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James Tuck interview for the Lest We Forget Collection of Oral Histories

James Tuck

Jeff Moyer

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Lest We Forget Interview Project

Interview date: May 23, 2003

Interviewer: Jeff Moyer

Interviewee: James Tuck

Jeff Moyer: How I can get in trouble and that's by taking on projects like...I'm blind, as you probably saw. So a lot of things.

James Tuck: I remember the one year that you played the uh guitar.

JM: Oh yeah?

JT: Is I'm correct?

JM: Yeah, that's right.

JT: 'Cause I remember that.

JM: Yeah, you have a good memory.

JT: Some of the people was rude 'cause they didn't...they was...I missed that. I really miss that. The orientation.

JM: Do you like music?

JT: Yeah, I missed that.

JM: Well you know I'll--I'm gonna send some CDs down so you'll get one of my CDs.

JT: Mmhmm.

JM: Ok.

Judy Leasure: Yep.

JM: Alrighty.

JL: We need that back light out Mark?

Mark Lyons: No, we can live with that.

JM: James what's your last name?

JT: Last name Tuck.

JM: Tuck. T-U-C-K?

JT: Right.

JM: Alright. Uh this is May 23, 2003. Uh this is tape #8 in the series Lest We Forget. And right now this afternoon I'm interviewing Mr. James Tuck. Thank you for coming in, James.

JT: No problem.

JM: Appreciate your time. You know as I told you, we're talking to people who spent time at Orient. Do you know how many years you lived there roughly?

JT: I'd say about...

JL: I lived in Orient about...

JM: Make the whole sentence.

JL: Make a whole sentence.

JT: I lived in Orient about maybe a couple...maybe one or two years in Orient. Maybe.

JM: Maybe? Do you know how old you were when you went roughly?

JT: Mmm...I'd say...I'd say about seventeen or something.

JM: Do you know why you went?

JT: Oh. Oh, no problem. The problem that I went to Orient uh was the drinking and poppin' pills and acting up. They--they couldn't do nothin'--matter of fact my mother couldn't do nothin' with me. Well you know when you got a bunch of kids--she had a lot of kids and I was the only problem. She afraid I might get hurt out on the streets or whatever so she didn't have no choice. Back in that time I think it was Robert Thompson and the people was talkin' about what could they do, ya know? So the only person that broke the news down to me was Miss Boyer. 'Cause she's about the only one that really can do something with me. When she broke the news I said I'm not goin' but she said, we'll be--how'd she say it? We'll be...it will be...un--some kind of unfitin' when they come and get ya. It wouldn't be right, ya know? So, I had a P.O. about that time. He couldn't do nothin' with me.

JM: Your probation officer?

JT: Right.

ML: Could you just drop that on the floor while you're...?

JT: Yeah. I had a P.O. and uh he couldn't do nothin' with me. But I was in and out of detention homes like drinkin' and poppin' pills and you know, that. I thought that I was...wouldn't hurt nobody. I thought I was just havin' myself a good time. But I think that I was hurtin' a lot of friends, because my mother was uh hurtin' now and you know doin' stuff like that. So, they figured they'd sent me to Orient and thought that that would help me but that didn't...that still didn't solve the problem. That didn't solve the problem at all. I can remember goin'...I can remember...goin' downtown. I won't forget it. I went downtown...to the buildin' and I--

JM: Is--when you were at Orient?

JT: No. This was before I went to Orient. So they had to have a hearing. So Miss Boyer said I had to take you...I think about that time Miss Boyer was pregnant and we sat in a room with all these chairs and nobody was there except me and her. She said I gotta take you downtown. I said, ok. I will go, you know. So I had um I think my mother was uh I thought that you know when that was goin' down, I thought that--I told my mother maybe you need the vacation, you know. You know, I thought I didn't need no vacation. But, I remember her packin' my clothes, adding 'em up and suitcase. And I can remember her havin'--and Miss Boyer took me downtown and I can remember that there was a judge there and two guys there and I...I didn't like the way it went down. And I didn't hold Miss Boyer for that because she did the best she could. She didn't know what was goin' on neither. That was the only way they could get me down there because I wasn't goin' nowhere. Uh...when the judge slapped the stick, and me and the judge had a few words and I got to the elevator, it was too late. I couldn't get...I couldn't get on the elevator 'cause the sheriffs. I can remember them handcuffing me, you know. They didn't hurt me or nothin' like that, you know. Uh...I can remember that uh it was an older guy and uh a younger guy and I won't forget that day. It wasn't over.

We got downtown...we got down the steps and the elevator and they talked really nice. I was still...you know pissed off a little bit but that still didn't solve the problem. Uh...I didn't know why I was goin' or where. I can remember that um gettin' on the highway we went to Columbus...I won't forget that day. Uh...I seen all these--when we got into the front entrance and got into the gate, I seen all these buildings and I seen like kids there, girls there, and I seen everybody playin'. Went to the hospital first, and uh they had to check you in there for a couple of days and uh still uh still--I still was...still upset why I was in a place like that. So I stayed in the hospital for a couple of days and then I got out of hospital and went to college, that number of college. Like college 1. And they had these big--I won't forget--they had these big long benches. They had a big black and white TV up in the ceiling like. And uh...and I--that wasn't too happy for me 'cause I was the kinda person I like to get out, run, run around and couldn't do that and uh and I had--I won't forget the guy named Ben Dike. He looked at my record and said, what in the world is you doin' up here? You--you shouldn't be up here. Only thing I see on your record is drinkin', poppin' pills and uh...and I've--they wouldn't give me no money. Like I work at the board of education and I would get a check. They figured that if I didn't have no money I

couldn't do the things that I do. But I still did the things that I do 'cause I know people that had the stuff. I didn't have a problem. I didn't need no money.

