CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH: Mr. Edgar Pickett
INTERVIEWER: Jennifer Dunn
PLACE: Lakeland, Florida
DATE: February 25, 2010

J= Jennifer Dunn
E=Edgar Pickett

Born in Lakeland, Florida on March 14, 1928

Lived in Florida for 81 years

J: Did your parents share stories with you of your heritage/roots?

E: Yes, they did.

J: Could you tell me some of those stories?

E: Well, my dad remembered that his great uncles came over to the plantation in North Carolina – It was General George Pickett from Virginia and then Carolina. His twin brothers came off the plantation. They couldn't read or write, one went into Melvin, Georgia and the other to the Southern part of Georgia; that's when they got separated and it was many years before they made contact with each other.

J: What kind of plantation was it?

E: It was the Pickett Plantation, the John George Pickett Plantation.

J: They grow cotton?

E: They were farmers.

J: Do you know if you are linked to any American Indian heritage?

E: Yes, my great-grandfather on my mother's side was an Indian and my grandmother was an Indian on my mother's side.

J: Pure blooded Indian?

E: Yes, Cherokee.

J: Did your family live together as an extended family with your grandparents all in one household or was everybody split up?

E: Everybody was split up.

J: Did your grandparents take an active role in raising you or sharing your heritage with you?

E: Yes they did.

J: Are there any stories of slavery beyond the ones of your twin uncles?

E: Yes, my father stated that when he was in Camilla, GA, where he was raised, he was working for a man by the name of Mr. Brooks – a furniture store- and he was allowed to go on the plantation with his truck and there was still slavery at that location. Every time he came out of the gate, they would check the truck to see if anybody was under it. He recalled that his aunt used to cook for this lady master and he saw them when they teared her outside and gave his wife a whip and then beat his aunt while the man was holding a gun on him. That's when he left and came to Florida.

J: How did your parents meet?

E: My dad's sister- in-law introduced my mother to my daddy here in Lakeland. They married for 63 years.

J: Did they meet at church?

E: No, it was at a restaurant on North Florida Ave.

J: How old were they when they got married?

E: My daddy was 18 and my mother was 17.

J: How far did they go through school?

E: My mother went through the 3rd grade and my daddy to the 5th.

J: Did that hamper them in the realms of jobs that they had? What kinds of jobs did they have?

E: My mother worked at the hospital in the laundry. My dad worked at a furniture store as a repair man and really had perfected it. He learned a lot about stains. He could take a piece of wood and cut it and make furniture [that had been damaged] he could match that wood up with that furniture.

J: What was the date of your father's passing?

E: Jan 28, 2001

J: Can you tell my stories about your father in regards to his career?

E: Yes, my father was limited in education, but he was a very wise man. He would attend city commission meeting and fight for the community. He's the one that started – at that time they called them the nigger of policemans – he went to the city commission meeting and asked for police officers in the community and they told him that the chief didn't want to work in it so they told him to hire a few. They hired Brooker as the chief of police.

J: What date was that?

E: 1949

J: Was your father a leader in the civil rights?

E: Yes, he was. He organized the Negro Chamber of Commerce. They were not allowed to meet with the whites. He was instrumental in getting a group of men together and organized the Chamber of commerce. They wanted the school to have a band. He went out and bought some drums and a bugle and we had what we called a bugle course – at that time the school was named Washington Park High School.

J: What school is that now?

E: Rochelle School of Arts

J: Could you tell me more about the Morehead community?

E: It was were the Lakeland Civic Center is today and that is where all the black doctors lived in that area and churches and so forth; he came from that area over to the North side of Lakeland. He was more active on the North side of Lakeland than he was in Morehead.

J: What was your father's line of work?

E: Furniture. He started out at Brooks Furniture Store in Camila, GA.

J: Where did you live at this time?

E: 505 W. 12th street. My father built the house himself.

J: Can you tell me information about your dad growing up – any stories he might have shared with you?

E: Yes, he told me that school was very hard for him because his mother passed at childbirth with him and he was staying with his aunt and each time he wanted help in school, he had to do all the work for her children in order that they would help him in school.

J: When did he come to Lakeland?

E: He came to Lakeland on March 14, 1922.

J: On your birthday?

E: Yes, and he was made deacon on March 14, 1922.

J: Did your father tell you stories about his father? What did his father do?

E: His father was a farmer, living in Camilla, GA and he had a twenty acre tract of land that the man he was working for told him he could have it, but then when he died the children took it from him because he didn't have it in writing, so the children did not get the chance to reap the benefits from it. His dad had a bad accident with a horse and always walked with a limp.

J: How many children did his father have?

E: He had 3 – 2 boys and 1 girl

J: How many children did your father have?

E: 4 – 3 girls and 1 boy

J: Could you tell me about your aunts?

E: My aunt Emma Green – she passed in 1983. His brother was named Tom Pickett and went into the Navy at 17. During that time, you couldn't buy whiskey until you were 18, so he went and put his age up to buy for the people whenever he got ready, He had to go into WWI and he went into the Navy. After he got out of the Navy, he went in through Atlanta, GA.

J: How was it different for him being a black man in war?

E: Yes, he was just a cook. He couldn't even go to the top of the deck until they go to clean it. He was always at the bottom.

J: So, they had to stay literally below ship unless they were cleaning the deck?

J: Was your father in WWI?

E: No, he was too young

J: But your Uncle Tom was?

E: Yes, not by age, but by him putting his age up – then he had to go.

J: What about your Aunt Emma Green?

E: She passed in 1983

J: So he just had 2 children?

J: Did your other aunts and uncles come to Florida?

E: Yes, Emma Green came to Florida. She passed over in Tampa. She used to live with my daddy when she came out of Georgia. She came and lived with us for a while and then they moved to Tampa.

J: When did she come to Florida?

E: 1980.

J: Did your Uncle Tom come to Florida?

E: No, he stayed in Georgia and passed in Georgia.

J: So your family actually didn't come together until 1980 and your Uncle Tom never came?

E: No, he never came.

J: What other older relatives did you know?

E: Yes, my father's mother died at childbirth and he had a step mother, her name was Inez Pickett and she passed in 1987. I don't know too much about her because I wasn't around her. She stayed in Camilla, GA.

J: You have how many siblings?

E: Two. My son is Edward Pickett III and was employed by Publix as a supervisor and was called into the ministry and started with three members 15 years ago and now has a church of 1,500. They have a school of over 200 children the alternative school on the campus. They was children 16 to 21 that was put out of school and couldn't go in and they get a high school diploma, not a certificate. We also have a daycare and insurance office on the property. He wants to help the community – the black boys that are out on the street. He is going to implement many, many programs through this.

J: Is that program going to reach out to everyone in the community or just the black community?

E: No, for everybody. Our church is integrated, so it is for everybody.

J: Did you say you had a family member who was the first business owner?

E: No, my daddy was working for a furniture store down town. It was called the Cash-n-Carry and my daddy was made the manager of that store. But my daddy did have a store at home, in the yard. When he retired, he had a shop on North Florida Avenue – it's called Martin Luther King Road now.

J: What was the store at his home like?

E: I would call it a shot gun store that he had, sold everything but meat and it was more of a community store.

J: This was the first of its kind?

E: Yes.

J: Do you remember what year that was?

