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Robert Olinger interview and David Johnson for the Lest We Forget Collection of Oral Histories

Robert Johnson

Robert Olinger

Jeff Moyer

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Lest We Forget Interview Project

Interview date: May 22, 2003

Interviewer: Jeff Moyer

Interviewee: Robert Olinger & David Johnson

Jeff Moyer: Alright, we're going to get started. This is tape #3 in the Lest We Forget Project. It's May 22, 2003. And I'm talking to David and Bob. David what's your last name?

David Johnson: Johnson.

JM: David Johnson.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: And Bob?

Robert Olinger: Robert Milton.

JM: Your middle name is Milton?

RO: (nods)

JM: What's your last name?

RO: Olinger.

JM: Olinger?

RO: Olinger. O-L-N-G-E-O-N.

JM: Olinger.

RO: Mhmm.

JM: Ok. So we're talking to David and Robert or Bob as he likes to be called. And guys you know what we, what we have explained is that we're interviewing--I'm interviewing people and getting their stories so that we can tell everybody what happened. You know your stories are like the stories of many people but I want to know your story. So you--you're here because you both lived for a long time at the Orient State Institute.

RO: Mhmm.

DJ: I lived in Don Hall, I did.

JM: You lived in?

DJ: Don Hall.

JM: Don Hall.

DJ: Right across from College C.

JM: Right across from College C--

DJ: Yeah.

RO: Yeah, up by Elmwood. Elmwood, where we used to be.

JM: Uh-huh

RO: I was a good (unintelligible)

DJ: It was.

JM: Did you like--where did you live?

RO: Elmwood.

JM: You both--you lived in Elmwood and you lived in?

DJ: Don Hall.

JM: Don Hall. What was it like? What uh--

DJ: Nice place.

JM: It was a nice place?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Yeah? What was nice about it?

DJ: I like it.

JM: Yeah?

DJ: Yeah. Get out every night and swing.

JM: You go out on the swings every night? Was there a playground?

DJ: Not a playground. Just the swings.

JM: Oh, just swings?

DJ: Yeah, I like it.

RO: Every night before we go to bed we usually take walks.

JM: Is that right? You take walks then?

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: Yeah. Sometimes we do.

JM: Do you remember um...what's your first--do you know old you were when you went there? David or Bob?

RO: Uh-un.

DJ: I know uh--

JM: You were children?

DJ: A couple kids.

JM: You were little boys when you went?

DJ: When I was a little boy I played with doll babies all the time. I used to. Not anymore. Grown up now.

JM: Yeah, but when you went to Orient, you were a child?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Uh-huh.

DJ: Long time ago.

JM: Yeah. Well, when you were living there...let's-- what uh did you--what was the food like? Was the food good?

DJ: Nice. They had pancakes and everything.

JM: They had pancakes there?

DJ: Yeah, everything.

JM: Did you like the food then?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Yeah.

DJ: Pretty good.

JM: How about you Bob?

RO: [No, I didn't like it. Night and day, night and day. Some days I'd get the same thing. That's what I didn't like. We used to get cold cuts and cheese up there. Bean salad.] (paraphrased)

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: Mhmm.

JM: So you didn't like it because they served the same food all the time?

RO: Yeah, plus you got tired of it.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Uh-huh.

DJ: Can I use the bathroom? I got to go to the bathroom. (gets up and leaves)

RO: I'll stay here.

JM: Ok. Well, is it ok if we continue to talk while he's gone, Bob?

RO: Yes, it's fine go ahead.

JM: Ok, um when you were--when you were living there you said you worked in the laundry?

RO: Yep.

JM: Talk--tell me about what you did.

RO: [Oh I sort clothes out or sort clothes out. Stack them up against those things--walls or something like that.] (paraphrased)

JM: You sorted clothes?

RO: Yeah. Yeah.

RO: [(unintelligible) laundry dump in a soaking, we had a big soaking...the clothes are in.]
(paraphrased)

JM: A big soap machine?

RO: No, soaking room, a big room they soak and dump your clothes out in.

JM: Ok, a big mover?

RO: It was a job but we got it done.

JM: Did you like working in the laundry?

RO: It wasn't bad, no.

JM: Did you work there every day?

RO: Usually Saturday and Sunday. Then they cut it down.

JM: Not Saturdays and Sundays?

RO: We did. We did one time.

JM: You did work on Saturdays?

RO: One time we had to work on Sunday one time.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: They cut it down though. The supervisor cut it down tells us we need rest. Take time off.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: (unintelligible) Frasier. He's the superintendent up there.

JM: Oh, Frasier was the superintendent?

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: I was hoping he was the superintendent too then because he was a boss. He used to pay us guys.

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: Yep.

JM: Did you--where--do you remember where you uh slept?

RO: In the upstairs ward. We had a big dormitory.

JM: Yeah, how many guys were in the dormitory?

RO: (unintelligible) I don't know how many they have.

JM: Uh-hun. A lot of guys?

RO: [Yeah, we had a fan, thank god. The fan would keep that place cool.] (paraphrased)

JM: I'm sorry?

RO: It had a big fan turn on--

JM: Oh, a big fan that--

RO: Oh, it'd keep you cool. It was hot in that day.

JM: Uh-hun. Did you have any privacy? Could you be by yourself?

RO: All guys were by ourselves. All guys was.

JM: You could be by yourself?

RO: Everybody was.

JM: Everybody was by themselves?

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: Huh. Well the dormitory you weren't by yourself?

RO: Yeah.

JM: Weren't you in a room with a lot of other guys?

RO: It was a big dorm where you sleep at.

JM: Yeah.

RO: (unintelligible) slept on the other side.

JM: Some slept on some side and some slept on the other side huh?

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: What about um the weekends? What did you do when you weren't working?

RO: Well, I'd take walks. We could go places.

JM: You go places?

RO: I go to Columbus one time. On a Greyhound.