JM: So when you were in Orient you were still able to do drugs and drink?

JT: No, not in Orient. But when I was in Orient I learned a trade. Uh...Orient to me was like a nightmare. It was just like, they had like uh butcher shop up there. Most institutions took 'em to like uh...they took 'em like three, or maybe two months, three months to butcher their pigs and cows. Where I was at in Orient, it took us maybe three weeks. I learnt a trade up there like they would come in with the cows and bulls. And I was so short I'd have a stand and I would hook 'em up there. You gotta watch you had these gloves on and hook 'em. And all the guys was there...they was there like at like--older guys. They know the trade and I learnt from them and uh butchering and cuttin' up you know, cuttin' up the meat and stuff. And only decent food you was gettin' like in the college...I got tired of the eggs and the rice and whatever they had. Like you work on the line you get the good stuff like the breakfast and the meal, you know...the good stuff. You got and you know on that line and I did that for a while.

But I was still upset. I was still angry and uh I can remember the time that uh I went to--came back to college 4--came back to college 1 and--and I was so mad that I ran my hand through the windows and I cut 'em. And uh and uh the attendant send me to Farmview. And Farmview was like a--like a dungeon you know? It was like way down and you didn't get out until about every half an hour you got some water. But they feed you but it wasn't the kinda food. Uh had a long white gown on and I got out of that one and uh 'cause I did so much good work and I got out of that one and I got back on the line. And I didn't know when I was goin' home. I really didn't know when I was goin' home. And um...now in the day I still sleep with the light on 'cause I have to have somethin' like 'cause the dark...I can't stand too much of the dark. I have to have a light on. I really have to have a--I have seen kids...I have seen the tenants hit peoples and stuff. Without no reason. I seen--

JM: You've seen them hit them with their hands?

JT: Oh yeah. Hit 'em--

JM: Hit them hard?

JT: Hit 'em hard. Hit 'em. I seen one guy. One 'tenant hit a guy in the restroom just for no reason. It was--it was really--and I had this one kid that was uh he didn't hardly have no family hardly. He didn't hardly have no hands and we went to Columbus Fair and uh he gave us--'cause you know it was very particular about notes, and the guy gave us a letter just so I can mail it home. He wanted a visitor. Visitor's brother 'cause he ain't seen his brother for a long time. So we got the note from him and got some stamps. We mailed it. We was at the fair and uh we gave it to somebody else. Somebody we didn't know 'cause could they mail it for us? They mailed it and the guy's brother came and seen him and took him home for vacation. See they was allowed vacations you know. Maybe uh two weeks of vacation. Maybe a month of vacation. But the guy found the guy and got home. I--

JM: So you saw a lot of abuse?

JT: Lot of abuse.

JM: What would they do for punishment?

JT: What'd they do for punishment? They would take their hands and hit 'em. They didn't care what they hit 'em with.

JM: Did you ever see them hit them with objects?

JT: Oh yeah, they had brooms and whatever...they--they didn't care. All they was caring about was the money. They didn't care about the people there.

JM: Did you live in the same cottage 1 the whole time you were there?

JT: Yes, I did. I went to--I went to Farmview for a while but I got back to college 1. 'Cause Farmview was like uh...had bars on the windows. It was like uh lock down. Lock down. They had uh like benches in there. They didn't have no TV. No TV. Now, the only time they can get out of Farmview, they had jobs, they had jobs up there like uh certain--they had like farms, like they would take care of the cows and stuff. They had different kinds of animals up there. They had school up there and stuff like that. That's the only time they get out at a certain time they'd be back into the Farmview. That other activity was different from other--other college. The other college was like privilege but that Farmview was like lock down. Once they came back in that was it. They was in for the weekend. They didn't get out like on Sundays and somethin' like that. The only time they get out was five days a week to go to work and do what they had to do.

JM: When you were living in cottage 1 what was--what was it like?

JT: At night it was like a big room with lots of beds in it. Then you had a 'tenant, sat at the end of the corner of the door. That's what he got paid for, he was sat there. Maybe with a spit bucket or whatever, his cigar or whatever he got, you know.

JM: You said that you uh you became afraid of the dark living there, is that uh what happened at night?

JT: 'Fraid of the dark uh I was in a dungeon, and I stay down there, you know you stay down in them dungeons so long and when you get it out of there, and you hit the light, it's sorta, you know...sorta hurt your eyes and stuff like that.

JM: You were in a dungeon at Farmview?

JT: Yeah.

JM: All dark?

JT: All dark.

JM: Isolation?

JT: Isolation. No--just white gown.

JM: How long were you there?

JT: Oh, couple of days. I say, maybe two or three weeks. Somethin' like that.

JM: Were you getting counseling?

JT: No counseling. No counseling at all. They call it punishment.

JM: Did other things happen at Farmview that you knew about that didn't happen to you?

JT: Well, other peoples got...got things that never came to 'em. It was pretty--it was pretty bad the way they treated people. They didn't treat 'em like human beings. They treat 'em like hurdles.

JM: Treats them like?

JT: Hurdles.

JM: Hurdles?

JT: Yeah.

JM: What do you mean?

JT: Like a hurdle of cows, you know.

JM: Oh...

JT: Like that. They didn't have...then one thing that really got me was uh I thought that my own opinion was uh I thought oh my mother did somethin' bad to me. No. She didn't do nothin'. She was tryin' to help me. And I still today, I do not hold that against her. 'Cause she did the best she could, you know. Stuff like that I said. Uh...I learnt a lot, I learnt a lot from it uh but it still didn't stop me what I wanted to do.