E: In the 1940s.

J: What was Mr. Kirk McKay like?

E: He was a nice man. Things were hard. My daddy was working during the time of the depression. He wouldn't lay my daddy off. There was a white fellow and he would let them work every other week and my dad was making $17.50 a week and from there, my daddy would do extra work – go out and lay carpet and install blinds and from that made extra money to take care of us.

J: And that's when he also had this little store?

E: Yes, my mother was working in the store

J: Could you tell me more about how the depression affected the family?

E: My dad would not allow the government to give us anything. They had what they called commodities at the time and gave out food. He told us he would work for us and shouldn't receive anything from the government. He was a man of integrity. He meant for us to learn how to work and he carried me every day that he would go and I was out of school and I started out at 7 years of age. He would work all day at McKay Furniture, put the truck up because they didn't have insurance so he could use the company truck and he would walk to jobs at night with his tools and work and then come back in the morning time and go back to work at K. McKay. At that time, I would go to sleep on the job because I was in school. I'd come home, take a bath and go to school.

J; Was the Cash-n-Carry related to the Kash-n-Karry Grocery store of today?

E: No, it was a furniture store, but the owner was Mr. McKay.

J: Did Mr. McKay have any backlash from people for having a black manager?

E: None whatsoever.

J: How long did your father work for Mr. McKay?

E: 43 years

J: This was Mr. McKay Sr. and then when he passed, Mr. McKay, Jr. took over and kept my daddy there until he sold the company out and he got my daddy a job at First State Bank and he worked there until he retired.

J: What did your father do at the bank?

E: A custodian.

J: Your family was able to financially make it with that?

E: Yes.

J: The little store at home that he had – what happened to that?

E: Closed In 1940.

J: Who were people you admired growing up?

E: The deacon board in the church was role models to us.

J: What about your mother – Did she have a large family?

E: No, there were only three children and my mother was on the easy side – she didn't stay out front too much. She had a sister, Mary Porter and a brother, Pear Porter.

J: What do you mean by "easy side"?

E: She was a laid back person.

J: What about her sister? Did she live in Lakeland?

E: No, she was living in Georgia and from there she went to Ft. Pierce and that's where she is buried.

J: What did she do for a living?

E: She would go on the season – pick apples and tomatoes and traveled on season work.

J: What about her brother?

E: Her brother was killed on a horse and buggy. He fell off the back of it and he died. I don't know when that was.

J: What about her parents?

E: Her mother was named Fannie Cason and she was Cherokee Indian. She worked on a farm in Georgia and before she passed, she came here and stayed with my mother and stayed a couple years before she deceased.

J: What about your mother's father?

E: Her father's name was Anison Pickett. He was a share-cropper in Thomasville, Ga. She would tell us how they would have to work with cows and had chickens and pigs and carry them to the market. She would let the hogs eat the peanuts. How she had to get the water out of the well to clean clothes. They would be in the house sleeping and the floors were wide enough to look down and see chickens under the house. They had to walk about three miles to school. The school and church was in the same building and the all the children were in the same room – regardless of what grade you were in.

J: What grade did they go to in the school?

E: No more than six, because the teachers didn't have a college education.

J: What was the condition of the house? Did they have glass windows?

E: No, they had wood windows with no screens, wood stove, fire place, a well and the rest room was outside. The kitchen was built off from the house. During that time, the kitchen was never built onto the house; it was like a little room off from it.

J: Was it hard to make it financially?

E: Yes, but they mostly lived because they killed their own cows and hogs and stuff and put it in what they would call a smoke house to smoke the meat and let it hang out there. They put a lot of salt on the meat to save it. They always had something to eat. It was hard to get clothes.

They made their own clothes and then a lot of times, the white people would give them hand me downs and they would get it from them.

J: Any shoes?

E: Just like me, I only received one pair of shoes per year – during Christmas time. Then the ones that I was wearing to church during that time that I got the new ones, then I could wear those to school.

J: What if you outgrew them?

E: We would go barefoot. I use to get sandspurs in my feet all the time because we didn't have any paved streets and we had to go through vacant lots to get to school.

J: Was your school all black?

E: All black.

J: Did you ever visit or go to a white school? Was it different? Was your school different from the other schools?

J: No we never did. We never got any new books or anything. We all had hand me down books of subjects that they had stopped teaching then we would have that subject the next year. When the white schools stopped the subjects they were teaching, then we would have that subject the next year. So we all had old books, some of the pages were torn out, some of the pages would have on there the word "N" that they knowed it was coming into our community.

J: So did you feel like you were challenged academically while you were in school?

E: Always. Except for some of the pressure. Even though our football teams didn't get any new clothes it had everything that Lakeland Sr. High had the shoulder pads, the hip pads for football. The ones that was damaged they would give em to our school and the only thing we had new was the jerseys because ours was blue and white. So we would get that. And so that was the only thing new for the ball players.

J: So when you actually started did you go to kindergarten, first grade, I mean?

E: No. they had what they called primer.

J: Primer?

E: Yeah, you go there and from there you go into first grade.

J: Do you have any memories from when you were in primer?

E: Yes, they were more or less very elementary just like a day care now.

J: Ok.

J: And where were your parents while you were at this school? Your dad was at … and your mom

E: My dad was working, my mother be home. And she was cooking, always cooking and cleaning up. And she would wash clothes for the opposite race and they would come by and pick them up. But then we would go home for lunch because we never did go into the cafeteria because they never did have a cafeteria. Then after they put one on the campus I never did go because I only lived about a hundred yards from the school. So they allowed me to go home, our family to go home and eat everyday for lunch and then we had to come back.

J: So was then the Primer school a part of the elementary school?

E: Yes, all the schools together. You would go out of one classroom into another one. Then there was a old white building and that's where we had to that one. Then now after you get to the third grade then you move into the brick building. Then from third to sixth was in another in one building. Then from seven to twelfth was in another building.

J: Did you always have African American teachers?

E: Always.

J: So there weren't any white teachers at this school?

E: No whites.

J: No white students or teachers?

E: No.

J: And when you went into elementary school do you have any stories that you remember of either lack of facilities things that you may have needed or, do you have any memories of your elementary school?

E: Yes, we really didn't have anything like pencils and things. We would try to get a pencil; if you brake it you would just keep sharpening it and sharpening it because they didn't have the resources to continue to buy. Then we had old type paper I can't recall the name of the paper. But we didn't have nice papers, no typewriters. There was one typewriter the secretary had it and it had a left hand carrier. And so we never did learn how to type and so that when I got on the police department I bought me a typewriter and taught myself how to type.

J: That's neat. Ok, So then you moved into a middle school or was that part of the elementary school?

E: All of it was together.

J: All of it yeah? Ok, so, but as you grew older was there sports? What kind of extracurricular activities did they have?

E: They had basketball, football and softball. But I was not able to play any of it because I had to work. They finally got a band in 1942. That was the first band at the school.

J: Were you the youngest son or you had an older brother named Tom?

E: No that's my daddy's.

J: Oh, ok.

E: I didn't have a brother at all I had three sisters.

J: When you got into high school you said there was a band but you couldn't play any sports. Did you join any clubs? Or was there anything like that available?

E: No, they didn't have any clubs and I was working. Each day I'd get out of school I had to go straight to work.