JM: Oh yeah? Uh-hun.

RO: We had a big just show (unintelligible). And we'd stay up there a lot.

JM: I'm sorry what, what happened? What Bob? Tell me again.

RO: Rented a car. Somebody gave us a car and we go up there. I want you to stay and be back by 6:00. Eat up there, have fun.

JM: Oh is that right?

RO: Columbus. Yeah big bus station up there.

JM: The bus station in Columbus?

RO: Yeah, good size.

JM: So you'd take a Greyhound from Orient to Columbus?

RO: Yeah, and we'd come back and get a pass (unintelligible).

JM: You got a pass?

RO: Yeah, some kind of pass you'd be up there (unintelligible).

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: Ok. So it sounds like uh the weekends you had some fun?

RO: Oh yeah, walk around. All that.

JM: Walk around the grounds?

RO: Mmhmm. (nods)

JM: Do you think everybody uh...did everybody work there?

RO: Yeah. Some of the guys worked different places. Some was at the plant and all that.

JM: Some what?

RO: (unintelligible) where they keep coal at. In a big boiler room they used to work at.

JM: In the boiler room?

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: Had a whistle on top of the roof.

JM: Oh yeah? Whistle on the roof? They'd blow that?

RO: Had a fire engine bull whistle.

JM: They what?

RO: They had a fire engine bull whistle. In the fire engines--

JM: Oh the fire engines.

RO: Yeah, they had a fire department house with the engines (unintelligible).

JM: Oh they had a fire engine--fire station right there on--at Orient?

RO: Yeah. (David Johnson returns to his seat)

JM: Uh-hun. Ok.

RO: (Unintelligible).

JM: Mmhmm. David we were just talking--Bob was telling us about working in the laundry and taking trips.

DJ: That's what I used to do.

JM: Did you have a job?

DJ: Working in the laundry.

JM: You worked in the laundry too?

DJ: Long time ago.

JM: Uh-hun. Did you work in the laundry with Bob? Did you know Bob then?

DJ: Yeah, I think so. Yeah.

JM: Uh-hun. How about weekends? What did you do on the weekends?

DJ: You mean at home? In the home?

JM: You stayed in the home?

DJ: Yeah, when we lived there.

JM: You stayed in your dormitory?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Was it fun or was it boring?

DJ: It wasn't that fun. (unintelligible) apartment. Got a TV of my own now.

JM: You have a TV of your own now?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Yeah. You get to watch what you want.

DJ: Yeah. Got a TV (rest is unintelligible).

RO: We got pushed out. The social worker pushed us out.

JM: The social worker placed you out?

RO: Yep. (nods)

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: (unintelligible) the different homes you know. I used to be at Camp Lookout. I live at Piedmont now.

JM: You live at Piedmont now?

RO: Yep.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: I used to be on 1st street before.

JM: I'm sorry?

RO: 1st street.

JM: On 1st street?

RO: Yeah, I been there for a while.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: I moved to (unintelligible) and after I moved to Piedmont.

JM: You two live in the same house now?

RO: (nods)

DJ: Downstairs.

JM: You live downstairs?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: But you live in the same house?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: It's nice to be with a buddy isn't it?

DJ: Sure is.

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: I sleep right across from him.

JM: Oh do you?

DJ: On this side (points to his right).

JM: Uh-hun. I want to ask you a question about when you were living at Orient. What happened when people didn't obey the rules? When they didn't uh...when they did something that uh wasn't right.

RO: They put you in the chair for punishment.

DJ: They put you in the chair for punishment.

JM: They put you in the chair?

RO: Yeah sure they put you in the chair. I been up there. I know they put you in the chair.

JM: What, what would happen when you were in the chair?

RO: Well if you didn't come in at a certain time (unintelligible) they put you in the chair. (unintelligible) 7:00 don't they put you in the chair and make a report on you. Put you in the chair.

DJ: Make a report on you.

JM: So they'd make you sit down in the chair?

RO: (nods)

JM: And stay there for a long time?

RO: Until they tell you to get off.

JM: Until they told you to get off. Where was the chair?

RO: Out in the classroom.

DJ: Classroom.

JM: In the classroom?

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: Yes ma'am. I mean yes sir.

JM: What happened if you got out of the chair?

RO: They just keep you from falling out.

DJ: Keep you from falling out.

JM: Keep you from falling out.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Uh-hun. Were there some guys who got in trouble a lot?

RO: Some did.

DJ: Some did.

RO: (unintelligible) you come in at 7:00 you don't do it buddy and they put you in the chair if you come in late.

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Did people smoke cigarettes there?

RO: I caught someone.

JM: Did you?

RO: (nods)

JM: Did you smoke when you were at Orient?

RO: Yeah, I just quit 'cause it take so much money. And the cancer side of it.

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: I just quit.

JM: Did they give you cigarettes at Orient?

RO: (unintelligible) I just go to the store and buy them. In stores.

JM: You could buy them there?

RO: In (unintelligible) store yeah.

JM: So guys, how, how young were guys when they started to smoke?

RO: Not long, they was.

JM: Pretty young.

RO: Yeah.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: My brother started smoking when he was eleven or twelve. Just a little kid.

RO: My doctor told me, he says I don't want you smoking. You might get a cancer. You could. You're gonna get cancer smoking is what you get.

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: You get that and it eats you up.

JM: When you were at Orient did you have uh...could you um...live where you wanted to? Or did you just live where they told you? Did you get to choose where you wanted to live?

DJ: Yeah.

RO: Yep we want to.

DJ: Don Hall.

JM: Could you uh did you have any um any girlfriends at Orient? Did you have a girlfriend?

RO: We was gonna see them one time at the girls' college.

JM: Yeah?

RO: We was gonna visit one time.

DJ: I didn't have any. I don't have none.

RO: We used to go visit girls. Talk to 'em.

JM: Were there ever dances or social events?

