, you know, for an hour. That's why they call it the holy hour. I have never missed it, not a novena. And every Tuesday I got to the, I'd be lost if I didn't go to the....

Daughter: Even when we had all left the house, you know, cause my mom can't drive, faithfully, what I think I had, I was the one, you know when Chris and Cliff couldn't take you,

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she didn't have to worry about it because one of us was going to always be here for her, you know, to come back and take her to church- pickup her friends, the other elderly ladies, pick them up and take them to church.

MS: Yeah, we had, that was, that's my home. Nothing else out there, but trouble. So why not go and spend it with the good Lord and then come home and feel good, you know, hearing the word of God, you know, Father give a nice sermon on novena night, you know. Just like regular Sunday, but we just have the extra prayer. And then they have the blessings of the Article of St. Theresa, you know. Then Father do the benediction, you know, with the scepter, the holy scepter thing and he go in the altar and he makes the sign of the cross with it, you know. And I lead the singing. I used to could sing it in Latin, but I sing it in English, but it's really supposed to be sung in Latin, but we sing it in English 'cause the other people can't do it and I lead the singing on the first Friday.

Daughter: You need to hear her. Momma, just sing one verse of a sing. I just want you to hear her voice. I mean, she sounds good without music. Anyone song, just sing one verse.

MS: I'm going to sing the Lord's Prayer, "Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debt as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen."

NG: Thank you.

MS: It goes all through me.

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Daughter: We didn't realize my mom had a beautiful voice until one day she called us and said, "I want ya'll to come to church. I'm singing my first solo. I'm gonna sing my first solo." We were all speechless. We said, "Mom, we didn't know you had that voice."

MS: Practice, I went for practice. Sure did, I went for practice. I mean it was just something I just loved. I was giving thanks to God for my blessing that he blessed me with, gave me my health back, you know. I was near death's door with this thyroid. I was near death's door. I couldn't go to the service for about, I think about two months. And when I got that voice back I'd be in church singing and dancing and everything. I 85 and I be 86 in December. And as long as I can do a little something like that for the good Lord, I will. And that's my favorite song, is the Lord's Prayer, that's the prayer he gave us, but I have other songs too. I have about nine songs that I learned from the choir. I treasure it, I sit here in the morning sometimes and I talk to my heavenly father and I sing, I said, "I'm going to serenade you" you know, and I would sing all nine songs instead of talking I gave him my blessing in singing and then some mornings I talk and I sing about two songs. That's how close I am to the good Lord. Thanking Him every day so don't ya'll worry about them all the time because them booger bears out there, I worry about them, but I'll keep asking Him to watch over them and protect 'em, friend, church, all everybody because everybody's life is in danger. Also us, you know because I was telling about them and they say, "Well momma, we got to pray for you too because you out there" you know, ain't thought about me at the time you know, just them. But I enjoy them all.

NG: I meant to ask you earlier, I was asking you about your involvement in the church and what I was thinking of is were you ever part of the church council?

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MS: No, I didn't join the parish council. That I didn't join. I was other things, but I didn't join the parish council. I would attend the meetings. I was at the meeting last week at the parish council, at the rectory. Father wanted all of the head organizations to be there so I went.

NG: How do you get to church now?

MS: She drives me.

NG: Then you all pick up Ms. Reed on the way.

MS: Uh-hmm, we go on and then bring her back home. And you know the story about that sweetheart is that long time, when my husband was working and when I was having my children, you know they were small and he was working and he got a cab to take us to church, you know, 'cause he was working and come to find out that when he, the cab driver couldn't take us anymore because he say, "Ms. Southern if I'm not there to pick you all up it's because I have a run" you know, "and if I'm not there in the front" you know. So I said, "Well okay then and so what happened a couple a Sundays when the children and I it was a beautiful day, but when we came out of church it started pouring out raining and we was at the corner waiting for a cab or a bus to come, you know. I said, "Ya'll see a cab. Stop and see if a bus coming" and this nice elderly couple came along and he said, "Ms. Southern, get in this car." I said, "I'm waiting..." "Get in this car. It's going to pour down on you all." I said, "Well there's too many of us" and he said, "That's all right. Sit on top of each other." And he brought, him and his wife, picked us up and brought us home and he did that for a few Sundays. I told him and I said, "Mr. Clarence" I said, "one of these days when you and your wife won't be able to drive we'll be able to pick you all up." His response to me was, "Don't worry about us Ms. Southern. You might do it for some other members." Momma Londo was the first member, Uncle Ben was the second. We've been

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picking up somebody all the time. Just like he said, "Don't worry about us Ms. Southern. You'll be picking up somebody." I'm still doing it, way back yonder. It's a blessing huh? "You don't mind Ms. Southern?" and I don't turn them down because I knew the...

Daughter: Cheryl would call us would come. We'll just come pick mom up, whoever she wanted to pick up, we picked them up too.

MS: But it was, it was a, it's a joy, it was just a joy, you know. When my children was all gone and everything so that keeps me busy 'cause I cried two months when they all left. When she left Lord have mercy. Then she came back, I was sitting, when she came with all her clothes and I would say, "Alicia, you want any..." "No momma, I can do it" you know. I said right there, "Well, okay mom I'm gone." I said, "Alright" and I went to the door and I watch her until she drive away. "I did it with all of them. They didn't know that and I didn't want to them that, but I did with all of them. Each one was leaving the nest and I couldn't take it. When she was the last one I said, "Oh Lord have mercy."

Daughter: What, Anthony left before me?

MS: Anthony stayed here until he was 20. No, she stayed here until she was 23. Yeah, she was 23.

Daughter: Yeah, right after I graduated from college.

MS: Anthony went into the service and when he came back he stayed here, I think then he was about 25. He, he, you know boys something else, you know. Yeah, he was ready to go, he was ready to go, but he got his house. He didn't go stay with nobody. My eldest daughter was in real estate and they got him a house and he's in that house right today. He was scared to death. He said, "Mom, I don't know how I'm going to pay for that house. Momma I don't make that kind

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of money.” I said, “Keep God with you. Pray and ask God to bless you, that, pray to God that you don’t get sick, you know, that you lose it like that.” I hope we answered your...

NG: Yes, you did. Thank you for time.

MS: Uh-hmm. Yeah, I enjoyed it. I didn’t know what it was about, but...[tape ended]