J: What were the best memories of you growing up?

E: I guess the best memories is that we was a family. We all stayed in a two bedroom house and we just all had to get along with each other. And when the sun go down we had to be home. That's one thing I remember. Then at night I had to get the water, bring it in the house because we didn't have running water. And that was my job. And I had to cut wood to go in the fireplace and the stove. And my mother never wanted to run out wood. So that was my job . My sisters cleaned the house and washed clothes.

J: And did they work outside like you did with your dad?

E: No, they stayed home. They didn't have to go out.

J: So your family was kind of financially stable then because your father and you worked as hard as you did?

E: Yes, we were in better shape than a lot of the community, black community.

J: What were the worst: what do you think the worst memories were of you growing up?

E: I stayed sick most of the time with asthma and that just was very rough and that fireplace I uh when the smoke from it would make me sick. I can't stand smoke now. So, that was my worst memories.

J: What about seeing a doctor? What was the possibility of you seeing a doctor when you were younger?

E: I didn't see doctors.

J: Not at all?

E: No. They would always come with some home remedy. No doctors.

J: So who doctored you? Just your mother?

E: Yes.

J: And what do you mean by home remedies what kind of stuff did they use?

E: They like the older people say uh get uh this type of herb put it together take that, take uh different type of cough syrup and so forth like that. See we never did have a doctor to go to. You couldn't afford a doctor. They had them but you couldn't afford them.

J: So they didn't have a black doctor in the community at all?

E: Yes, we had several black doctors but you just couldn't afford it. Some people'd go but you would have to be almost dying to go to a doctor.

J: So you couldn't like barter with them for like some chickens or that you had to have money?

E: You had to have money.

J: How far did you go in school?

E: Approximately two years of college.

J: Ok, in regards to your memories of your high school, how did your high school years go? What kind of student were you?

E: I was an average high school student and that's where I met my wife because we didn't have a library. They wouldn't even allow us to go to the library so they had the library in my classroom. And my wife was two grades behind me. So she came in to do some research. And there is where I met her. So we dated approximately four years and then we been married sixty years this year. Books and things we just could not receive from the library. We had one teacher they would allow her to come to the library on Lake Morton after hours to pick up a book if we needed it. And this most times the book would be checked out before she would get there.

J: Do you think that was intentional?

E: I don't know. We just had a rough time.

J: So what was your favorite subject when you were in school?

E: Math.

J: Math?

J: Ok so you graduate from high school and what are ceremonies what are the things like? Was there anything unique about your graduation?

E: Yes, we had the senior prom. And I was in a play. That was the first time I had been in a play and it was my senior year and the reason why I was in it then it was done after World War II. They didn't have night school for the veterans to go to. So the veterans would come back and go to school with us and they were very older than we were and so they looked like grown men and we weren't able to play any ball even if I wanted to play they was too old and we wouldn't play with them.

J: Were there any special events that your school did or that your community did in support of WWII? Did a lot of the black community go off and fight in the war? Can you tell me something about that?

E: I can't recall anything about that.

J: Nothing on WWII at all?

E: No

J: Has it changed your life in anyway did you have any kind of fundraisers or anything that you guys did?

E: Yes, we used to buy saving bonds, they would tell us to keep our nickels and dimes and you could buy a savings stamp and put it on a booklet until you get seventeen dollars and fifty cents and then you get you a savings bond. So we always was instrumental in getting those stamps to make us a saving bond.

J: So how many bonds did you get?

E: I can't recall mine because I cashed them in when I got married (Laughing)

J: Oh no, I was hoping you saved one so I could see it.

J: Ok, so your way of contributing even as children was to save up your change and get these stamps?

E: Yeah, get stamps and as you get the stamps you put them in the book until you get a certain amount then you take them to the post office then they give you a bond.

J: So what did you do to raise money? What did you do?

E: Working, Working with my dad and so forth and he would give me money.

J: Now what about at that time did they have where you could collect bottles for deposit? Did they have anything like that?

E: Oh yes, they had those that's because we were doing that at our store. The children would come in and it was two cents on each bottle.

J: That's pretty good huh?

E: Yes.

J: So how much was it for a bottle of pop or is it soda?

E: 5 cent.

J: 5 cents? And they got two cents back for bringing the bottle back?

E: Yeah, and cigarettes was 10 cent a pack, kerosene was 8 cent a gallon, gasoline was 13 cent a gallon, sugar was a pound for 5 cent, mullet fish was 3 pounds for 10 cents, 3 pounds for a quarter. It was 10 cent a pound and 3 pounds for a quarter.

J: That is so your family really did sell everything it really was a grocery store?

E: Yes.

J: And you said it was the first black grocery store was that in Polk County?

E: No, in this area.

J: In Lakeland?. Uh huh, That is awesome. Ok, So, is there anything else you remember in realms of WWII? Do you remember like any of your friends going off to war that you had gone to high school with?

E: You couldn't buy gas. You couldn't get gas during that time and they had stamps and all. And shoes, you had to have stamps to get your shoes. So what it was we couldn't afford all of the shoes so my mother would give our stamps to somebody else for some other stamp. They would switch different things. And uh like sugar they had to have stamps for that. The government allowed so much for each family according to how many children, the more children you had the more stamps you get in order to go purchase the merchandise. You had to pay for it but uh without the stamps you couldn't get it.

J: So you not only had to pay for the item but you had to have the amount of stamps for it above and beyond that?

E: That's correct.

J: So in order for your mom to be able to get the things that she needed if she didn't have enough of certain stamps for one item she traded them for stamps of another item?

E: Yes.

[Part of conversation not recorded where Mr. Pickett tells how he was working as a manager and one night while trying to get home and avoid the whites on the street because of the possibility of being attacked he came across a crowd. When he saw a white policeman in the crowd he felt a sense of relief thinking the policeman would protect him. The policeman in fact was the one who attacked and beat Mr. Pickett badly. Mr. Pickett went to his parent's house and told them that the experience of being attacked had changed his life and he wanted to become the first black policeman. His mother worked for the mayor and in fact the mayor did open those doors. Mr. Pickett's mother forbid him to go and take the test so there were two black me appointed to be policemen before he was. He snuck off two months later and passed the test becoming the third black policeman appointed in Lakeland, Florida. Before he explains the arrangements and differences between white and black policemen.]

J: So the officers, they worked separate shifts, the white officers worked separate shifts than the black officers and you said you weren't allowed to arrest any white people. What about in regards to testifying against people you had arrested?

E: Well we could testify against the black but never arrested any white so we never did get the opportunity to testify against them.

J: And how were they seated in the courtroom?

E: The black officer had one side of the courtroom the white officers had the other one. The blacks would be in the back of the room and the white people'd be in the front.

J: And how many other African American officers did you have within your department?

E: It was four of us at that time and the sheriff's department had two.

J: Ok, so who were the first officers that were hired by the city?

E: Sammie Lee King and Sammie Lee William. They was hired in January uh in January of 1954. Tom Hodge and I was hired March the first, 1954.

J: And can you tell me a little bit about the sheriff's officers if you knew them?

E: Yes, one was named Wilson I can't think of his first name, and the other one was Jessie Nesbitt. They were hired by Monroe Brannen.

J: Ok. And in the 1960's in the time frame that you were hired you were required to take the same test that the white officers were?