RO: We'd have a dance every once and awhile.

DJ: Dance once and awhile.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: Did you guys uh were you there at the holidays? At Thanksgiving and Christmas?

RO: I went home for Christmas a year ago.

DJ: I was too.

JM: But when you were at Orient did you ever go home for Christmas?

RO: (nods) My dad used to come pick me up.

DJ: Mine don't.

JM: You stayed there then? What was it like at Christmas? What happened at Christmas?

DJ: I stayed at home and had Christmas downstairs and everything.

JM: Where you are now, you mean? Uh-hun.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: When you were living at Orient, did they celebrate Christmas?

RO: Yep. (nods)

JM: Yeah?

RO: They have a Christmas tree, they have lights on and everything.

DJ: Lights on and everything.

JM: And everything? Ok.

DJ: Yep.

JM: So were you glad when you found out you were going to get out?

RO: (nods) On a Friday the social worker said, come on (unintelligible) take the train.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: Went back up and turned around went to a group home on 1st street.

JM: So you went into some training with the Salvation Army first and then you--

RO: I was in a warehouse for a while.

JM: Were, were you happy when you found out you were going to be getting out?

RO: (nods) Yep.

JM: Looking forward to living in the community?

RO: Yep.

JM: How about you, David?

DJ: Same thing.

JM: You're happy?

DJ: Yeah. Happy where I am right now.

JM: What do you like, what's better? What's better than Orient? It sounded like a pretty good place.

DJ: It wasn't too bad though. It was pretty good.

JM: Was there anything about it you didn't like?

DJ: No.

JM: Well, you're a very agreeable fella, huh?

DJ: Yeah, I was.

RO: We used to get up 6:00 in the morning, eat (unintelligible) and go to work 7:00.

JM: You'd get up at 6:00 and go to work at 7:00?

RO: Yeah.

JM: What was the cafeteria like? Do you remember going to the cafeteria?

RO: There were dining rooms...downstairs, yeah downstairs.

JM: Uh-hun.

DJ: Big dining room.

JM: Big ones, huh?

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Were they loud?

RO: Usually go on Sundays. We don't like the food we liked (unintelligible) started to buy something 'cause sometimes my food wasn't good. (unintelligible) It was greasy, all that stuff.

JM: The food was greasy sometimes?

RO: (unintelligible) was too I ate one time.

JM: What was it?

RO: (unintelligible) was greasy one time.

JM: I'm sorry, I still didn't get what you said.

RO: We had greasy chicken. I didn't eat it at all.

JM: Oh the chicken! Oh yeah.

DJ: I didn't eat it. It too greasy.

JM: It was too greasy for you too David?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Yeah. Do you like the food where you are now, living in the community?

DJ: Yeah.

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: Much better?

DJ: There wasn't no place else.

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: I'm sorry David?

DJ: I wouldn't live--

JM: You wouldn't live anywhere else?

DJ: No.

JM: Well that's great. If someone said hey, we have a good opportunity for you. They're-we're gonna re-open Orient, want to go back?

RO: Nope, I got a job. I'm staying with it.

DJ: No thanks.

JM: But I thought it was a pretty good place?

DJ: It wasn't too bad though.

RO: I've gotta come here and get a job, make money. I'm a janitor keep the floors clean, mopping, wash tables.

JM: You like that better than the laundry?

RO: How I got out here if I were in--I ain't gonna go back and do it no more, nope. I-- How they gonna open if they're gonna make that into a penitentiary? They're gonna make a penitentiary out of that.

JM: Yeah. You know, they're not going--I'm not asking you if you really wanted to go back. I'm just saying if someone said that to you, if someone said hey, we're opening Orient again. Want to go back?

RO: (shakes head) Nope.

DJ: No.

RO: I'm staying where I'm at.

DJ: Staying where I'm at.

RO: I've got a good job and stick with it.

DJ: Never going back.

JM: It's better where you are?

DJ: Yeah.

RO: Yeah.

JM: What's better about it?

DJ: Nice place to live.

RO: Place that I go out and work.

JM: It's a nicer place to live and you get to work at a job, earn some money?

RO: I get a check and we got to keep the floors clean.

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: Mop, wash tables.

JM: David, how 'bout you?

DJ: Uh...

JM: What kind of work do you do?

DJ: Clean my room up and everything.

JM: Do you work outside? Do you work in a workshop?

DJ: (unintelligible). On Wednesday and Friday I do.

JM: You do Wednesday and Friday?

DJ: (unintelligible). Wednesday and Friday.

JM: (unintelligible) Uh-hun.

DJ: I don't like it.

JM: You don't like it?

DJ: I like it.

JM: Oh, you like it? Good.

DJ: Yeah. Well, you know you both are very nice guys.

RO: And see, I after 12 I go work at 1:00, I get home at 5:00. Job I'm at.

JM: You go home at 5:00?

RO: Yeah. I go at 1.

JM: That must be good.

RO: Pretty good job. It's nice pay, keep the place clean.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: I'm a janitor. I keep the floors clean.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: I'm not going back to Orient for nothing, nope. I'll stay where I'm at.

JM: Well, if a...if someone said to you, what's, what were the best things about Orient? What were the best things there? What was the best thing about living there?

RO: I've forgotten.

JM: What were the worst things about living there?

RO: They beat kids up with a strap. Beat the patients up. I seen that happen.

JM: You've seen people beaten with straps?

RO: Big razor strap like that (gestures the length) hittin' them around.

DJ: Put them in the electric chair too.

RO: Lock 'em in the side room. Big key to lock 'em up. I don't see no sense in that at all.

JM: So they'd take them to a side room and beat them with a strap?

RO: Yep. (unintelligible) superintendent (unintelligible). There ain't no sense in hittin' nobody. They didn't do nothing, no sense in hittin' 'em.

JM: You heard him say that?

RO: It was the superintendent one day.