JM: Were people who were um...people who had uh severe cognitive disabilities, do you know what I mean by that?

JT: Right, uh-hun.

JM: --and severe disabilities.

JT: Mmhhh.

JM: Were they uh...were they treated worse than people who were more intelligent?

JT: They was treated the same.

JM: Everyone was treated the same?

JT: Everybody was treated the same. They had--they didn't pick certain ones. They didn't care who you was. It was just like uh...adrenaline to them. It was just like adrenaline. And I seen the time that it took...six tenants--I mean six guys--I mean maybe six guys handle one person. This guy was pretty strong. He was--

JM: What were they doing to him?

JT: They was kinda gonna put him in the lock-up. And it took 'em awhile to put him in there.

JM: Were they gonna tie him down?

JT: They was gonna tie him down and get him in any way they could get him in there.

JM: What would happen if when the attendants hit somebody they hit back?

JT: Well, if they hit back it was worse on 'em. It was double worse. That was just double punishment.

JM: It wasn't just getting hit once then? You could really get beaten up by these people?

JT: Oh, you can get beat up pretty bad. Real bad.

JM: You saw it happen?

JT: I seen it happen. But some people just turned all their heads and well, what could you do?

JM: Was there sexual abuse?

JT: Some of the kids. Some of the kids. Some of the kids.

JM: Did they get raped?

JT: Some of 'em did.

JM: No, what I'd like you to say is...leave my question out of it and say, I know that some people got raped. Just--

JT: I know some peoples got raped.

JM: The smaller ones.

JT: Mmm...some small. Different size.

JM: More than one person?

JT: More than one person.

JM: I mean was it like ganging up on people?

JT: Yeah.

JM: Just talk about that. Talk about what you saw. I know it's painful but we need it.

JT: Well...like taken' advantage of another person. Taken' you know. That kind of stuff. Uh...it's pretty hard to see somebody gettin' tookin' advantage of, you know. 'Cause I'm the kind of person that I just stay by myself. I didn't know when I was goin' home but it just right to the day of this I still--I still have whiplash on it, you know.

JM: James you...you talked about people getting raped but I--we need to have you say that without me being a part of it.

JT: Mhmm.

JM: What I'd like you to do is talk about--you saw this happen?

JT: Yes I did.

JM: Rather than saying takin' advantage of, because that can mean a lot of things...

JT: Ok.

JM: Talk about rape. And I want you to talk about it and what you saw.

JT: Well, my opinion is that somebody was takin' advantage of them. Just takin' their manhood from them or somethin' like that.

Judy Leasure: Draw us a picture, James. In words. About what you saw.

JT: Well, what I saw was a person that make somebody do something that they don't want them to do. And the person had did it. That's not right, to take something from somebody and make him do this or do that. I seen a person that do like for cigarettes or candy bars, stuff like that, you know.

JM: Attendants making other inmates?

JT: Right.

JM: Ok say that.

JT: Other inmates.

JM: Ok what--if you'd say something like, I saw people who lived there demand sex for a candy bar, that kind of thing.

JT: Ok. I saw people demand sex for candy bars. I seen people demand for cigarettes uh candy, stuff like that.

JM: All manner of sex acts?

JT: (nods)

JM: All kinds of them yes?

JT: All kinds of things. In that kind of place you might see anything go on. It just...I guess it just the nature of that.

JM: So you were there for over a year?

JT: Over a year. In Orient for about over a year.

JM: Did you go home at Christmas?

JT: No, never did. Never did. Never had no visitors. I think it was best for me not to have no visitors. I think it was best not to have them 'cause I tell you why, I wouldn't want nobody to come up there and see me, see that in a stay. No. I wouldn't want them come see me. My mother didn't come to see me, my sister never come to see me, nobody didn't come to see me. And then I said his holidays, why they don't come up and see me, but they did do some good things. They send me things. They send me clothes, they send me uh shoes, candy and all that, you know in the package. But they told me why they didn't--I didn't want 'em to see me like that, really.

JM: Were you able to keep your own clothes?

JT: Oh yeah, they put like uh...they mark your clothes. They put like tags in there. Before you get your clothes you have to wear some of their clothes 'till they mark your clothes. They mark, they had certain numbers on there. That way they know your clothes like they take 'em to one big place where they wash clothes and stuff like that. And they had numbers of different college and then you have to have your name on in order to wear your clothes.

JM: What were the state's clothes like?

JT: State clothes like you didn't have no clothes, they had like uh blue jeans and a blue shirt.

JM: Like prison?

JT: Yeah. Like a blue shirt and blue jeans and a blue shirt. They let you wear them to time being 'till you uh 'till you get your clothes marked.

JM: What was it like Christmas there?

JT: Hmm...Christmas...it wasn't Christmas. It was just like uh maybe having dinner, breakfast and lunch. Sittin' on a bench maybe watchin' TV. Nowhere to go but there. Might have some uh some candy or whatever or maybe some cake somebody brought in from other places and stuff like that, you know. But it never changed, it wasn't Christmas there. It was just like uh...nightmare.

JM: Was the room that you slept in, was it hot? Was it cold? Was it comfortable?

JT: It was...

JM: Start with the room was...

JT: The room that I slept in, it was like maybe cold, maybe a little warm. In between. The room that I slept in. Lots of beds. You have to make your own bed. If your bed wasn't made up right you was just...you have to suffer the consequences.

JM: What would they do if your bed wasn't made up right?