E: Yes, I was

J: And were you allowed to go to school with the white officers?

E: No we were not

J: And so you were actually taught by another captain?

E: Captain Kent would teach us. We had what they called the jail and we would go in the office and then he would teach us there. As I say they had what they called The Florida Police Officers Association and they wouldn't allow any blacks to be a member of that organization. But we had a captain named Captain and when he got to be president he wanted us to be a part of it so he accepted our money and when it reached the headquarters they told him that we could not be a member of it and it hurt him so bad he carried us on the outside of the building to give us our money back. And from there I organized what they called the Negro Police Officers Association.

J: And exactly what did that consist of?

E: The same as theirs that we would further our education and was trying to get groups that we met up in Gainesville. That was our first meeting.

J: And how many years did that go on? Did your association consist of other officers from other communities participating?

E: Yes, sheriff department Gainesville, Bartow and some of their chiefs wouldn't allow them to be a part of it. We sent letters out to all of them but they wouldn't allow them to be a part of it.

J: What year was that in?

E: That was in 1962.

J: And is that organization still operating?

E: No, once they allowed us to come in then we dropped it.

J: What year was that?

E: I became a member in 1969 of the Florida Police Officer Association.

J: How did you feel about that?

E: We were just members that's all we still didn't go to their meetings and so forth we just uh had some of the benefits and the benefit was just a small life insurance policy

J: So why didn't you continue with your own organization that you had started if there weren't any benefits besides that?

E: It was just too much of a strain because then the other ones went with the Florida Police Officers Association with the whites.

J: Now what about we had talked about when you became a police officer the supplies, what kind of supplies did you have.

E: We didn't we had hand me down supplies. But I have to go back to the time that I started with a corresponding course and teaching myself. I made my own stuff up and I became a finger print expert, handwriting and they had organizations they called the Florida Police Officers Association then the National Association and Florida Police Officer Association and nobody knew anything about fingerprints. And I went down to Delray Beach and was talking to some black officers and they told me they didn't know anything about fingerprints. So, they had the sergeant there and I went in and talked to him and he told me and said well what course are you taking and I told him that Institute of Applied Science. He said, "Well that's the same one I took." He said, "Meet me in Winter Park" and during that time they had just released where blacks could live in a motel. I told him, I said, "No. I can't go." He said, Why?" I said, "Cuz you know the condition." He said, "How you put your pants on?" I said, "Well one leg." He said, "Well, meet me." And I met him up there. He treated me very nice and that is where I met all the FBI agents and they told me anything I wanted to know call them. During that time the 800 number wasn't as plentiful as they are now so they gave me their personal number and

said, “call us person to person. But we couldn’t accept a call but we will call you back” they said, “but don’t worry it might take us an hour to get that line because its only one line going in there.” And so, when I get on a case and I didn’t know what I was doing, I would call them. They would tell me what type of chemicals to make and so forth and they’d call me back to see if I had done it and if I needed more help. So it was very helpful. They were very helpful to me in that way.

J: When you started out as a police officer you had some problems with resistance that came towards your family and yourself could you tell me a little bit about that?

E: Yes, the children would jump on my children at school. Uh, one night a lady called up and cursed my wife out and uh, so, I went across the street and called the operator and she checked in on the line and heard the lady and told her that it was very nasty what she was doing. So, they disconnected my phone that night where I couldn’t receive any calls but I could call back out. And I found out who the lady was. But it took me about ten years to break her down but I broke her down.

J: Did you have a hard time during that time in realms of separating the fact that you were a part of the black community and it was being abused and attacked?

E: Rephrase that.

J: When you had to deal with people of all races and you and your family were being attacked could you give me some different examples of different types of attacks that they brought upon your family?

E: I say that the whites put a cross at my door. Then on my desk they would put different things on my desk like the KKK has their eyes on you and so forth. Then, when I made the President of the International Association, they would take everything and erase it off of the association and just have it that I was the president A double S. They didn’t want me to have any promotions. And I studied and I made the sergeant. So the chief wouldn’t make me sergeant. And Uh, so, I had to get an attorney and then he made me sergeant after I was going to sue them. And I passed the lieutenants test but they wouldn’t make me lieutenant.

J: During the time that you said that your children were being harassed also besides them putting crosses and mentioning that they were a part of the KKK what did you do to protect yourself?

E: Really nothing I could do no more. I made a cassette tape with the names of individuals that I knew were after me but I never did tell my family. And I put it in a safe deposit box with evidence tape and on there I had that if anything happened to me carry this straight to the FBI and not to the police department and it’s still in my safe deposit box till today. So I lived on a lot of tension and that’s what gave me this bad heart I have called congestive heart failure. I’m operating on 18% of it now. I had so much stress

J: Now after you were you a police officer then you moved in to the position of juvenile?

E: Yes, I came into juvenile I stayed there and worked there in the time of demonstrations that they was having, and after the demonstrations left then they made me a detective.

J: What happened during the demonstrations where there any particular ones that stick out in realms of having to arrest people or violence?

E: Yes, there was demonstrating at the restaurant and so forth and they would have what they called a sit in and we had to go and pick them off the ground carry them to the police station and there they made several arrest but they was illegal because they had passed that they could go into restaurants but these people who owned the restaurants didn't want them in there.

J: And what was the police station your head people that were over you what was their opinion in realms of all this what did they tell you?

E: They were actually afraid of their shadow. We had a police chief that would do anything Neil Booker. He was nice man and would hire but he was afraid of his race. Also so he was rocking the boat both ways and he knew it was wrong but then he had to satisfy the other people.

J: And that was Mr. Booker is that right?

E: Yes, Neil Booker

J: How long did you work for him?

E: I don't know how many years. I guess say 'bout 10.

J: And what kind of man was he?

E: He was nice man that way but he just was afraid of his shadow he just didn't wanna rock the boat

J: Who took his place after he left?

E: Herbert W. Straley took over.

J: What kind of man was he?

E: Oh, he was a straight man. He was a very straight man. He came in and straightened the department out and he caught it because the other officers didn't want him there and they ganged up on him and got him away but he was one of the best chiefs I ever worked for

J: Where did he come from?

E: Pennsylvania.

J: What years was that in; what year was that?

E: I'm trying to think, I can't recall.

J: You were very certain that he was a straight shooter-- a fair and honest man. What types of things did he do?

E: He came in and broke up that sensitive group. He just demoted and he promoted.

J: So when he demoted what did they do to him?

E: They went on to the Ledger on him just kept bickering till he finally had to come out. The city manager fired him.

J: Was that during the time of the civil right movement also?

E: No. It was over with then.

J: Did you ever meet Martin Luther King?

E: No I didn't but I worked the case.

J: Tell me about that.

E: Um, I went to the FBI Academy. These FBI agents see some potentials in me so they came to the chief and the city manager and told them that all they had to do was pay me for my time that I worked they paid for my transportation the schooling and my food so I went up to Quantico and there we had ID officer from all over the country: Japan, Canada and so forth, and when I would test question was James Earl Ray they gave us his print and I knew I could read print and nobody could match the print and um so we asked the instructor to show it to us and he told us to forget it and he gave us all an A so at that time I knew that Earl Ray did not kill Dr. King, that he had to be the fall guy and after I saw movies that they had and it showed the print that was not the print they showed us at the school.

