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Elgertha Hall interview for the Lest We Forget Collection of Oral Histories

Elgertha Hall

Jeff Moyer

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**WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Lest We Forget Interview Project**

Interview date: May 23, 2003

Interviewer: Jeff Moyer

Interviewee: Elgertha Hall

Elgertha Hall: (unintelligible)

Brenda Whitney: Get your sleeve down here. There you go.

Jeff Moyer: What is this #7?

Judy Leasure: Yep.

JM: Ok. Well, let's roll it!

EH: Ok.

JM: Well this is Friday May 23rd, 2003 and this is tape #7 in the Lest We Forget series. And we're talking to Elgertha Hall.

EH: Yeah.

JM: Who just turned 65.

EH: Yeah.

JM: And Elgertha, what we're doing today is we're talking to people who spent time living in Orient or places like Orient.

EH: Yeah.

JM: And what I want to do...is just have you just give us--share some of your memories with us, ok?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Um, do you know how old you were when you went to Orient?

EH: Fifteen.

JM: You were fifteen. Do you remember what it was like before you went? What--were you living at home?

EH: Well, at home it was ok but it was so much. Then I went there, say I want no more people there. They got no more people at Orient.

JM: No more people living at Orient?

EH: Yeah 'cause I know some people that's up there.

JM: You knew some people there?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Well, when--do you remember when you first went to Orient? Remember your first day there?

EH: When my mother die.

JM: When your mother died?

EH: Yeah.

JM: And that's why you went?

EH: Yeah.

JM: You went because your mother had passed away.

EH: 'Cause I wasn't gonna stay with no strange aunts, no way.

JM: No. So you went to Orient and what was it like?

EH: Nice. Everybody started talking to me, showin' me around and it was real nice. They have stairs, everybody had their own rooms and stuff.

JM: How many people were in your room?

EH: Two.

JM: Two people in your room?

EH: Me and um Jean Brown and some (unintelligible) up there.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: And me and her share a room. Then after there, then she went home, so I had my own room. So we did a lot of stuff. We worked. Worked up there in Columbus.

JM: You know the other people we've talked to said that there were 50 beds in one room.

EH: There was.

JM: It was like that? You had 50 people sleeping together?

EH: Yes.

JM: Uh-hun.

EH: And we had fun up there. We go out to eat and go shopping.

JM: Uh-hun.

EH: Yep.

JM: Where did you work?

EH: I worked in the food service up there. In Columbus. You had to wear all white uniform and white shoes. I did dishes and I helped cook, up there.

JM: How many days a week did you work?

EH: Everyday.

JM: Everyday. S--

EH: Saturday and Sunday.

JM: You didn't work on Saturday and Sunday. What did you do then?

EH: Go out to eat and mess around and go to the movies, and go to shows. We went to the theatre up there. And then we went after the movie's over with, then we went to Kmart and then we went to (unintelligible), we went a lot of places up there.

JM: How--how long were you there? From the time you were 15 until when? How long have you--

EH: Till I got 40--not 40, 15. I got 15 and then I come back down here. 'Cause I know some peoples wantin' me to come back. I could name uh...I know Frankie, is a lady I know. Frankie, Mary Jane, and Mary Jo, and Mary (unintelligible)...and Frankie. They all wanted me to come down here to work.

JM: They wanted you to come back here to work?

EH: Yes. 'Cause they's gonna tear down--'cause they told me they's was gonna tear down Orient. So we came back down here.

JM: Do you think that they should've torn it down?

EH: Uh...it ain't up there no more.

JM: Was it a good place?

EH: Yeah.

JM: It was?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Do you think everybody liked it, who lived there?

EH: Yeah, but everybody disappeared and they left--they went away. They went out of state and I wasn't goin' out of state. I can--

JM: They weren't goin' out of state. No.

EH: Oh well some people live up there. They moved far away.

JM: When you were living at Orient and you had 50 beds in the room, and you got up to--put on your white uniform and you went to work in the kitchen--

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: Did you ever uh know anybody there that uh didn't behave? That got in trouble?

EH: The boys downstairs but I didn't have nothin' to do with them downstairs.

JM: Oh, the boys who lived downstairs got in trouble?

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: What happened to them?

EH: I don't know but I wasn't gettin' into that. They liked to fight and (unintelligible). Cussin' and stuff.

JM: Cussing and stuff?

EH: Yeah, 'cause I don't go for that crap.