JT: Uh, they punish you. You went to the cell or they took all your, your privileges away. You couldn't go outside. You couldn't go to commissary. Another thing they had up there, they had like uh they had--you know you had your own money uh like you work, you get paid. You know you got paid maybe, maybe six dollars--account on what you did you got maybe six dollars. Well, shoot six dollars was a lot of money. You can buy you know cigarettes uh candy bar or potato chips depending on what you like to eat, you know. Stuff like that. But you didn't work, you didn't get--it was just like an allowance to you or somethin' like that. But you have to work. They pay you for workin'. They paid ya.

JM: But if you didn't work you had no money?

JT: No money. Unless...the only way you had money was is your family send you some money from home. That's the only way. But my family send me some money. I...I had some money. Wasn't a lot, but anything was better than none at all. They did do that. And uh I had you know candy bars, stuff like that that I wanted. Cigarettes. I used--

JM: Did a lot of people smoke there?

JT: I used--when I went to Orient I didn't smoke period. But when I got there I started smokin'. I smoked Cool's so I got on them and sorta relaxed me a little bit and I was smokin'. And then I had to buy my own cigarettes. Part of my responsibility.

JM: Did you see younger men and boys smoking?

JT: Oh yeah. Not the younger boys. Not the real younger boys.

JM: How young were the men in your unit?

JT: I say like...like in their 30--like in their 60s and 50s and they uh 18, 17...on up a little bit. Some have been there long time. Some was like in...like in wheelchairs, been there. Some of 'em just couldn't hardly talk. Some of them--some ain't never seen any families in a long time.

JM: Lot of people there have uh...did they have a lot of contact with their family or not?

JT: Yeah, some of them have contact with their family, but some families don't come up there and see them. They don't care. They there, and that's it. Now some of 'em have visitors, they--you know like on the holiday like the 4th of July. Some of their parents come up there. They have a certain day that they come up there. Some of 'em bring 'em cigarettes, clothes and stuff like that. Some of 'em see them on the holidays. Some come on Christmas Day, spend a little time. But they had certain days that they come and see them. And then some of 'em write 'em letters and stuff like that. They would write home. But sometimes the super--Van Dyke would have to look at the letter and see if it was alright to send it out. They was very particular about letters. If the letters didn't have--you put something on there that you wasn't 'spose to, it didn't go out. The only way the letter would go out was unless you was...unless you was on the outside--unless somebody was gettin' on the outside and you give it to them and they give it to the outside person and mail it for you. That's about the only way you can get it out. But if you give it to the attendant you didn't, you didn't...

JM: Van Dyke was the superintendent?

JT: Yes, he was. He was an older guy, pretty nice guy. Pretty reasonable. But the guys--he had like other guys working under him and uh they would say like something that the guys got hit or whatever, say you tell Van Dyke it will be worse on you. Guys were scared to tell Van Dyke what's wrong with the situation. They were just scared. That was his double.

JM: The attendants that you saw beating people, did they ever...were there consequences to them ever?

JT: No. They never got a write-up, never got suspended, none of that.

JM: What's the worst thing you ever saw happen there.

JT: I seen a guy get almost beat to death. Took him to the hospital. He made it but he was all bruised up, all beat up. But nobody ever did nothin' about it. They never--

JM: Was he beaten with fists or an object?

JT: With a rubber hose.

JM: Ok say that...say he beat--

JT: W--well he was beaten with a rubber hose.

JM: How long did they beat him?

JT: A few minutes. 20 minutes.

JM: He was unconscious?

JT: Just about conscious. But it was pretty stout--he was a pretty stout fella. Really strong guy. Really...and he fight back. He fight back. That what made it so worse on him.

JM: At Farmview did they beat people in front of you?

JT: Oh yeah, it was like that everywhere. Matter of fact you had...you had the girls goin' through the same thing. But not as bad as the guys. Not as bad as the guys. I think the girls had more, more privileges. They would go to school and stuff. Uh...'cause they had separate college, you know? They like the girls' college was way over there and the guys' college was on this side. So that was sorta like separate...separate.

JM: Did they ever hit you?

JT: I got hit once or once a time but it wasn't no--it wasn't a you know...I didn't take it. I just took a mop and hit the guy right across his head. 'Cause I don't bother nobody. I'm the kind of person that just stay by myself. But my concern was the--when was I goin' home? Nobody never told me when I was goin' to go home. Every time I thought about it and thought about it, and thought about it, for days and days and days, it just got worse and worse and like when I didn't think about it, it got a little bit better.

JM: How many times did you go to Farmview?

JT: I think I went to Farmview that one time and I think that did enough for me. That did enough for me. Dungeons wasn't too hot for me. You know, commin' out every half an hour and gettin' a drink of water and gettin' this you know, long white gown. That wasn't me. I couldn't handle that one. Couldn't see ya know? Then when you come out the light would hurt your eyes and stuff like that. And you set in there and you set in there and nothin' to do. You just set in there and set in there and set in there.

JM: In the total dark?

JT: In the total dark.

JM: Did you ever see anyone else leave the time you were there? Ever get out?

JT: No, I have seen lot of people uh I seen people that get out and left when their time was up and they did somethin' bad and they came back. Now they had rules up there too. If a person ran away from Orient, and they caught 'em, it was double time. It was double. They double whatever time he had, and he ran away from Orient, and they caught him, they would double his time and send him to Farmview. Once they send him to Farmview, that was it. That was it. They couldn't get to the other college, they had messed themselves up. They had to, they had to stay at Farmview for a couple of months. Before they can get back to the other college. It was double time for if they ran away. I could've run away myself 'cause I had people in Columbus. I had cousins in Columbus but I figured it wasn't going to do me no bit of good. You know, runnin'. I thought, maybe you know that it would make it a little bit worse on me.