JM: So, did you uh what happened after they were beaten? They must have been uh they would go to the hospital?

RO: Some had bruises, cuts on their back. All that stuff.

JM: Bruises and cuts on their back?

RO: Yeah. Mmhmm.

JM: Like they were whipped, huh?

RO: Ain't supposed to hit nobody. Rules.

DJ: Sure is.

JM: So, it sounds like--you know why I was asking before if people did something bad you said they just made them sit in the chair, but sometimes people got beaten up, huh?

DJ: Electric chair. Put you in the electric chair, they do.

JM: I'm sorry David?

DJ: Put you in the electric chair if you do.

JM: They put you in the electric chair?

DJ: Yeah.

RO: (unintelligible)

DJ: (unintelligible) sometimes they do.

JM: Well, that's uh...I don't think that happened at Orient, I hope. That happened at the penitentiary, I think.

RO: (unintelligible).

JM: Someone stole their money from (unintelligible).

RO: They stole the tenant's money.

JM: The tenant's money?

RO: The check. They got paid. They stole that.

JM: From when they were living at Orient?

RO: Yep, and they got away, didn't catch 'em.

JM: So when I ask you what the worst things about Orient are, it sounds like things got stolen?

RO: They steal money up there too. They steal money.

JM: Sometimes people got beaten up.

RO: And they take your money too.

JM: Mmhmm.

DJ: I had, I had a record player (unintelligible) green one. That's gone now. My record--

JM: Your record player? What happened to it?

DJ: The green one? Somebody took it.

JM: When you were at Orient?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Mmhmm.

DJ: (unintelligible) records. Green one.

JM: So your record player? Anything else ever get--did other things get taken too?

DJ: No, just, just my record, that's all.

JM: Just your records.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: That must have made you feel sad.

DJ: It does.

RO: (unintelligible) took a belt and hit you across the room. I seen it happen too. I turn it in.

JM: You've seen him hit them with a belt right across the room?

RO: I went right in and turned it in to the office. They come down too. Far as they got for hitting someone with a belt. No sense in that. Take a broom on the (unintelligible) broom on the back too.

JM: Broom--hit him with brooms across their backs?

RO: With a strap, yeah.

JM: With a strap across their back?

RO: On the rear end (unintelligible). People got mad about that.

JM: Hit them across the rear end you said?

RO: With a leather strap, yeah.

JM: With a leather strap?

RO: Yeah. They shouldn't do it. They did it anyhow. I turned the guy in for it, too.

JM: You turned the guy in?

RO: I had a right to.

JM: Good for you. That was the right thing to do.

RO: (unintelligible) Don't you ever come back and we're done. No paying him for hittin' the kids. They fired him for it.

JM: Did people get hit very often?

RO: I went down one time and hear somebody screaming. There was a woman had uh big uh you call it a belt like that, hittin'. I say woman (unintelligible). I took it away from her. I took her right up to the office. I took her up with me too.

JM: So you saw, you saw someone getting beaten and you took the belt away.

RO: I took the woman up to the office, too.

JM: You heard someone screaming?

RO: I said come on. Let's go to the office. Frasier thanked me for doing it. She got fired for hittin' kids. I don't see sense. You shouldn't hit kids. There ain't no sense in that. There ain't.

JM: No.

DJ: No.

JM: So, you heard people screaming? You could hear them--did that happen more than once?

RO: More than that once.

JM: Lots of times?

RO: Yeah.

DJ: Lot of times.

RO: (unintelligible) strap there. I took her up to the office. Superintendent didn't say thank you. He got fired for it. There ain't no sense in hittin' no kids. There ain't no sense in that.

JM: No there isn't.

DJ: No. Sure ain't.

RO: Beat 'em up (unintelligible) tell them to sit down and keep still. All that stuff. I turned it in.

JM: Sounds like you uh really stood up for the people. You really helped them. Is that right Rob? Bob?

RO: Yeah. Supervisor (unintelligible).

DJ: Right too. Right.

JM: So, when I ask you what uh what bad things happened there, why--how come you wouldn't want to go back, it sounds like it was a place where people really got hurt, huh?

RO: (unintelligible).

DJ: (unintelligible) I don't want to go back either.

JM: You don't want to go back?

DJ: No.

RO: I got a good job. I--

JM: What was the worst thing about it for you David?

DJ: Uh, kinda nice. It was.

JM: Uh it was kinda nice but you said you wouldn't go back. I like to go back to nice places.

DJ: I know.

JM: What wasn't nice about it?

DJ: Uh, they beat you up and everything.

JM: Did they ever beat you up?

DJ: No. Sometimes they do once and awhile. Not very often.

JM: I'm sorry they--they--they try to--

DJ: Sometimes they do. Not very often.

JM: They try to beat you up you said?

DJ: Yeah, once in a while they do. Sometimes they do.

RO: Another thing is I got my release and I signed my release papers. I'm not going anymore.

JM: I'm sorry?

RO: Release papers. I got released out of there.

Brenda: (off camera) Got release papers.

JM: Oh, you got the release papers?

RO: (unintelligible) got my job and staying (unintelligible).

JM: Ah yeah. Yeah.

RO: I'm not going anymore, no sir. I had enough of that.

JM: Do you think uh anybody would want to live there?

RO: I dunno.

DJ: No, not me.

RO: Takes too much money to stay up there and all that stuff.

DJ: It does.

RO: Takes money for cottages. All that stuff.

JM: Well, it takes not--not the money part but I'm thinking more what it was like for people who live there.

RO: I'm staying where I'm at.

JM: Did you--let me ask you this, could you uh did you wear nice clothes when you lived there?

RO: Oh, yeah.

JM: Did you?

RO: Mmhmm. I washed my own clothes out.

JM: You had to--you kept your own clothes?

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: I did too.

RO: Wash them in the laundry.

JM: How about you, David?

DJ: Same thing.

JM: You got your own clothes?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Your own shoes?