JM: What would they do--what would happen to them if they cussed?

EH: Go to their supervisor. Then they'd punish them.

JM: How would they punish them?

EH: In they rooms. For two days. Then they'd write 'em up... and they'd get stricter.

JM: They'd get restricted and get written up?

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: Did anyone ever get hurt?

EH: No, they just would fight each other.

JM: The boys would fight each other?

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: Pretty bad fights?

EH: Yep.

JM: Did you ever see any of those fights?

EH: You could hear 'em.

JM: You could hear them?

EH: Yeah, they'd upstairs--the beds, our rooms upstairs. You could hear them down there. Throwin' stuff and saying bad language and stuff.

Brenda Whitney: Elgertha, you were at Orient for 11 years weren't you?

EH: Mmhmm.

BW: Do you remember the dates that you went?

EH: (unintelligible)

BW: 1969

EH: '69

BW: to 1980

EH: to 1980.

BW: Yeah. And what cottage did you live in?

EH: In (unintelligible) apartment D.

BW: F.

EH: F. (laughs) F (unintelligible). So that's a really long time to be in a place.

JM: Mmhmm. If you um...when you got up to go to work, did you uh did you enjoy going to work?

EH: Oh, yeah.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: Eat breakfast, take meds, and say I'm leaving! Have a good day, see you when you come home.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: Yeah, come home, take off my clothes, take a shower and then get dressed and go in the kitchen, cook supper. And I cooked chicken and mashed potatoes, peas, greens and all that stuff.

JM: Uh-hun.

EH: And I had my coffee sittin' there. And we'd sit down and enjoy our meal.

JM: Where would you eat?

EH: In the dining room at our table. We had a dining room table.

JM: At the dining room table?

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: In the dining room?

EH: Upstairs.

JM: Upstairs.

EH: Yeah.

JM: Is that where everybody ate?

EH: All the ladies--

JM: All the ladies who worked in the kitchen ate there?

EH: Yep.

JM: Mmhmm. You made some good friends when you were there?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Mmhmm. And did you, have you kept those friends? Are you still in touch with any of those people?

EH: Nope. They left.

JM: They all left?

EH: Yeah.

JM: You know you were talking when we were having lunch, you were talking about the graveyard. What was the graveyard like?

EH: Oh they got that little cemetery down there and (unintelligible) your grandma (unintelligible), there's my mother in parks. And then Anna and the other Arlene and the next one is Jackie and the next one's Fred Bunch, and the other name, Pewee, and the other name Mr. Bunch. See I'm--

JM: That's a nice graveyard where your family is...right? But we were talking about the graveyard at Orient.

EH: At Orient?

JM: Yeah.

EH: Ah, ok. They just drop 'em down in the ground in a case...in a case and they put flowers on 'em. They make everybody say it.

JM: Did they have their name on it or just a--

EH: Yeah they name on it. But most people just uh bustin' down cryin'.

JM: People were crying when they would go there? Is that what you said?

EH: Mmhmm. How they'd feel sad when someone had died. 'Cause one girl I know, Ellie up there, she took it hard when her mother died. She just bust out cryin' and she passed out. And they had to call down and rush her to the hospital. 'Cause they hurt her real bad.

JM: They hurt her?

EH: Real bad. You know it hurts you inside your heart.

JM: It hurts inside your heart.

EH: Yeah.

JM: But they had--did they have the names on the graves like where you go to visit your family or did they have numbers on the graves?

EH: They just had numbers. Little bitty numbers you could hardly read that. Little bitty numbers. See they had like my Mom big numbers you could read it by names there.

JM: So, at Orient in the graveyard they didn't put the names, they just put a number? Yeah. So no big number? So if you wanted to go remember somebody you'd have to remember what number they were, 'cause there were no names?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Was--was the graveyard nice? Would they take care of it?

EH: Yeah. They was nice. They take care of it. Yeah.

JM: Was there a hospital at Orient?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Did you ever go to the hospital?

EH: Yeah. The hospital across there. You walk out, you have to go down the basement, like you do drive-through, it's a hospital right in there. Then you go down there, they got beds in there and then they come check your blood pressure and they check your throat and your eyes and make sure you're ok.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: Then they give you a little bitty pill to make sure you don't be hurtin'.

JM: So you wouldn't be hurting?

EH: Right.

JM: Why were you--why did you go to the hospital?