JM: Did you ever see anybody get beaten up for running away?

JT: For running away? Oh sure. That was just, that was really bad. I seen, I was sittin'--we was sittin' out in the yard one day and a guy had ran away and he was gone for like three weeks. And I remember we was sittin' out there eatin' uh ice cream on a stick and they didn't bring him back. They brought him back, dragged him. Right to Farmview he went.

JM: Who was dragging him?

JT: Uh...that uh...the attendants.

JM: By his feet?

JT: Yeah. They didn't walk nobody. They dragged you. If they hit ya, you were lucky to be able to get back up.

JM: So you need to tell me that story, just tell me the end of the story about I saw them dragging him...

JT: I seen 'em dragging him by his foot. I seen 'em drag him by his foot.

JM: Was he conscious?

JT: No, he was still--he was still--he was still--he was still--his eyes were still open. He wasn't conscious or nothin' like that. They dragged him. All the way to Farmview.

JM: Across the grass? Across the road?

JT: Across the grass. 'Cause uh in Orient they had a lot of grass and they had gravel in some places. It's like when you go up in the...the roads like they had a lot of trees and grass and...

JM: Did you ever see the cemetery there?

JT: Yeah.

JM: What was that like?

JT: Uh it wasn't too happy. Uh it wasn't too happy. It was graves--it was peoples there for a long time. They had like creeks there, you know you can fish there, but um and it wasn't too hot in the graveyards.

JM: Do you remember whether they had names on headstones or just numbers?

JT: They had names and numbers. They had names and numbers on 'em. 'Cause some of 'em been there for real long time.

JM: Was it well maintained or...

JT: I don't think so. I don't think that peoples really--I think the peoples really didn't care. All they cared about is a paycheck. They didn't care about no graveyard. If somebody come put flowers on it they did or they didn't. They didn't worry about it. But I had peoples up there when I was up there. Said that peoples that was in Orient, they had got buried there. And some of the older guys, they can tell 'em. They had good stories 'cause they...they been there all their life.

JM: What kind of stories did you hear?

JT: Stories that...when they was there when they was just kids their self and been there. Never had no visitors, never had no gifts, no birthday card. None of that. They didn't know they had a mother or father, cousin, or nothin'. That was only mine. You know, they had--you know I asked guys that been there and they said they never. But they got money. Some of 'em had...had good money. Some of 'em had--their parents were rich. They was--you know. They met 'em or nothin' but they had everything that they needed, you know. They never hurted for anything. They had their own money, you know stuff like that.

JM: Their own clothes?

JT: Their own clothes.

JM: Would the families have to send them in or did they go buy them?

JT: Uh the families would send 'em in. Then they had like uh a voucher. It--If a person's family would send somethin' in, that person could go maybe out...go--go out--go to town and stuff like that. Go to town. That person would take you, stuff like that. The idea was to go to town.

JM: The uh the people that were there, were there for different reasons and we've talked to a lot of people and I know a little bit about those places.

JT: Mmhmm.

JM: I've never heard of anyone being sent there because of drinking and popping pills and actin' up.

JT: Well that was me. See 'cause when I was...see when I was in school all--all I did I said well, I didn't need to be in mental retardation. So what I would do is drank. So...I can remember they gave me a job because I would go to school maybe three weeks and work the other three weeks. And the Board of Education was payin' us and I was makin' some good--about this time they had like uh...uh...a social worker, some kind of social worker. The guy was Davis Burrow or somethin' like that. Somethin' like that. And uh he would--he would get us these jobs and he got me a job and I would--I work like three weeks--I mean work a whole three weeks and I get paid. And that time, gettin' paid every two weeks I was like uh I was like h--like \$300. And I would take the whole \$300 and blow it. Like pills, drinkin' and everythin'. And then that's when Robert Thompson came into the picture 'cause--they didn't know what else to do to me 'cause I would come to school raise all kinds of hell and gone about my business.

And uh Miss Boyer was the kind of person--I don't know...she played a--to me she played a lot of key rolls. 'Cause the woman...she was just like crazy like anybody else. She'd set you down and play games and uh it was somethin' about her that--that caught me because I'd respect the woman, respect the woman...I mean she would set me down in that chair, BAM! And I wouldn't say nothin'. And uh games and we'd sit there and talk. The teachers would leave her. I said Miss Boyer don't worry about that. We'll take you where you need to go. We'll take her to the park and the teacher said how did you get there? Well James took me there. I took her there but uh she uh when I got ready to go to Orient, uh she let me stay at her house. Her and her husband. And I was down at detention home and she told my P.O., let me take him home. And the P.O. said you've got to be out your mind. He's gonna run away. I didn't run away. I set there at the house and watched T.V. and enjoyed myself. And when it was time for me to go back down to detention hall, I went back down to detention hall. I stayed the weekend for--with them. But uh that was a lot of help, you know.

She the one that took me down when it was time for me to go. She the only one that took me down 'cause I told my mother I ain't goin' nowhere. They just have to come and get me. And that's what I meant and uh and Miss Boyer explained it to me, but they left out some lines on that too. Didn't tell Miss Boyer the whole thing. And I asked Miss Boyer, is I commin' back? She said sure. But see when I got down there I wasn't commin' back. I said shoot. I can see the expression on her face. I said, well it's not--it's not...it--I didn't hold that against her because it wasn't her fault. And I don't blame it against my mother. She did the best she could. She thought that would help me. In rougher times thought that would help me. But that still--the problem I had was the booze and the pills. That's why I had to find a program. Then when I got out of Orient, it made it worse.