RO: Yeah.

JM: You always had a coat?

RO: Oh yeah. We had everything.

DJ: Yeah. Everything.

JM: Did everybody?

RO: Everybody had 'em up there.

JM: They had good clothes?

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: Yeah, everybody.

JM: Well, it's certainly better living in the community isn't it?

RO: Oh, yeah community. Nice.

JM: Yeah, now you've got, now you have, you're living in a nice house. You have privacy. You have your own rooms.

RO: Got your own room.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Your own television. You can watch what you want when you want to watch it.

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: Go to sleep when you're tired. Wake up when you're not.

RO: I go downstairs, hit the bed, and go to sleep.

JM: What was it like? Did they make you go to bed at a certain time at Orient?

RO: Oh, they didn't make you go to bed early. 6:00 one day I was out.

DJ: 6:00.

JM: Made you go to bed at 6:00?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: In the winter time?

RO: Yep.

JM: Were you tired then?

RO: I just got tired (unintelligible).

DJ: A little bit.

JM: Yeah. But they told you when to get up and when to go to bed?

RO: Yep. Get up at 6:00 in the morning. Go to work 7:00.

JM: Did you always have enough to eat?

RO: Oh, yeah.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Yeah? You never went hungry?

RO: Not me. I always bought my lunch.

JM: You ever see anyone get their--get food stolen from them? People take other people's food?

RO: Sometimes they do that.

JM: They do that?

DJ: Sometimes they do that. They do.

JM: But that wouldn't be good.

DJ: It would.

JM: Then you'd be hungry.

RO: If they open that place up. I won't ever go back. I'm in the community. I'm staying in the community. Nice day job. Nice supervisor.

JM: Well you know what, when we were talking about you guys coming over, I'll tell you that the people that were bragging about both of you about what good workers you are, and good community members you are, how proud they are to know you so. And those places are closing. We're not, we're never going to have those terrible places again.

RO: I'm staying where I'm at. I'm doing good.

JM: Yeah. If you--if you were going to um...if you could go back and change one thing about Orient to make it better while you were there, just pretend that you could go back and change one thing, what would you have changed? What would be better about it than--

RO: I'm staying here. I ain't--never go up there. I got it made. I got my release papers.

JM: Yep.

RO: Yep. Social worker's the one that go me out. Her name was Kelly. She got me out.

JM: She got you out? How long you been out?

RO: I don't know how long I been out. I think about 3 or 4 years I think.

JM: Is that right?

RO: Yep. Community's a good place to stay.

JM: Well, it sounds like you're in a great place, in a great job.

RO: I like my job. I like the people I work with. Like them too.

JM: Now when you two got out and you--when did you first uh meet each other as friends? Was it in the house you're living in now?

RO: Where'd I meet you at one time Dave? Outside somewhere?

DJ: Yeah, outside someplace.

RO: Outside one time.

JM: Uh-hun. Outside?

RO: Yeah.

JM: But you said, hey I remember you. You were at Orient. We knew each other at Orient.

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: Yeah, long time ago.

JM: Long time ago.

DJ: Yeah.

RO: They just closed the place up. Didn't have enough money. Going to make a pen out of it.

JM: Yeah. They're turning it into a penitentiary.

DJ: They had uh I say something. They had a store. Like a coffee shop. They had one over there. I have breakfast on my own now. Long time ago. They got coffee don't they Bob?

RO: Coffee on certain mornings.

DJ: In the mornings and everything.

RO: Sometimes I'd get a bite to eat and go back to work. During your lunchtime.

DJ: Then you go back to work.

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: Did you say you worked in the laundry too?

DJ: Yeah, a long time ago.

JM: So you worked together in the laundry at Orient?

DJ: Mmm...

JM: You don't remember that?

RO: Uh-uh

DJ: No I don't remember it.

RO: They had a big truck to back up to the clothes they bring you. They back the truck up and they unload it. We take and sort 'em out and stuff.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: And all the clothes one time (unintelligible). A lot of clothes.

JM: A whole lot--washing clothes for everybody who lived there?

RO: Guys had to wash them all the time. Hospital stuff, I had to wash it. It was terrible.

JM: Was it?

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: It wasn't too bad.

JM: Soiled sheets? Dirty sheets?

RO: Oh yeah. You put soap and wash 'em out.

JM: Mmhmm.

DJ: Not everything.

JM: Did you like your job?

RO: Yeah, I liked the job pretty good.

JM: Did you have any uh...you ever have any friends there that uh didn't like it?

RO: Some of them didn't.

JM: Some didn't like it there? How come?

RO: I don't know. They just wanted to get out.

JM: They just wanted to get out?

RO: They got tired of it. You get tired standing up all the time. You get tired of it.

JM: Yeah.

RO: I'm gonna stay in the community (unintelligible). I got it made here. I won't go back for nothing, nope.

JM: No.

DJ: No way either.

JM: No, you'll never go back again.

RO: I got a good place to stay.

JM: You know one of the reasons we're making this video and this cd is so we can tell everyone else about what it was like. Because some people don't know. They weren't there. They didn't know anybody who was there.

RO: Had to take a bath or shower in the morning. Get cleaned up.

JM: You take a shower in the morning?

RO: Yeah, (unintelligible) take a shower I do every night. Gotta have clean clothes to wear.

JM: Is it nice to be able to take a shower when you want to?

RO: There's a temperature (unintelligible).

JM: Could you control the temperature at Orient?

RO: No, the attendant does that.

DJ: Attendant does that.

JM: Oh, the attendant--

RO: Yeah, he turns the showers on.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: Put soap on, make you feel good, get cleaned up.

JM: So when you were living at Orient you couldn't even set your own water temperature?

RO: Uh-hun the attendant does that.

DJ: Attendant does that.

JM: Was it too hot or too cold sometimes?

RO: (unintelligible) get scalded.

JM: He--on purpose he did that?