EH: 'Cause I got a--I started havin' bad pains and stuff...in my chest.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: And they couldn't do nothing and I had to go back to the hospital and then I had all my teeth pulled there and I just lost a lot of blood.

JM: You had all your teeth pulled out there?

EH: Up there. And I lost a lot of blood.

JM: Did you get dentures? Did they give you false teeth?

EH: Yeah, then I come down here, then I had to get some new ones made here.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: I still got my old ones from Columbus up there.

JM: But they--they gave you teeth after they pulled your teeth out?

EH: Yeah they gave me a plate.

JM: They gave you plate.

EH: Then after that I had to go back in surgery.

JM: Uh-hun.

EH: They gave me a surgery on my breast.

JM: Everything's ok though?

EH: Yeah.

JM: That's good. Well, it sounds like that you knew that the boys weren't always doing so well downstairs, huh? You'd hear them yelling and throwing things?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Did you uh did you know about anyone that uh...it sounds like you lived in a very good--in a nice ward, in a nice unit, huh? In F? Is that where you lived, in F?

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: Uh-hun. It was pretty nice?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Did you know about any units that--that weren't nice where people lived? Did you ever hear about any places that weren't like yours?

EH: Well, the only place we had stayed at--we didn't go out all over the town and look for the folks that stayed there. The other people--see they had most--it's a whole lot at Orient up there too. Buildings--

JM: Yes.

EH: there. 'Cause I could tell you I'd knowed um I knowed Dennis, he used to be there. And I--who else is it I know? I know Nancy used to be there and I know some of the boys from Greenhill down there.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: I know J.D. and the other boy uh Clifton...and the other one is name uh...he used to...what's that little boy's name at Orient--I mean Columbus? He used to live with J.D. and them. Arius.

JM: Arius?

EH: Yeah. He was there too.

JM: Did they like it there do you think?

EH: Yeah. They liked it.

JM: Did they?

EH: Yeah.

JM: If--if uh if they opened Orient again and said, you want to go back? Would you want to go back and live there?

EH: No way! (laughs)

JM: I thought you liked it.

EH: I did but I better stay here 'cause I got more friends here now.

JM: Oh. What if your friends could go too?

EH: No. My roommate didn't want to go there.

JM: Why wouldn't she want to go there?

EH: 'Cause she'd never been there.

JM: But you like living in an apartment better than living at Orient?

EH: Right.

JM: Hmm. What do you like better about it?

EH: You got more free time and you go places and you call and tell 'em when you're leaving and tell 'em where you're goin'. Call when you go to work and you call when you come home. And you want to go out to eat and go shopping and the car company got answering machines, staff got answering machines to tell where we goin'. So--

JM: So you didn't have that much free time at Orient?

EH: I had free time but they didn't have no answering machine. 'Cause you had to wait until they come in.

JM: Uh-hun.

EH: To go. But--

JM: There's been a lot--there's been a lot of inventions since you lived there, including the answering machine.

EH: Yeah.

JM: But, we--you didn't have a telephone at Orient did you?

EH: Yeah, they had telephone there. But we didn't know the numbers there 'cause see they had one of them uh some kind of funny answering machine that you put on your phone and then would pick up your message.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: 'Cause Miss Whiteside, she had one. Like you would call her and say you're leavin', you'd have to wait for a beep but then she's there. I call her and say you got my message? She say oh I (unintelligible), or I quit, call somebody else. You know the phone she carried to talk on, she pushed the number that come and say she's on.

JM: Did you uh...so you lived there for 11 years?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Did you come home during that time at all?

EH: I come home when my mother died.

JM: When your mother died you came home? Yeah, that must have been very sad.

EH: It was.

JM: Mmhmm. When uh when you were uh when you were living there, what was it like at Christmas?

EH: Uh...yeah. 'Cause see I went and saw my mom before she died. They uh them, they (unintelligible) her chest and all that. And she had the IV that's in all the stuff there.

JM: But when you were living at Orient when you weren't going home, you were living there at Christmastime. Was it a good thing? Was Christmas good there?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Did they give you presents?

EH: Yeah. And I know another girl that lived there but she just--Jackie, (unintelligible), but she left.

JM: Oh, she left?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Now I'm just a little bit confused, Elgertha. You know why? 'Cause you tell me what a great place it was--

EH: It was. It's nice.

JM: But then I asked you if you wanted to go back, you said no way!