J: How neat. That's really neat. What year was that in?

J: You went to the Police Academy and the FBI Academy?

E: I went to the FBI Academy five times. I went over to Canada, California, Arizona, Broad Chester, New York, Ashville, North Carolina, Austin ,Texas, Savanna, Georgia. They sent me everywhere and as they say, not bragging but, nobody could touch me on fingerprints and I taught myself, so, I was the only black outta the whole country, a member of the organization in 1972. The white officers nominated me as the ID officer of the year for the state of Florida. They made me president of the organization in 1972.

J: How did the other officers feel about you that you worked with?

E: They didn't like it and they didn't want me to have the position as the ID officer at the police department and there was one white officer in Alva des was across seat was across each other and his name was William Kramer and we were taking the same course but he knew, I knew more than he did, so, he got mad with the police department and went to Kentucky to work for the phone company. They told me that they were lookin' for someone to take Bill Kramer's place. So then Bill Kramer didn't like Kentucky and he came back and they told him Bill you

have your job because we never hired anyone and he said, "No he is better than I am, give it to him." and that's how I got the position.

J: Wow. Did you ever consider working for the FBI and the FDLE?

E: I did. They wanted me in chief Herbert W. Straley stopped me from going because I had to go to Tampa and I had to report to him by 5 o'clock one day and he kept me in the office showing me that the transportation of possibilities of having a wreck from Tampa there and he waited till after the 5 o'clock to release me outta his office where I could stay there.

J: You think he did that on purpose?

E: Yes, he did. He didn't want me to go I worked for every police department in Polk County I did all the work for Plant City police department they didn't have ID officers so I did the work for all of them and they couldn't pay me but I was on call 24/7 and anytime they whenever you make an arrest with a finger print you had to send it to the FBI. It would take them 6 weeks to send it back and say yes you have the right person but then with me I could look at it and tell them it was the print so you wasn't allowed to make a mistake because you make a mistake, you could never testify again so that was a lot of stress on me

J: How did you feel about being kept back like that from being able to go to that meeting?

E: Rephrase that

J: How did you feel when your superior kept you in that office past your meeting time because he knew you had to go?

E: I felt alright because then. I knew I was wanted.

J: Oh, ok, so you weren't angry with that?

E: Oh no. I wasn't angry he knew I would want it and I knew that I would want it at that time.

J: So you looked at it in that way rather than him trying to hamper your future in working in another field?

E: Yes. After I looked at it. It would've been a lot of stress me driving from Lakeland to Tampa. Then come back through all that traffic and so forth so he couldn't make me um he couldn't give me a promotion because they told him I was the only one that was in that department and I didn't have anyone to supervise so they couldn't gave it and I asked them to pay me different between the sergeant and the lieutenant pay if I couldn't be a sergeant but the city manager wouldn't do that. So, I had to remain with the patrolman salary until later on when I determined I wanted a rating because when I go to the conference and everything everyone was sergeant lieutenants' and captains and that's the time that I went then to an attorney and he told me I had a good law suit and he went to Karol Odman was the mayor at the time and he went to her and told her that I was getting ready to sue the city. When I got back home, the city manager called me and told me that the chief evidentially liked me because he wanted to give me a promotion and wanted to know if he could do it before the budget and he told him, "yes"

and so he said go see the chief. So when I went to go see the chief, the chief said, "the city manager really love you and he wanted to know that I have enough money in the budget to make you sergeant." So, that's the way I got to be sergeant.

J: What was the name of your lawyer?

E: Ken Glover.

J: Oh, that's awesome; can you tell me something about him can you tell me something about Mr. Glover how did you pick him as your lawyer?

E: He was the only black attorney in Lakeland. He was outstanding in the community and he would just do everything and he was a member of the NAACP and he would fight for your rights.

J: What did you know about the NAACP? When did that become something that you learned about?

E: During the time, that all these demonstrations were. They was active, very active in it.

J: Where you apart of that?

E: No, I couldn't be because I was a police officer.

J: Did you know any of the officials from the NAACP?

E: Yes, Madeline Brooks. She was the president and um Otis William, correction, first, it was Odis William from Plant City then, Madeline Brooks took over.

J: Robert Sanders from Tampa?

E: I might of heard of him but I can't recall him.

J: Can you tell me about the other two?

E: Otis was the one that stopped them from building schools and everything. They wanted to build elementary school on Webster Avenue. He stood in front of the bull dossier and wouldn't let them do it. He was instrumental in getting them black waitresses in different buildings and also he got the first black teller that we had. His name was Harold Brown Jr. at Florida national bank and the 1st black female was Gracie Williams at First Federal and Madam Brooks came in and she had demonstration of closing up all the white stores in the black community.

J: What about the tellers? Did white people give them a hard time, about going to them, going in their line?

E: I don't know.

J: Okay, the female leader the second one that became the leader of the NAACP, what was her name?

E: Madeline Brooks.

J: Could you tell me about her?

E: Oh, she was a go getter. She was the one that closed up all the stores on the north side of town. All the white stores they would picket the stores and close them up. She was just a go getter.

J: She was involved in demonstrations and things like that?

E: Yes, she was involved in demonstrations. She had the younger people. She would organize them and would get them going. We had a lot of trouble but we was blessed because when they were burning down building we didn't have any buildings burnt down in the city of Lakeland but then we had burglary and I had to talk with one of the buildings and there they had all models of cocktails on top of them they went off they burned out before they set the buildings on fire so we was blessed during the time of the demonstrations.

J: Who was it that was burning the buildings?

E: The children they starting it. They was all over the country, everywhere you see them, burning the building but Lakeland never did get a burnt building.

J: Did you see white people integrating between the African American population in participating in these demonstrations?

E: No, not in Lakeland.

J: So it was only the black community vs the white community?

E: Black community. We wasn't allowed in other words, down Kathleen road. Providence are where we are now. Blacks just didn't go there. You could go there and work during the day time but if you go in the evening then you were a suspicious person and you would be picked up and arrested and they had so many different charges that wasn't even charges because when I started classifying fingerprints, I would see on the card gp, gp and I knew it wasn't in the statutes and I had to ask Captain Harden what it meant and he said it meant general principle. So they were just picking them up for general principle and putting them in jail.

J: General principle, so that meant everything that wasn't a law?

E: That's right.

J: Oh my word, ok, that's terrible, in regards to you and experience that the role of the sheriff and the police department had together could you tell me something about that?

E: I had good experience with them. I have several letters sent in to the chief of police telling me why I was helping them and I can't think of the year but President Carter came to Lakeland and they had a fellow that was following him around that they thought was gonna assassinate him and his name was Franklin.

J: 1980.

E: The FBI picked him up and brought him to the station and during that time we didn't have good communications on finger prints and stuff to call in so they brought him into the station for me to finger print him and when I finger printed him then we called the FBI up in Washington and I had to tell them the certain characteristics that I was looking at to identify him then he admitted who he was.

J: Who was he?

E: Franklin was his name. I can't think of his first name

J: What was it that he did wrong?

E: He wanted to kill the president. They made a movie outta him but they put that he was arrested in St. Petersburg but he was arrested here in Lakeland but received different type awards on it.

J: Did you get to meet the president?