Then they took me to a resident home. I said, well I'd rather go back to Orient then stay in a resident. And I hate to wear a suit and tie. I did--somebody making me put on a suit and tie, that hurts me. I don't like a suit and tie. Going to church and bowling. I didn't like to watch TV. I had enough of that. So what I did was, I guess my mother said to them, maybe James had enough. And I said, well then let me come home. Well, shoot that didn't last a couple of days I was doin' the same thing again and again and again and again. And again.

Uh when it was time for me to graduate, I didn't get on no stage. Uh, my sister and them came. My brother and them came, you know. I thought--they thought that would help me. Still didn't help me. So Miss Boyer said...she was a principal...she said, James what do you really want? She said, well I want a job. She said, ok. I got a job workin' at Southview. Did the same thing. Had some of the nicest Boss--Clay, and worked with them. They would shake their head. Didn't have no vacation, still doin' the same thing. But I had broke a lot countin' back and it was time for me to think, I had enough. So I said well my sister didn't want to talk to me or nothin' so I went to AA. I went to a treatment center and uh I didn't want nobody to touch me. I didn't want no body to talk to me. I was that way. They had to really break it down to me. So...when it was time for me to leave the treatment center, I know I still had my job and uh...I went to AA and I met Bill Woods and he was uh....a guy and uh...Vernon. They was on me like nobody's been. You can't think. So he came on the job and told me, boy he said this has got to be it for James. This is it. This is it. This is it.

So, my sister and them won't talk to me, not like that so I came--I stayed with Bill Woods for the whole summer and I stayed sober on fear alone. 'Cause he would go out of town and say I can't get drunk 'cause he'll find out. So uh it was time for me to go, I went back home and my sister and them couldn't believe that I was sober, so I told them, I know I told a lot of reelin' so it's time for me to go. So I said I'd talk--Miss Hemmel was a social worker...so I came to work and I talked to her and I said I gotta find me a place. I gotta find me a place. 'Cause they don't believe that I'm sober. So that still didn't--I stayed sober, I found me a house--found me an apartment downtown across the bridge,(unintelligible) by Chevrolet. They built the...car lot on it. Had no curtains. I had a black and white TV and a trunk Only thing I was in was bringing the bodies to the meetings. I would go to work. Didn't have no curtains. And uh then they said somethin' about 'sponsibility. I said, what they mean by 'sponsibility? 'Cause all these peoples are old money. You know I thought they couldn't--they couldn't gun shoot me so I didn't worry about it. But the thing when you come ready to get something, that sort of hurts ya.

So I made an amends. I said I got to pay all these peoples. So I said well I can pay you all like \$20. \$25 every time I get paid, and I kept my word. And I finally got all them paid off. And then when my sister and them called me at work one day, said is James at work and Miss Boyer said yeah he's at work. He's doing pretty good. She said, ok. So they came one day to find my house. Came and knocked on the door and I didn't have no curtains... they bought me some curtains. And that sorta made me feel good because I had to earn my trust 'cause I hurt 'em pretty bad when you're drinking and poppin' and stuff like that. And uh I was missin' days of work when I was drinkin' and boozin' and stuff like that. And I told myself when I got my life back together, and I got my sponsorin' and I said well...didn't miss no day of work so...I finally got some keys. So Miss Boyer said maybe James might...might be able to handle keys and lockin' up a buildin' and stuff like that so. So that made me feel good. I had to earn trust and you

know it took me awhile and I finally got keys to lock the buildin' up. Close the buildin' up and stuff like that. I was capable of doing that. I was capable of doing that, and she knew I was capable of doin' that. 'Cause she said to myself, what is you doin' here? I said, well with the readin' part and they pass you through these schools and they don't care about you. Let you set in the back, and that's where I was at in the back. Other things that I can do but uh I'm workin' on the reading part, goin' to literacy counseling and stuff like that. And doing somethin' with that. Uh...uh...

JM: When you were at Orient, was there any attention to your education at all?

JT: No, not at all. They had school up there but nobody didn't take no concern with that. Period.

JM: So what I'm wanting to hear you say is...

JT: Not at all.

JM: There was no education at Orient.

JT: Not at all. There was no education at Orient there for me.

JM: W--you were--you described working in a slaughterhouse it sounds like.

JT: Yeah. Uh...workin' in a--in a--it was not like a...it was not like a slaughterhouse. It was like a big room. Like a ice, like a freezer. Then it had like outside that you could work out. That had like saw and stuff. My--what I would do is have one of these uh...leather vests, whatever they call 'em, strapped 'cause the knives would be so sharp that when you get ready cut the fat off of 'em. It might slip and cut you in the stomach. So that would 'tect you right there. So you had to wear these white gloves and they would be on your hand and then 'cause the meat would be so greasy, that way you get a better grip to that and you won't hurt yourself. So that would 'tect you from the blade 'cause the knives would be so sharp.

JM: When you were at Farmview, did you still work in the butcher area?

JT: No, no I didn't. I was--I was...I was on...punishment so I couldn't work. So I had to stay down in the dungeon.

JM: You uh...you have your life together now and you...you've come a long way haven't you?

JT: Oh yeah.

JM: If uh...if you had to summarize, you said--you said--you said it pretty beautifully, you said that powerfully, not beautifully, powerfully, you said that Orient was a--was just a nightmare huh?