EH: (laughs)

JM: No way! I mean real fast.

EH: No 'cause I tell you why. They said there ain't no more up there 'cause I wanted to go up there to visit some of 'em but they said there wasn't nobody else up there. 'Cause some lady I know--

JM: I'm sorry, say that again.

EH: Some lady I know she had her daughter up there. She wanted to go up--she went up there to see it and I asked her did she go see her daughter and she said honey you don't want to go back up there no more at Orient up there. 'Cause she tried to find her daughter but she doesn't know where her daughter is.

JM: So, her daughter went to Orient.

EH: Yeah, but they don't know where she at.

JM: They don't know where she is now? Huh. They lost her?

EH: I guess so. She said she went up there, she couldn't find her. She had to go to the office and they said they got rid of 'em 'cause they're tearing the building down. I guess 'cause they didn't have money to keep it up.

JM: Mmhmm. Well, you--but you said pretty strongly that you would not--even if it was there, you wouldn't want to go back.

EH: No, cause everybody here are friends.

JM: Everybody's here.

EH: But see, I tell ya it wouldn't matter. That lady I know, Miss Whiteside she ain't up there.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: She's nice 'cause she's the only one, you know helped me out and a lot of stuff up there. But see Miss Whiteside ain't up there.

JM: She's not there anymore?

EH: No. She went to California. Her and her husband. See they don't have kids.

JM: Uh-hun.

EH: And they like to travel. So if I went back I wouldn't have a--you know Miss Whiteside wouldn't ever be up there.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: So...

JM: What was the worst--you know every, every place has good things and bad things. And Dan was telling us some stories...real bad, you know people getting hurt and punished. Did you know of any--of any bad things that happened there to other people? It's ok to talk about them now. We just want to try--we just want to teach people about what happened so we never do that again.

EH: They just learn how to behave. They'll get in trouble--

JM: And what--what would that mean, getting in trouble? What would they do if you got in trouble?

EH: They wanted to go out and drink, cuss and carry knives and guns and stuff.

JM: People were carrying knives and guns there?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Huh.

EH: And you had to learn your manners and not to do that.

JM: Yes, but what--if they would punish you, what would they do?

EH: They'd--

JM: What, what would the attendants do?

EH: They just send 'em to jail 'till they'd straighten up and learn how to behave.

JM: Ok, but what would they do to people to make them straight--help them straighten up?

EH: Go to them--I tell you what they could do, go to the counselor. A counselor, they'll help you.

JM: A counselor?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Counselor's there help?

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: Ok. Do you--do you know of Farmview?

EH: Yeah.

JM: What was Farmview?

EH: Just like you do. Like you help them and they help (unintelligible)--I tell you what, they help you real good.

JM: They helped you really good, huh?

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: Farmview helped?

EH: They get you medicine and time--and straighten you out.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: 'Cause I was up there--that one boy, he come and he came there for work, see we all worked together in the kitchen.

JM: You all worked in the kitchen?

EH: Yeah. And I--he had that in there and that lady said what you puttin' in your arm? (Unintelligible) 'cause he'd stick a needle in his arm to shoot that stuff in his arm, dope.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: Shootin' that stuff in his arms.

JM: At Orient they were doing that?

EH: Yep.

JM: Huh. And he--so one of the--one of the men know it was he--did he live at Orient or did he live in the outside?

EH: He was inside.

JM: He was inside.

EH: He lived--yeah. He lived there.

JM: And he was using--he was injecting drugs?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Wow. What happened to him?

EH: They had to call the police and the police came and got him. Put the handcuffs on him. Put him in the car and took him to jail.

JM: Wow. Did he come back?

EH: No.

JM: How old was he? Do you know? Was he a young man?

EH: He young.

JM: Uh-hun.

EH: They don't tell it to him, they tell it to me. 'Cause I told that lady, I said you see there? She say, no you don't do that either.

JM: No you don't.

EH: You don't do that. Then he kept gossiping about her. Sayin' nasty stuff to her. She said I can't take this anymore.

JM: Hmm. So that was someone else who worked in the kitchen with you? And then they were taken away by the police? So you lived there until 1980?

EH: (nods)

JM: 1969 to 1980, is that when it was?

EH: Yeah.

JM: And then you came back to Dayton?

EH: Yes.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: I could tell you all about comin' back here.

JM: Ok.