E: Yes, I did.

J: And what did you think of him?

E: I didn't get a chance to do too much. I just shook his hand because I had to guard him and when he was coming out I reached over and I shook his hand at the civic center and then we followed him to the airport and then we got him to the airport. He was trying to get those 57 prisoners out of, I think of 57 people that was in the country and they called him when he was making a speech at the airport he had to drop everything and get on Air Force 1 and take off. So we didn't get a chance to talk to him too much.

J: That was the Iranian prisoner hostage problem?

E: Yes.

J: Was that underneath the supervision of Herbert W. Straley Who succeed Mr. Straley?

E: Lawrence Crow.

J: And what can you tell me about him?

E: He was a little better than Bill Booker. He was a pretty good fellow. He would let me go anytime I had a convention I wanted to go to. He would always see that I had an opportunity to attend them when that's when I made the promotion, I knew it was him.

J: Your promotion to detective?

E: My promotion to Sergeant.

J: To sergeant?

E: Ummhumm. (yes)

J: Ok, so to recap, you started as a police officer, than you went to a juvenile over juveniles and then you went to a detective than you went to a sergeant?

E: Yes, a sergeant than in charge of the crime scene division.

J: Can you tell me about when you went into that position when he promoted you?

E: I was already in it but he just promoted me while I was in it so I was in charge of the crime scene and finger printing at that time.

J: Was this the gentleman? Was Straley the one that promoted you that went to the city commissioners and everybody to get your raise?

E: No, he went there to try and get me a raise but then it was Crow who promoted me.

J: It was Crow that actually got you the money?

E: Yes.

J: And supposedly the city manager loved you and that's great. Ok, during your time as the sergeant did your job duties change? Did you get more benefits beyond the raise that they gave you?

E: Yes, I received the same ratings that the whites did and um same salary.

J: Where you treated the same?

E: Well yes, but some of the officers didn't like the position I was in so I had to fight them also.

J: Give me some examples.

E: That's when I was telling you they would put different things on my desk and so forth and they didn't like it they didn't even like it when I made sergeant. One fellow came out on me and said if I did something wrong I would know how to write him up but he came out and apologized later. I told him he shoulda done it inside the room where he made the statement.

J: So did you have any recourse did you have any one you could go to?

E: I went to John Simpson because things were so bad and he had made a cassette tape on everything that I told him and put names but he didn't do anything about it.

J: Who was John Simpson?

E: He was the Major. He was assistant chief. One day he went to the sheriff department with Crow but he never would do anything but I went to him. He knew about it.

J: When was that?

E: 1980.

J: So, did things start getting any better at any point? When did you start seeing a difference, where it got a little bit easier for the African American officers?

E: Just gradually. Different things happened, so, no particular time.

J: But was it a drastic difference?

E: When I left it still was rough. It still is that way now because they don't get any promotions and so forth so it's still rough.

J: When did you leave?

E: 1982.

J: 1982 you retired?

E: Yeah.

J: And did you receive the same retirement benefits that any other officer would get?

E: Yes, I did.

J: Did you, why did you decide to retire? Was there a particular thing that happened?

E: I was getting sick. I had congestive heart failure and my wife wanted me to retire earlier. Anyways she owned a daycare center for 40 years and she tried to get me to retire when I was 50 years of age and I wish I had but I stay until I was 55 and that's where my health started going down because of the disability and there was a lot of stress on me. Whenever an FBI agent got a finger print it would be three of them um if they assigned it to you. You would look at the print and you would say yes this is the individual. Then you write up a report and give it to somebody else. They'll look at it agree and give it back to you. Then you give it to your supervisor. He'll look. So that's three people that looked at that print but with me it was just only one. So anytime that an attorney wanted to get somebody else to look at an print, it had to be that individual, if not then, I wouldn't be able to testify again.

J: Wait. If you looked at a print and than they would have somebody, two other people look at the print?

E: That's what the FBI and FDLE work but with me it was just only one that I would say that was the print but if an attorney that was representing you and he felt like he wanted some assistance he would send that print off and if he sent it off and they say that I made a mistake than I would never be able to testify again.

J: So you always had to be right on?

E: I had to be right.

J: So what if it was another white officer, say that ever made a mistake, would it be the same repercussions?

E: Same thing.

J: They would say he'd never be able to testify again?

E: That correct.

J: What would you say the best part of your job was in all the different positions you had what time did you?

E: I enjoyed the crime scene and the finger print. I loved it. It just was a part of me. Like a person that plays a piano. I just enjoyed looking at prints and identifying.

J: Was there ever a case that was hard to crack or that you never got to finish?

E: Yes, it was a case that I had was over in Plant City. They had given this case to the FBI and the FDLE and they could not identify the print. I did it and so I was tense because I knew the boy had a good attorney and they had said that the FBI had turned it down and FDLE but before we went to court the attorney had plead him guilty. It was a Plant city case but I've testified in Hillsborough County, Polk County and Orange county in different cases while working for all the departments.

J: How did your superior officer do with, your chiefs do with you going around to different jurisdictions testifying?

E: They didn't have any problem.

J: Because they didn't pay you?

E: Well see, I didn't get paid because I was working for the city of Lakeland but the man over in Plant City the chief over there would let me go to the farmers market and I would get strawberries and different things like that. They would have me give them but the other departments couldn't give me anything but they sent many letters out congratulating me and complementing me for what I did. Plus, I taught in Polk Community College, Pasco and Highland with just the education that I had but I taught crime scene, photography and fingerprinting.

J: When was that?

E: Uh, all the way until I retired. I say from about 1980 until I retired. It might have been a little longer than that.

J: And did you like teaching?

E: Well, yes I did.

J: And you kept teaching and working for the police department at the same time?

E: That's correct.

J: And were you paid for that?

E: Yes, I was paid that salary and was able to get the social security because they were taking it out. Then when I left the department I was a consultant and I had cases out of Fort Myers different things the FBI agents knew what I could do and they would tell the different agents and they would send me the information for me to look at it.

J: So, Plant City would pay you with strawberries. Is that right?

E: Yes.

J: (Laugh) But the other ones weren't that nice they wouldn't even give you any vegetables, just a letter of thank you?

E: Yes.

J: Any other fond memories as for the best parts of your police work that you did?

E: No, but worse I can tell you, I could tell you the worse part of it.

J: That was my next question? (Laugh).

E: The worst part was when I was shot in 1964. December 31st at 2:30 p.m. At JM Field Service Station. There was three of us shot at that time. They left me last to pick me up because they thought I was dead. The bullet went into my left shoulder. Went up broke my neck. Came down in my right shoulder. And the doctor said," it missed my spine, by the length of a nats eyebrow." I told him, "I didn't know a nat had an eyebrow." He said, "Well that's how close it came." And from here all the way now I feel all of this down to here. And uh, I guess you call it shell shock because I had to have thirteen shock treatments. And I didn't carry a gun for about five years because I couldn't stand to hear it. A gun or even a vehicle backfire. So that was the rough part.

J: What was the surroundings behind you getting shot?