RO: Sometimes (unintelligible) you'd get scalded. (unintelligible) it was too cold sometimes.

DJ: Right.

JM: So the attendant would turn it up too hot and everyone would get scalded?

RO: Uh-hun. He'd throw us out or we'd get burnt.

JM: Do you think he did that on purpose?

RO: No, (unintelligible) if somebody get scalded they get in trouble for it.

JM: But sometimes they did scald people?

RO: They had to cool the water down.

JM: They'd have to cool the water down?

RO: Yeah or it'd make it too hot.

DJ: Make it too hot.

JM: And everyone would get burned who was standing under the water.

RO: Get scalded.

JM: Did that ever happen to you?

RO: (shakes head no)

DJ: Sometimes. Not very often.

JM: Mmm. I don't think I'd like that at all.

DJ: I wouldn't either.

JM: That's terrible. So you--at Orient you had to shower when they told you to shower.

RO: The attendant told you you could take a shower. He said you could get cleaned up. Had to clean up every day, keep clean.

DJ: Every day.

JM: Yeah.

RO: Keep your feet clean, your whole body clean and all that.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: Makes you feel good.

JM: Oh, it does make you feel good to be clean?

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: It does.

JM: But at Orient you couldn't take a shower when you wanted to. You had to take a shower when they said to take a shower.

RO: The attendant told us to take a (unintelligible) do what they tell us to do.

JM: Would everybody go and take a shower all at once?

RO: One at a time.

DJ: One at a time.

JM: Just one at a time?

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: One at a time.

JM: Hmm. And they would have the control to the water?

RO: (nods)

DJ: (nods) Yes sir.

JM: What about getting up? Did you get up when they told you to get up?

RO: They had a big whistle they blew we got up.

JM: A whistle?

RO: Yeah, they blew one and we got up at 6:00 one morning.

JM: So that's how they woke you up in the morning? With a whistle?

RO: Yep. (unintelligible) 7:00 we go--go to work at the butchers.

JM: Do you remember that too, David? Is that how they woke you up?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: With a whistle?

DJ: No, not very often.

JM: Not a whistle? How did they wake you up most mornings?

DJ: Uh they'd come down wake me up about 7:00--

RO: The attendants would come and wake us up. The attendants.

JM: Were the attendants nice?

RO: Yeah they'd say come on it's time to get up and you'd say ok. (talks over David).

DJ: Yeah they are nice.

JM: Sounds like the attendants weren't always nice. Sometimes there were attendants who weren't very nice.

RO: No they ain't nice.

DJ: They ain't nice.

JM: What would the ones that weren't nice, do?

DJ: Uh... (unintelligible)

JM: I'm sorry David, what?

DJ: (unintelligible) like Kelly...Lisa and everybody. They nice.

JM: They are--they were nice, huh?

DJ: Yeah they are nice. Nice to get along with.

JM: Oh, you're thinking about the people you live with now? Who are your workers now.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Yeah. But at Orient the attendants, some were nice and some weren't nice, right?

DJ: Right.

JM: And what--the ones that weren't nice, were they the ones who would hit people with leather straps and scald them?

DJ: Yes. Sometimes they do, once in a while.

RO: Yeah, a strap about that wide (gestures).

JM: I'm blind. How wide is that?

RO: Big one. They hit him around.

JM: Bigger than my belt?

RO: Something like that.

JM: Like that?

RO: Yeah. They'd hit 'em. Hit 'em hard. (unintelligible) I'll take my boy out if you beat him up. He went to the office. They said you take him home. (unintelligible) eyes, face and all that.

JM: Bruise marks all over his eyes and his face?

RO: Yeah. Attendant done it.

JM: The attendant did it?

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: Beat him up?

RO: I don't see no sense in doing that. 'Cause the rule is you ain't supposed to hit nobody.

DJ: Sure don't.

JM: The attendants weren't supposed to hit people but sometimes they did?

RO: That's the rules now.

JM: The rules were you couldn't hit.

RO: Uh-hun.

JM: But you--and you saw someone get hit and their face was all bruised?

RO: I went and reported it in right away.

DJ: Right.

JM: I'm sorry? What Bob?

RO: I reported it in, I said.

JM: You reported it in. Yeah. Well it sounds like you were really helping protect people.

RO: I took a belt away (unintelligible) I say you're not gonna do nothing. Supervisor come in and say, you're fired. They got paid the one day and got their checks taken away.

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: I don't see nobody hitting like that. I don't see no sense in that.

JM: No. No there's no...there's no excuse for hitting somebody.

RO: Parents one time had to come and parents told me what happened? Parents didn't want me to get beat up. People got mad about them beating their kids up.

JM: And when you say kids, are--do you mean--these are...were young men or old?

RO: Yeah, the class one time had small kids in a class one day I was.

JM: I'm sorry Bob, what?

RO: They had a class one time with kids in it. (unintelligible) I tell--I tell you don't you ever hit me young man. I took the belt away from him. I push him back to get the belt away from him. I had the right to from the office.

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: Yep. I say here. Ain't no sense in hittin' kids like that. They don't do nothin'.

DJ: Sure ain't. They don't do nothing.

RO: Nothing like that, they beat 'em up one time.

JM: Why were they beating them up?

RO: For smartness.

JM: For being smart?

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: For saying something they didn't like?

RO: (unintelligible)

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: Mmhmm. No sense. There ain't no sense in it.

(whispering off screen)

JM: Oh, Bob you worked in the Daycare, huh?

RO: For a while.

JM: When you were at Orient you worked at a Daycare?

RO: I went to different cottages and worked.

JM: Different cottages?

RO: Yeah.

JM: So you worked with younger kids?

RO: Yeah, help them out one morning.

JM: Ah, and that's when you'd see them getting beaten up?

RO: They used to have seizures. If someone falls, somebody falls on the floor, I'd take 'em to the hospital.