EH: Mary Whitey...Brenda, that's the one at Koons, Brenda and...another lady at work come back here and Miss uh that lady at work brought me back. They all want me to come back down. They said they needed help. Work for them.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: So they all brought me back here and then after that they brought me back here. Then they say, do you want to go back there but by that time if I went back I didn't know whether I could make it down here for Claire's funeral. So they just say, just stay down here.

JM: So they told--they told you, you could just stay here instead?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Uh-hun. So it sounds like you um...you've always worked?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Ok. Was it hard work or--

EH: Yeah.

JM: Did you enjoy your job that you had at Orient?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Do you like the job you have now, better?

EH: Yeah.

JM: You do?

EH: Yeah, cause I get paid. Get big fat paycheck.

JM: You mean you worked but you didn't get paid at Orient?

EH: Yeah we got paid at Orient. They give you money but they don't give you a check. They just give you cash for your work. See they got a little office in there...where you get your money at. I get cash for checks.

JM: Cash for checks?

EH: Yeah and they put your money in an envelope and give it to you.

JM: Uh-hun. So you--you did make some money when you worked at Orient but--do you make more money now?

EH: Yep.

JM: Uh-hun. And it sounds like you like your life now a lot better.

EH: Yeah.

JM: Yeah? Were those happy days or not happy days at Orient?

EH: Happy days.

JM: They were happy days?

EH: Yeah.

JM: You know...I have a feeling, Elgertha...that you're the sort of person that you would make the best out of any situation. That you're always looking for the good aren't you? And you make your life good. By your attitude and by the way you are. I mean you're a happy person, right?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Yes. Well, you know the--the--when you were--the difference between living on the inside and living on the outside. When you were inside you didn't get many choices, did you? Did you make choices about what you wanted to do? What time you wanted to get up and what job you wanted to have? Or did they tell you?

EH: I just get up on my own. We didn't have no clocks there. I just get up on my own.

JM: You didn't have any clocks?

EH: Not in my room.

JM: Uh-hun.

EH: And get up and you look out the window and it's daylight. Get up and go and wash up and go in there. Sit at the table and eat your breakfast and then time to go to work all night.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: Take one block and you could walk up the street to where...

JM: You could walk up the street? At Orient?

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: Uh-hun. Could you ever leave the grounds?

EH: The staff would be with you.

JM: The staff would be with you? Yeah, and where would you go?

EH: They go shoppin'.

JM: Did ya?

EH: The grocery store to help buy groceries.

JM: Oh really?

EH: Uh-hun.

JM: You must of had to buy a lot of groceries.

EH: Yeah.

JM: You're feeding lots and lots of people, huh?

EH: It's for me and Jean Brown 'cause me and her worked together. And they'd take us to the store and buy food.

JM: Ok.

EH: And we cooked. We'd take turns to cook. Like I'd cook on Friday, Saturday. She cooked Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

JM: Uh-hun.

EH: And then we uh sit down and eat and I'd do the dishes.

JM: Was the food good?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Uh-hun.

EH: (unintelligible)

JM: Now, are you talking about your roommate now?

EH: No that's at Orient.

JM: At Orient? Just two of you though?

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: But you must--didn't you cook for everybody?

EH: This is when I was living upstairs.

JM: Oh, when you were living upstairs? And you had a kitchen upstairs?

EH: Yep.

JM: Oh, like a little apartment, huh?

EH: It big rooms and big floors. This the kitchen. And you come out of your bedroom and go in the kitchen and start cookin'. On the stove.

JM: That big bedroom where 50 people slept? That room?

EH: Yeah.

JM: So a lot of people there?

EH: Yep, there a lot of people at Orient.

JM: Did you like living with all those people?

EH: Yeah. But see before I left I didn't tack no pictures up 'cause I was gonna tack up pictures before they left. But if they left I didn't get no pictures up.

JM: Oh.

EH: And I used to take care of a little boy too.

JM: You took care of a little boy there?

EH: He was about--I got a picture of him but I didn't bring that--but I used to take care of him.

JM: You used to take care of him? What did you do? What did you do with him?

EH: Uh watch him, wash him up and go to school at night. Then she'd come home and then she'd get him.

JM: Was this a staff person or someone else that lived at Orient?

EH: Yeah, it was a staff person.

JM: A staff--you took care of a staff person's child when they went to school?

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: And where did you take care of him?

EH: In the--

JM: At Orient?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Uh-hun. Did you get paid for that?