E: It was a traffic violation. And I went to JM Fields. I was a detective at that time. And when I entered the building I didn't know who I was looking for. All I knew was it was a black male. Then I saw three white males in there taking inventory. So this white male was easing around t he corner and I saw the white people looking at me real hard. But they didn't tell me he was coming. So he reached up and he snatched my gun, tore my pants off and uh that's when I turned myself to the side and he shot me. And the officer didn't hear it and when he opened the door, he shot the other officer. Then he shot the sergeant four times.

J: So the other office was that your partner? Was it a black man?

E: No, It was the captain, I must correct the Sergeant Lacarpus and it was Inspringer. We all was in different vehicles.

J: Did everybody survive?

E: Yes.

J: And were they able to capture the man?

E: Yes. He was they stopped him on the riffle range road.

J: For a traffic violation?

E: Yes, he had a traffic violation and he did all that.

E: He ran from the officers and we went there to get him. He was working for JM Fields.

J: So how long were you out of work?

E: About a month. But then I was, I knocked a whole year of 1968 out of my life. Because I was in taking those shock treatments and I don't know what happened during that time. As to say, I had thirteen of them.

J: Ok so you were shot, you were shot in 1964, and then you had some reoccurring medical problems in 1968 is that right?

E: That's correct.

J: And in 1968 you just had to go in for these special shock therapies?

E: Yes, I don't know what happened. And my wife didn't tell me. So I still don't know she wouldn't tell me.

J: It must have been pretty bad. Did you ever shoot anyone?

E: No, I didn't.

J: Never had to?

E: I shot at em but I didn't. . . .

J: Are you happy for that?

E: Yes I am.

J: OH, do you think your job was harder for you then say a white officer?

E: Yes I know it was.

J: Why do you say?

E: Because the pressure that I had to go under. The stress I was under was harder.

J: Like for promotions?

E: Promotions and even the work that you do.

E: You had to work twice as hard. IN other words they could do a little and get away. We had to do a lot even when we was in patrol. They had the opportunity to go get hot coffee, different things at night, sandwiches. We didn't have any restaurants open. We patrolled strictly in the black community. There was no restaurants there. And we had to bring our own lunch to work. We had to fix our own coffee and have it in there, the things to keep it warm. So we didn't have the opportunity they had. And then the captains, they would follow us around to make sure we were working. We had to get out and shake the doors and they would come along and put a straw or something up over a screen door to come and see if we had uh been there and they would be in a restaurant sitting down laughing and talking. And we would just continues to work. And it was real hard because the community wasn't that large. And we were just going round and round and round in circles all night long. And that's the way we had to work.

J: Just in realms in how hard you had to work, was it harder during certain times of your career? Like during the resistance and the rioting and stuff? Was that a more busy and harder time for you than …

E: Yes, It was during the time of the demonstrations. It was very hard for us. And when we first on it was very hard because as I say they just didn't want us on there. Even the whites or the black. When I first got on, before I even got into uniform, I will never forget one of the white officers said. " you mean to tell me you want to arrest those "N" people, And your one too?". And uh I had to hold my peace. And stay there so uh, It was just hard.

J: You know the way you say that, that has been one thing for me I was just wondering especially with an older person like you where you use the "N" word , how do you feel about your community continuing, especially the young people, using that word?

E: I don't like it. When they come off with it. I just don't care for it. And they still use it.

J: Um hm, I know.

E: They same way I don't like for them to call a female a "W".

J: Um HM.

E: It just worries in that change instead to educate themselves and that's what my son is doing. He is working with teenagers that's what he did Sunday. He called them all down front. And he is educating them telling them to pull their pants up, stop those tattoos and all. And he is organizing a force of men and wants the men to be role models for their boys and the girls so he had over two hundred children in church Sunday. Talking to them and letting them know that's not the way to live.

J: Did they have anybody in the black community that did that during the time of the riots?

E: Yes, I have to retract. Coach Willie Speed and I. They was having so mucha trouble and I went to the chief of police and I asked him could I do something to help create jobs and things for the children.

J: And you were working with Willie Speed at the time?

E: I was working with the police department.

J: Oh ok,

E: So he told me to go to the city manager and he asked me. "Well what do you want to do?" I say, "We don't have any jobs and these children are on the street and I want to see what could we do." Well he showed how to be interviewed for jobs." He said, "you say we, we who?" I says "let me get Coach Speed." And so we organized what we called the ACE. And they allowed us to have a building on North Virginia Avenue. And there Coach Speed and I got together and we had the children to come in. We went to different department stores, factories and things and asked them to help us that we was trying to get these black children to work. And so they did. And we taught them how to dress, how to be interviewed, and e would check on them each month to see how they was doing and that's how we got a lot of them placed in department stores and so forth.

J: It was Coach Speed? How do you spell that?

E: Yeah, Willie Speed. But he was a coach for Kathleen.

J: And this is called Ace A-C-E-?

E: Yes.

J: And what did that stand for?

E: I forgot

J: Anyway, this was an organization that you started. Was that an organization that continues or has something spawn from that?

E: No

J: Were there any other or how long did that organization continue what year was that?

E: About 65.

J: And it lasted until?

E: I guess it lasted about five years.

J: Five years?

E: Yeah, a good five years.

J: And then what ended up happening with the organization? How did it disbanded?

E: Because everybody could get a job and so forth and so it was of no value to

J: So the whites didn't need an organization like that, they didn't have any problem getting jobs.

E: No they didn't it was only the African Americans. The only thing they would let us do was clean yards and things and the children wanted different type jobs and that is the reason why we went for it.

J: How did the general public react to that?

E: We didn't have any problem when we went in to that.

J: And was there any problem with African American workers in the department stores?

E: Some of them said they wouldn't work with them. And we had a florist shop and she determined that she wasn't gonna hire any. And she had her place in the black community. And she wouldn't hire them.

J: So the other workers didn't want to work with them and some of the business owners didn't want to hire them.

E: That is correct.

J: How did the customers react, the white customers react to a business whether it was an African American?

E: Some of the people wouldn't allow them to wait on them. They just tell them I don't want you waiting on me.

J: When did you really start seeing a difference like integration and desegregation? When it really was starting to make a difference?

E: I guess in the later part of the 70's.

J: WOW! What were some of the major things that surprised you like when you turn on the tv now a days and you hear them say a word that you think you never would have heard them saying on a public television? What were some of the main things that you saw happening that you thought I never in my life thought that it would get this far that we would be able to overcome?

E: With sports, because Ohio had a football team and they had a black on the team and they had to come down to Orlando to play and they refused to let him play on the team. I'll never forget when Nat King Cole was the first black that came on tv. They wouldn't allow him to get close to a white female. If she sang she would be on one side and he'd be on the other side. Uh just couldn't believe we ever would have a black president, black mayor, all of these things I just couldn't see it. Uh, black doctors on the staff at the Watson Clinic and uh in the hospital. Things we've come a long ways but still it's a long ways to go. That we can do better. But we as a black race can do better if we begin to recognize that we need to do better. And pick up and get education, uh learn how to dress, learn how to be interviewed and so forth.

J: It sounds like you were able to travel outside of Lakeland into other communities, other states, other countries, what differences did you see between and here and Florida and those areas say

during the times of the most racial tension? Did you see it was worse here in Florida than it was elsewhere in the country?

E: I just didn't have any problems because I was around a group of FBI agents, FDLE and police officers so they treated me very nice so I didn't go into the black community or go into department stores when we was at the seminars and things like that. So I couldn't tell if there was any difference in those areas.