JT: Yeah, it is--I tell you why it--it's a nightmare, they didn't care about people. They did not care about nothin'. That's why I sometimes wanted for myself that I had to sleep with the hall light on 'cause I slept in that dungeon so long with no light, you know. I had to have that light. And uh just say for instance that like uh like um at my mother's house or somethin', she's got a hallway, she'll leave that hallway light. It's almost somebody else say why do you have to? I say, don't ask no questions. I got to have that hall light. And they let me have that hall light, no questions asked, you know somethin'. You know that. It makes--I dunno, maybe it's like a security uh security blanket or somethin'. But uh I have to have a light.

JM: Do you ever have nightmares about Orient?

JT: Sometime I do. Sometime. It--when I got out of there I used to have nightmares, you know. I'd wake up sweating and stuff. Sometime I--when I wake up I...I have to look around and see is I'm there or whatever? Then when I look around and I'm not there then I can go back to sleep.

JM: How old are you?

JT: Uh, 50.

JM: 50. And you're approaching 30 years in your current job?

JT: Right.

JM: So you started there when you were 20?

JT: Yeah.

JM: Pretty close to 20. And how long was it when you got out, when you started working there?

JT: I say...maybe about a year, maybe. Somethin' like that.

JM: And you went when you were 17? 16?

JT: Yeah, my 16. Somethin' like that.

JM: So you might have been there for more than a year. Maybe two years.

JT: Yeah. I was there, I think it was two years, I think. I'm pretty sure it might have been two years 'cause I was there for quite a while. And uh...then when I got out of Orient, I didn't go straight--I went to the resident home. And I stayed in the resident home for quite a while too. So then I went to uh...then I went to Northview, and I went to Northview for a while. Then when I moved--went home to my mother and them, then I went to Southview. Then I still digress from there.

JM: Hmm...what a story James. You're quite a man. I've a lot of respect for you. You've lived through uh....an awful lot of pain and suffering. I mean you've come out of it clean and sober

and livin' the life you're proud of, own a home, service work, AA, working. It's a great story. You have great character. Anything else you want to tell us about Orient?

JT: Yeah, uh like I said what happened to the rest of the peoples there?

JM: Yeah.

JT: But, uh...it was just when they said that they got rid of Orient I was just--it was a blessing 'cause nobody never know what happened in them places until they hear it from peoples that been there, been there, and been there. And suffered it, you know. And some of the peoples--some of the peoples...it was just a shame that they have a place like that and nobody didn't care. Nobody didn't listen to 'em. They didn't have nobody to cry to. They didn't have nobody to cry to. 'Cause some of them kids up there, they--they got in their bed at night and you got attendant sittin' outside the door and you don't know when you're goin' to go home, you don't know what's gonna happen, you don't know you gonna get hit with a stick or you gonna get hit with this, or whatever.

JM: Would you hear people crying at night?

JT: Oh yeah, they cry at night. They want to go home. They want to see their family. I seen one guy the next day, for years his brother came and got him and took him out of there. He was so happy. And I said to myself, when we goin' home? But um...

JM: You know for many of the people that lived there, they never wanted to go home.

JT: Uh-hun.

JM: You were lucky. You were there for a short period of time. Most of the people, once they got--went in there, they never left. I mean the only time they left was when programs took them out and put them back in the community and helped them get their lives together. But, the plan was not for short term. It was there for life, like you talked about the old guys that had lived there since they were children. Lived and died there. Buried there. It wasn't like a prison sentence, it was worse than that because you never got out.

JT: No.

JM: Was night the worst time? Or day?

JT: Uh...to me I was glad to see uh mornin' 'cause you know uh night to me just...I had to have light. I really did. And I been like that since, since I been out of Orient I have to have a light. I don't sleep with my whole house dark. (laughs) No way. I have to have a light. I have a hall light in the hallway that'll stay on, but when it go out, I put another bulb in there. But that hall light stays on.

JM: When you were uh in Farmview, did they know how bad it was for you?

JT: No, they didn't care. They figured that I had messed up. It was all me.

JM: Were there a lot of people at Farmview?

JT: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. You had like--in Farmview you might have had about maybe...300 people. In Farmview alone. Them big college. They big. They can hold--they had uh different colleges. I mean the college was just big. There wasn't small. They hold peoples in there. All them people's up there (sigh). They had a commissary like--like a big restaurant or somethin' like that. If you had money you could get a decent hamburger, you know, fries. Stuff like that. They had girls that worked in them commissaries.

JM: If you weren't eating in the commissary, how was the food at uh Orient in general?

JT: Bad.

JM: Describe it.

JT: Uh, had boiled eggs, uh rice, uh chicken--baked chickens, stuff like that. Uh green beans, corn, different stuff.

JM: But you didn't like the way it tasted?

JT: Oh no. It wasn't seasoned. It just--just throwed together, you know. But you had to eat...in order to survive.

JM: Did you see people steal food from each other?

JT: No, Uh-uh. The only good food they were dying to get like in the morning--at 5:00 in the morning--you got to the commissary and you worked on the line, you got decent food. Breakfast, like bacon, scrambled eggs, any way you like your eggs, uh toast, juice, sausage, uh ham, stuff like that. The good stuff. See in the college they just had...maybe powdered eggs or whatever. Maybe oatmeal, stuff like that.

JM: Were you ever hungry?

JT: No, I never went hungry. Never hungry.

JM: You ever see the doctor while you were there?

JT: No, barely say I've seen the doctor. The only way you see a doctor was you had to of been really sick (laughs) you had a sore throat, or whatever. But you never seen a doctor. Doctor didn't come in the college and check you. They didn't send you to the doctor. The only way you seen the doctor was unless you was really sick and then they send you to the doctor. They had a place like a...like a hospital. They had a hospital up there too.