EH: Yeah.

JM: You did? Hmm. So you worked in the kitchen and you took care of children and you did all kinds of things.

EH: Yeah.

JM: I bet they were glad to have you there.

EH: Yeah.

JM: You've always been a very good worker.

EH: Yeah.

JM: Hmm. Did you have nice clothes when you lived there?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Did you? Did everybody?

EH: Yep.

JM: So everybody had nice clothes to wear? Good.

EH: Everything matched to wear.

JM: Everything matched?

EH: Yeah.

JM: And when it was cold outside did you have a nice warm coat?

EH: Yeah.

JM: And gloves?

EH: Gloves, hat and boots.

JM: The whole thing huh? It sounds like you were--you were pretty fortunate when you lived there. Pretty lucky. I don't think--we've been talking to people and they said it wasn't--they didn't have that good of time. A lot of people said they didn't like it at all. But it sounds like you were a good worker and they took care of you and--

EH: And I took care of everybody.

JM: And you took care of everybody. Mmhmm.

EH: Next time I'll have a picture made to you. Next time I see Brenda I'll give you one of 'em. I got a picture--the copy of it--I'll get you a picture with all the people that I used to be up there with.

JM: Do you have some pictures that you took at Orient?

EH: Yes, but I didn't bring any.

JM: Well that might be a nice thing to have for this project. You know put some pictures in, that would be good.

EH: I have some copy, then I left the envelope at the office, and then Brenda will give it to you.

JM: Alright, well I wouldn't be the one to give it to but you know if Brenda has it that's good. Brenda can give it to Mark and we can take some pictures of it and use it.

EH: Ok.

JM: Well if um...what was--I want to ask you one more question. What's the best thing about Orient and what was the worst thing about it? What was the best thing about it?

EH: Good. Good.

JM: It was good? Just it was good huh? Ok. And what was the worst thing about it?

EH: Only day you had to go to the laundry mat, but I don't do that. The staff take your clothes and do the laundry.

JM: The staff took your clothes and did the laundry? In fact we were talking to a couple men yesterday and Bob was saying that he--he and um...David worked in the laundry. Bob and David worked in the laundry. So I think sometimes people had jobs in laundry just like you had a job in the kitchen.

EH: Yeah.

JM: Staff didn't do the laundry did they? The people who lived there did.

EH: But see the staff had the uniform. See that was like nights so they do laundry for a year.

JM: Uh-hun.

EH: See 'cause you can't wash your clothes by hand. You wouldn't go out, streaky white uniforms at work.

JM: Yeah. Yeah, nice white uniforms you'd want to be real clean. Uh-hun.

EH: Yeah, cause they check you over. That's what they do at Arby's. 'Cause I got three shirts you got to change.

JM: Yeah. Do you like the uniforms at Arby's better than the uniforms from Orient?

EH: White--Orient--I mean back in Dayton's ok but Orient you had to keep the white uniforms clean.

JM: Mmhmm. Was that easy to do?

EH: Yeah. In a way.

JM: 'Cause they'd wash them for you and bring 'em back. Well this is--you're very helpful. You've got--you have a good memory. And it sounds like it was a good place for you.

EH: Thank you.

JM: Yeah. Anything else you'd like to tell us?

EH: Uh I like the staff.

JM: You like the staff there?

EH: Yeah. Van Garden. She helps you out too.

JM: Oh the staff here?

Brenda: It's RHA

EH: RHA

JM: I'm sorry?

Brenda: That's...resident home where she's--

EH: Rest home.

JM: Oh where--the resident home where you live now. That sounds like a very good place.

EH: Yeah.

JM: I mean it's much better than Orient isn't it?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Mmhmm.

EH: They take you to the doctor's and uh a doctor that's important and stuff. Just had my eye surgery about a month.

JM: You had eye surgery? Did you have cataracts? Cataracts removed?

EH: Yeah. That one (points to right eye). They had that one removed.

JM: Can you see nice and clearly now?

EH: Yeah. I see you. You got on a blue shirt.

JM: (laughs)

EH: And white pants and white socks.

JM: I can't see you, I'm blind.

EH: (laughs)

JM: My eyes don't work.

EH: I mean your white socks.

JM: Oh, well I know I'm wearing white socks--

EH: I know.

JM: Yeah.

EH: I know.