JM: Oh, if they had a seizure you'd help get them to the hospital?

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: If somebody cuts head, something happened that day, head bashed in. Yeah they'd take seizures.

JM: If they fell down they had a seizure and hurt their head?

RO: I had to take them to the hospital so they got well. One time I had to stitch his head one day. Gashed his head wide open.

JM: He fell when he had a seizure?

RO: (nods) I used to take them up often up there.

JM: You had to pick them up often?

RO: (unintelligible)

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: (nods)

JM: When you--when you were living there and taking care of...the kids in daycare, and uh protecting them from getting beaten, was it just one person that beat them or did that happen more than once?

RO: More than once.

JM: It happened more than once?

RO: (nods) Oh yeah.

JM: did they hit them with their fists, or with belts--

RO: Belts! I see it happen. I don't see no sense in hittin' somebody. No sense in that.

JM: No, there's no sense.

DJ: Sure ain't.

RO: Tell you to shut up and sit down and all that.

JM: Tell you--little children to shut up and sit down? David, when you were uh--did you--you didn't do that same kind of work did you? Did you--helping younger kids in their cottages?

DJ: Younger kids. Just younger kids. That's all.

JM: Younger kids?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: You did work with younger kids?

DJ: Yeah, a long time ago.

JM: Uh-hun. Did you--did you ever see that kind of thing happen? The kind of things we're talking about kids getting hit?

DJ: No, I don't think so.

JM: Yeah.

DJ: I don't think so.

JM: Uh-hun. Did um, when you were living there did anyone ever die? Who was living there?

DJ: Just that one.

JM: One guy who died?

DJ: It wasn't a guy. It was a woman, it was.

JM: A woman died?

DJ: She's walking across the road and he got hit by a car.

JM: She got hit by a car?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Did you know her?

DJ: No, one of my friends though do. I didn't know two of them. Not all of them that don't. Just that one.

JM: Just the one?

DJ: Yeah, just the one.

RO: There was a guy one time went swimming and drowned one day up at Orient. A guy went in icy (unintelligible) and he drowned.

JM: Did you know him?

RO: Yeah, he was--the age four (unintelligible)

JM: Did they have a funeral for him?

RO: Yeah, and they had to pull him out. He was dead.

JM: He was dead?

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: And they buried him there?

RO: They took him to the morgue at the hospital. They took him to the morgue.

JM: Uh-hun.

RO: And they buried him. (unintelligible)

JM: I'm sorry?

RO: It was about that deep (unintelligible).

JM: The water was?

RO: Yeah. I dove in and pulled him out.

JM: Did you um, did you ever see the doctor when you were at Orient? Or the dentist?

RO: Oh yeah.

JM: Yeah? Were they good to you?

RO: Oh yeah.

DJ: Sure was.

JM: Yeah. They were pretty good? Did you ever stay at the hospital there?

RO: They tore it down.

DJ: Tore it down, they did.

JM: They tore it down?

RO: They made a new hospital.

JM: Yeah?

DJ: I had to work in the hospital.

JM: You used to work in the hospital?

DJ: Take care of little kids.

JM: Moving? Helping push people around?

DJ: No I just stayed in there. Stuff like that.

JM: I'm sorry what?--

DJ: Just stayed and everything like that, I did. A long time ago.

JM: Uh-hun.

DJ: That's about it.

JM: That's it, huh?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Well you both have uh...had experiences that none of us here have ever had. Very few people have. And what we want to do is help--

RO: [They had quick sand one time up there. I said boy you go in that quicksand (unintelligible) and he went clear down in the water. Somebody had to go and pull him out way down in the water quick sand.] (paraphrased)

JM: Quicksand?

RO: Yeah. It was deep too.

JM: Where was this? On the grounds?

RO: Way down in the ground at State.

JM: At State?

RO: Yeah.

JM: And you saw someone fall into the mud and get stuck, huh?

RO: Well I tried--I pulled him out. (unintelligible)

JM: You pulled him out?

RO: (nods)

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: Got clear up here about that wide (gestures to waist).

JM: I'm sorry?

RO: [His head was--his stuff was deep. I said boy you better not go in there. I pulled him out.] (paraphrased)

JM: You pulled him out? You saved his life it sounds like, huh?

RO: Yep. Quicksand is deep. If you can't swim, you're done for.

JM: Well, in quicksand I don't think you can swim anyway. You just...it won't hold you up you just keep sinking.

RO: He went right down to the bottom. We seen many times that happen.

JM: And that was on the grounds of the State or something like that? Hmm. Well you're both lucky men. You're lucky to have friends like each other and live in a wonderful place and have jobs.

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: And uh and never again, you'll never again live at Orient.

RO: When did they shut Orient down? You know?

JM: Hmm?

RO: When did they shut Orient down?

JM: When did they shut it down? Uh, I don't know but maybe Brenda knows.

Brenda: Well it's shut down now. The prison shut down. It's sitting there empty now.

JM: When was that? When was it converted to a prison?

Brenda: It's been a couple years now since the prison shut down.

JM: Yeah, they shut the prison down a couple years ago.

Brenda: So it's just all empty now. Nobody has to live there anymore.

RO: They're gonna make a petitionary out of it, I heard.

Brenda: They only did that and then they shut it down.

RO: Yeah.

JM: It didn't--even the people running it didn't think it was a good petitionary.

RO: Uh-un.

JM: Did you ever feel--sorry Judy.

Judy Leasure: Didn't think it was a good place for people to live.

RO: No, not at all.

DJ: Sure was.

JM: Did you uh when you were living there did you ever feel like you were in a penitentiary?

RO: Nope.

JM: You felt like it was a good place as your home?

RO: I was in a cottage. I was a tenant I know.

Brenda: a cottage.

JM: Oh, college. You felt like you were going to a college?

RO: Yeah, I wasn't going to no penitentiary. That's a bad place.

JM: Oh yes it is.