JM: You ever go to the hospital?

JT: Oh, when I cut my hands I did. They stitched 'em up.

JM: How are your hands now?

JT: Oh, they good.

JM: Still have scars?

JT: Yeah, I still got scars.

JM: Is that the only time your put your hands through windows?

JT: That's the only time.

JM: You must have really been hurting.

JT: Oh, I was hurtin' big time. But I brought all that on myself. I--I look at today for myself. I brought all that on myself. But they did not know what to do for me. They thought that sending me there would help me a whole lot, but it didn't. It just made me worse. And I would tell 'em. Why you send me to a place like that? We didn't have no choice. Now they talk to me....I've been sober for 25 years...it took me 25 years it really to learn the bases, what it mean. It took me that long time. And I don't hold that against my mother. I talk to her on a regular basis. I call her. Ask her how she's doin'. I talk to my sister and brother-in-law and them if I want to go somewhere they take me, you know. They don't have to worry about I'm gettin' drunk. I take care of my own 'sponsibility.

Some people used to ask me, how do you take care of your own 'sponsibility when you can't read? I don't--I always ask for help. People show me things and I don't forget it. I take like payin' my house, you know I take it serious. I go there and grab a check out there everytime I get paid and have a check wrote out, stuff like that. Somethin' I don't know somethin', I ask somebody. I say could you help me with this if you don't mind? No problem. But some peoples be ashamed of it but I don't.

JM: Well, you're a gentleman, people are gonna respond to that. You treat people with courtesy and respect.

JT: Mmhmm.

JM: There's something you said that I wanted to ask you about. You know, I know what it was. You just made the comment your mother didn't know what Orient was like.

JT: No, she didn't.

JM: She was told one thing and she didn't know.

JT: What she was told was, you know like uh...the guy I mentioned, God I can't think of his name right off the bat...the guy I mentioned...he said that it would be best for me there. But they didn't tell the whole story. It was just like they told a lie on it. See? And then sometimes my mother asked me, what was this all about? What was it...all about? And she asked me one day...asked me...and I explained the situation...and she said to herself, I didn't know. See they don't tell everybody everything. They just say well, that's best for them, so they can get--see they get paid for doin' that. They got paid for doin' that to keep that place open. The more peoples they had, the more quarters--the more money they would get. They was funded so the more peoples they had, they say mmm. Nobody never asked nobody about no question what--what's going on it there. And I wonder that today, why nobody didn't do nothin' with that place?

JM: You know one of the first people to bring light on how bad those--to begin to expose how bad those places were, was Robert Kennedy.

JT: Mmhmm.

JM: John Kennedy's brother who was assassinated in 1968.

JT: Mmhmm.

JM: He went in with a photographer into an institution in New York to take photographs and published a book.

JT: Mmhmm.

JM: And began to show people.

JT: Mmm.

JM: What we're gonna do is something that's never been done before. We're--you know you said it just right, it's no one will know the suffering going on there 'til they talk to people. That's why we're talking to people like you that lived it.

JT: Mmhmm.

JM: We've talked to a lot of people but you--you have been...your story has been the clearest, you've had the most information, you've been the most forthcoming. And I really really appreciate what you've had to say.

JT: No problem.

JM: I know it wasn't easy. It's like visiting a very bad memory isn't it?

JT: Yeah, you can say that. It's like a nightmare. You know, when you talk about that stuff it's just sorta there. Uh...to me I look at today...I'm very blessed and I'm very lucky, you know to pick up the pieces and--you know I really to be honest with you, I didn't think I was gonna make

it. I thought that I was gonna do the same thing. A lot of peoples helped me. I was lucky that a lot of peoples helped me, you know. Helped me cross the....journey that I was goin' through. Made me look at it, that's not right.

JM: You mean you didn't think that you were going to make it when you were living at Orient?

JT: I didn't think I was going to make it, period. I--you know to tell you the truth, I didn't know when I was goin' home. Was I goin' home at all? So when I got ready to leave, my mother didn't come pick me up, somebody else came and pick me up. Then when I left Orient, I went straight...I went straight to the resident home. Straight to the resident home. Matter of fact I think I know which one it was. It was up on...let's see...East Third Street right on top of the hill. They got one on top of that hill. I can't think. It's...brown. Brown bricks...it's real old house.

JM: Let me ask you something about Orient. There was a lot of land around it, wasn't it?

JT: Right.

JM: Way out in the country?

JT: Right.

JM: Were there dogs in the woods? Dogs that lived on the property?

JT: Oh, peoples had houses up there had their own dogs.

JM: Not wild dogs?

JT: No, no, no, no. Not wild dogs. Just tame dogs. They had like, they had like some peoples that stay on that land. They had peoples that stay on that land and they had their own pets. They had their own families on there.

JM: Mmhmm.

JT: I remember that.

Mark Lyons: I need to change the tape in two minutes so...

JM: Do you have anything else James?

JT: No, that's about it.

JM: Any other memories you want to share with us about it?

JT: Well...I can say that...my opinion I learnt a lot. It's somethin' that I can help somebody with, I'll be glad to...to do that, you know.

JM: That's what you're doing.

JT: But uh...I just wonder...it was a lot of...it was a lot of hurt and I think that so of the guys still feels it, you know? I feel what they feel. I think they was just plum robbed. Robbed. Robbed from everything. From the holidays, picnics...we didn't have no picnics. That was out. I think they was really robbed and an institution like that...it should--my opinion, it should be the peoples that worked there, it should've been in there and let them see how it feels to them. That just my opinion. That's rough.

JM: Thank you James.

JT: Thanks.