JM: Well, Arby's is lucky to have you and I--you had a great birthday party for your 60th birthday?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Did you get any presents?

EH: Yeah I got a new outfit.

JM: A new outfit?

EH: Yeah.

JM: That's nice. What kind of outfit?

EH: It's blue and white pants. I had it on last Sunday to go to church.

JM: Did--what church do you go to?

EH: Mylena on Third Street. It's a church over on Third Street.

JM: Church on Third Street.

EH: Yeah. It's a big building.

JM: Did you go to church at Orient?

EH: Mmm...they had church there.

JM: Did they have church there?

EH: (shakes head)

JM: Did you ever go?

EH: If they had one I would but they didn't have none.

JM: Oh, they didn't have a church at Orient?

EH: (shakes head no)

JM: Oh...

EH: When I come here I joined church.

JM: Yes, you joined the church.

EH: I just got baptized about a month ago.

JM: You did?

EH: Mmhmm.

JM: Congratulations.

EH: Thank you.

JM: Sounds like everything is going the way you wanted now, huh?

EH: Yeah

JM: Life is--Is life much better now?

EH: Yeah.

JM: You like it better living where you're living don't you?

EH: Go places and go out and shop and eat.

JM: Sounds like you're a good shopper.

EH: Oh yeah.

JM: Yeah. Gotta take that pay check and make your money and then go buy what you need huh?

EH: Well I have to pay rent too.

JM: Oh pay rent yeah.

EH: Yeah. See on Monday the resident home too.

JM: I'm sorry?

EH: On Monday the resident home is where I have to pay where I live at.

JM: You have to pay rent, yeah.

EH: Mmhmm. Yeah.

JM: Well, yeah that's because you're a working woman. So...people have to work and pay their way.

EH: Right.

JM: Well I sure am glad that I got a chance to talk to you.

EH: Thank you.

JM: I'm gonna ask Judy and Brenda if they can think of anything else we can talk about?

EH: Yeah. She's nice.

Judy Leasure: Who's nice?

EH: Brenda Whitney.

JL: Oh no.

EH: (laughs)

JL: Look at her. Elgertha, did you see any uh did you get to do things with the boys? Or were the boys and girls together at Orient or what did--

EH: What they did all women, women do with guys.

JL: So you didn't have any boys with you?

EH: No, that's--

JL: Were you allowed to be with the boys?

EH: I didn't want to.

JL: But did Orient let you be with boys?

EH: They asked me but I didn't want to.

JL: Oh.

EH: I can't hang around with them bad boys. They talk too much language. Cussin' and stuff.

JM: Their language wasn't very good huh?

EH: 'Cause I hear enough of that at work.

Brenda Whitney: I think it's real important to Elgertha that she has choice.

JM: Mmhmm.

BW: She likes to--she plans her days and times very well and when she has a good day sometimes her arthritis bothers her. She can get up and do whatever she wants and I think maybe that's more important to her than the life of you know some of the things worth thinking about.

JM: Mmhmm.

BW: It's--those are the things for her that she didn't have much yet.

JM: Did you, did you have a lot of choices at Orient? Could you make your own mind up?

EH: Yeah. I can be my own man.

JM: Could you pick the job you wanted?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Yeah. You decided you wanted to work in the kitchen or is that--

EH: Yes. I wanted to work in the kitchen. Where the food's at where I help people out. Serve it to 'em.

JM: What about um on the weekends? Did you--could you make choices about what you wanted to do then too?

EH: Go out...go to--no I don't go to ball games...ball games ain't my favorite but I like to go out shopping, go to the movies--I go to the movies.

BW: I think this is now.

JM: Ok. Well thank you very much. It was very nice talking to you Elgertha.

EH: You're welcome.

JM: Good. Do you like music?

EH: Yeah.

JM: Do you have a CD player?

EH: No, but I can get one.

JM: (laughs)

JL: There you go Brenda.

BW: That's the difference.

JL: There you go.

JM: Do you have a tape player?

EH: I can get that too.

JM: Well I...I want to send you an album of music that I've...it's my CD.

EH: Ok.

JM: But do you want a CD--would you rather have a CD or tape?

EH: Both.

JM: (laughs) You don't get both. You get--

EH: I'll take the CD.

JM: I like choices too. But you get a choice.

EH: I'll get the CD.

JM: Alright you get a CD. Thank you very much. Sure appreciate your time. Thanks.

EH: Nice to talk to you too.