RO: Got rough guards, I tell ya.

JM: No I'm just thinking about when you were living there. You know you couldn't leave and they told you when to get up and when to go to bed and what to do.

RO: (unintelligible)

JM: But uh--

RO: Now. Now, they'd say come on its time you guys got up I'd say ok and we'd get up and took a shower and got cleaned up (unintelligible) and went to work.

JM: Uh-huh.

DJ: Went to work.

RO: I went to work about 6:00 a day.

JM: Mmhmm. Well, do you have anything else you think you'd like to tell us about what it was like living at Orient or what it's like for you now?

DJ: Wasn't too bad.

JM: Wasn't too bad.

DJ: No.

JL: Can I ask a question, Jeff?

JM: You bet.

DJ: You go ahead.

JL: Um...uh Dave and Bob uh do you remember why you went to Orient or who told you, you were going to Orient? Can you remember that? Why did they tell you, you had to go to Orient?

RO: So I could go to school.

DJ: Go to school.

JM: Go to school?

JL: To go school?

DJ: Yeah.

RO: I went to a nice school before I got out.

JL: Could you--was there a school in--here where you lived that you could go to or why did you have to go to school at Orient?

DJ: I didn't like it.

RO: I don't know what I went there for.

JL: You don't know why you went there?

RO: I went to--I go to night school before I got out. We had night school.

JM: You had a night school there?

RO: (nods) Yep.

JL: Did anybody tell you that you were going to Orient or did you just get there? Did they explain it to you and say you have to go to Orient or how did you know that you were going there?

DJ: I just got there.

JM: You just got there? Wound up there?

RO: Mmhmm. Just got there. (unintelligible) one time.

JM: What's that?

RO: (unintelligible) They didn't get enough money. They quit. They don't get enough pay up there.

JL: Oh the attendants quit because they didn't get enough money?

RO: Some of the attendants quit too. They didn't get enough money.

JL: How many attendants did you have in your dorm?

RO: I don't know how many we have.

JL: At one time did you have a lot or just a few?

RO: Just a lot of 'em.

DJ: Just a few.

JL: Just a few.

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: One or two maybe?

DJ: Just one or two.

JM: Uh-hun.

DJ: That's about it.

JM: Was it always uh the right temperature? Sometimes was it too hot or too cold?

RO: Most of the time it was hot. One time I took me a cold bath one day I got sweaty.

JM: It was too hot so you took a cold bath?

RO: [Oh I cooled off but I was still sweaty as when I took a bath. Real sweaty. Hot that day I was out. It was hot.] (paraphrased)

JM: David, how 'bout you? Was it too hot or too cold sometimes?

DJ: Too hot.

JM: Was it too hot?

DJ: Yeah, it was too hot. From the (unintelligible) they burn.

JM: I'm sorry, but you got burned?

DJ: I mean I think the water was too hot.

JM: Was too hot?

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Yeah.

RO: (unintelligible)

JM: I'm sorry? What did you say?

RO: Someone took off.

JM: Oh they ran off?

RO: Had money on them. Took all day they never did find them.

JM: They never did find them?

RO: (shakes head) Uh-un.

JM: And these were guys that lived there that ran away?

RO: Yeah, they had money on them. They got money and just left. Try and get a job they try and do.

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: Mmhmm. They was a bunch of 'em that went off. Right Dave?

DJ: Right. Bunch of 'em run off.

RO: One got away. They might stay up there.

JM: And they'd find them and bring them back?

RO: Nope. They didn't.

JM: They didn't?

DJ: Nope they didn't.

RO: They got away and they left.

DJ: They left.

RO: They went out of states.

JM: They ran out of states?

RO: The bus ticket's out of state.

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: Mmhmm.

JM: Did you ever think you wanted to run away when you lived there?

RO: Nope. I got a chance at gettin' out.

DJ: Not me.

JM: You just waited until you got your release papers?

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Good way to do it.

DJ: Yeah.

JM: Judy?

JL: Anything else guys that you remember that you want to talk about?

DJ: I can't think of anything.

JM: No?

JL: No.

DJ: No.

RO: No, not that I know of.

JL: Did you have visitors? Did you have any family or anybody that come to see you while you were at Orient?

RO: My mom and dad used to come up and see me one time.

JL: Did they come a lot or did they just come--

RO: Come when they get time.

JL: Did they?

RO: My mom and dad--mom would turn on--she always--news on--St. Joseph's she passed away--a hardship when my dad died.

JM: So both your parents have passed away?

RO: Yeah.

JM: I'm sorry to hear that.

RO: I had a brother passed away, too. He was (unintelligible) when he had a heart attack.

JL: But they came visit sometimes when you were at Orient?

RO: Oh yeah.

JL: And where did they see you? In the day room?

RO: Yeah. We went and eat and went shopping and all that.

JL: Oh, they could take you to shop?

RO: Yeah and take me out to eat.

DJ: See, the only family I got is my sister. So I got no family.

JL: You got a sister?

DJ: Yeah, lives in Alabama.

RO: I got a sister that lives in California.

JM: Did your sister in Alabama ever visit you when you were at Orient?

DJ: No, she never did.

RO: I have a sister in California.

JM: Mmhmm.

RO: Yeah.

JM: Well, I'm glad you both are where you are now. What house do you live in? Not on first street. What--where do you live?

DJ: Pewmont Avenue.

JM: Pewmont Avenue?

DJ: Yeah.

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: Where I got a big TV in the living room and got one downstairs.

JM: Boy.

DJ: (unintelligible) got my own.

JM: Well, I'm real glad to have a chance to talk to both of you.

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: Ok.

JM: Anything else you want to add, Bob?

RO: Not much I know of.

JM: No?

RO: Uh-un.

DJ: Not much I know of.

JM: Well you both have been very good. Thanks a lot. Appreciate it.

RO: Mmhmm.

DJ: Welcome.

JM: Ok.