J: Did you later on figure out that in fact it was different than it is here?

E: Oh I knew it was different. I carried my family up to uh Kansas City, Kansas and so the car broke down on me in Alabama and I thought I was gonna have problems there and the man treated us nice. But then I had been driving all night and when I got into Memphis, Tennessee I pulled off on a side street to sleep and some white people came on and said, "look these "N's sleeping downtown", and they began to rock the car, to turn the car over. And I had to take out and go straight into the highway and I was just blessed that a car didn't hit us. So, I made sure I didn't come back through Memphis coming back. Back that way, I asked my brother-in-law to give me another route coming out of there. So that was one I had. Then when I went up to New York I came back down into uh Savannah, Georgia and that was in 1964 and President Johnson had just signed a (Civil Rights Bill) bill that you could eat so my children said, "daddy, why we can't eat In a restaurant?" So I stopped at a Holiday Inn and the minute I pulled up, the sheriff department pulled up. They had em to come in so the waitress wouldn't wait on us. The manager came over to the table and took our orders. It was very cold in there I knew that. So I kept watching out to see if they was following me because I knew they would do things like that but they didn't.

J: It must have been hard to try to explain to your children being a police officer yourself having them have to experience that.

E: Yes it was. And an experience that I really had was when I couldn't arrest a white and the children would tell them, "Your daddy is nothing but a pimp because he can't arrest white people." And then, the children would have fights at the school.

J: When would that change? In what year did they start allowing you to arrest white people?

E: In 64.

J: And do you remember the first white person you arrested?

E: We'll allowed them to arrest them because I wasn't doing it then I was doing investigation work. But I remember the first call I got to a white it was uh this will be comical. They had a fellow that was killed in an accident and I had to go to Gentry Morrison Funeral Home for them one morning to take a picture. And they had em all laying on the tables in forth and I had to get up on the table to look down to shoot. So the phone rang and the mortician says uh "well, I'll be back in a minute." I say, "You a lie, we'll be back in a minute." (laugh) He says, "why?" I say, "you not gonna leave me out here with all those white folks dead." (laugh) He say, "they won't hurt you." So that was the first thing that I can recall.

J: (laugh) That's funny. Well we have been talking about all of the different things you have done to accomplish and you are evidently an overachiever. What is your stance on what we were talking about discrimination, how about reverse discrimination? Have you experienced that and how do you feel about that?

E: I feel pretty good but I feel like it could be better because I say now they are still not giving promotions in the department. A black has to work ten times harder than a white officer. They can get by with most anything that the black officer can.

J: Do you think that there should be certain things like they started up charter schools evidently you probably know how that came about in the 1960's when they passed the case and law suit that happened here in Florida. In realms of starting schools up charter schools and magnets schools that was to benefit primarily the African American population? Did your children partake in any of that?

E: I was on the committee that Dr. N. E. Roberts was the area superintendent for the northwest section. So he asked me to be on the committee when they started the magnet schools. And so, on the discussions we had a lot of parents come in that didn't want those schools because they didn't want them in the black community. They said they was afraid to come into the black community. So we had a lot of convincing to do and so they sent us down to West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale where they had already started magnet schools. For us to know how to communicate with the parents here in order to get em. So we started out at Lincoln and Rochelle for the first two magnet schools in Lakeland.

J: Which now happens to be some of the top schools in all of Polk County?

E: That's correct.

J: And McKeel Academy is another one?

J: Did you have anything to do with the case? Were you at all involved in the lawsuit that took place?

E: No I didn't. I was one just to help to start the schools.

J: What was the original idea behind the starting of the schools?

E: I can't recall.

J: But it did have to do specifically to do with the desegregation requirements for the black community?

E: Yes, they wanted blacks and whites to come together. They wanted them to have equal opportunities. But then they would separated that you had to be a top student to get into the magnet schools. And so that is where it came into, through that.

J: Are you at aware of how the program originally started in realms of nowadays it is two categories, African Americans and other. And there are waiting lists for those students to get in.

I have two children that go to McKeel Academy but to this day they still have two categories African American and other and they pull so many children out of each category as to balance the racial.

E: Yeah they say it balance them but I don't think because a lot of the schools have more whites than they have African American. Uh my great grand that lives with me that I am raising , he go out to the airport to the Air Academy and out of a hundred and some children there is only three minorities.

J: Why do you think that is?

E: I don't know if, well they put you in there by your grades and you have to go on what you say waiting lists so really the percentage wise is way off at that school. And it's the same way with the other schools that the percentage wise the same way with the teachers that it is not. They out of their …

J: Do you think they are just not able to compete? I mean are there contributing factors as to why they can't compete in the African American community vs the white community.

E: I'll put it this way the white community have more programs that when the children get out of school they can go over to these programs and it encourages them to move forward. But when the black children come back into the black community there's no programs or type of buildings like the YCMA or anything like that to encourage them and give them the uh, uh, uh, uh, desire to want to improve themselves. The same as the, you can have great donations here(FSC) I'm not knocking it but they give millions and millions of dollars on this side of town when they won't put it on the other side of town and it's going down and it need to be kinda evened out. If it doesn't come even just give something in that area to help the community. And the community is just fading away. And then when we have somebody they move out of the community then the children don't have anyone to look up to as a role model to say I would like to be like somebody. Uh, even when our ball players anything they go off they never come back to the community to say what can we do in the community to help the community. They gone. So we don't have…

J: Why do you think they don't come back?

E: They want to say they are above everybody. But I have to go back with the Picketts because I'm one. My wife ran a daycare center for forty years and she have, had hundreds of children to come through her school because she had seventy children each year she can go. We built a home and it's a $300,000 home at that time and she wouldn't allow me to the community to build a home she said she received the money in the black community let's stay in the black community where they can see what we were doing. So we built the home in the black community. We didn't move out but we could have moved out at anytime we wanted to because we paid cash for the house. But yet still she wanted to let the children see what could be done in the community.

J: Who were some of the role models that you had when you were growing up?

E: Just ball players because really I worked so hard I didn't really have any my father was about the best role model because I never heard my father use the word damn, I never saw him smoke he never drank um he never danced and he was my role model.

J: That's neat, one of my questions I was in regards to your encounters with the white supremacies groups, other than the KKK thing was there any other like that when you were growing up?

E: Yes, when I was growing up once in the morning when I got up they had the paper I saw where they had taken out a pastor we had a church there at Florida and Memorial Blvd. a red brick church that use to be a land mark and the pastor was living in the parsonage next to it. They came there, woke him up 3 o'clock in the morning, went down and got a group of people and marched them down Florida Ave. The 5th and Florida and they burned a cross at that location and they had their pajamas on and everything and it was really hurting for me to be a child and look at my pastor standing up under a cross with his pajamas on at that time in the morning so that was my 1st thing of seeing that racial problem that bad and then when we was a child they put a skating rink they wouldn't allow us to go a skating down town and I never learned how to skate, but they brought a tent out there and they say that the Klansman was going to come in and run us out of there, and Pat Gordon he was the sheriff at the time and he told us to stay there and skate and that they wasn't going to come there but that was the rumor that they were going to come and run us out of that area.

J: Do you think those experiences that you had formed or scared you as an adult brought it to your adulthood?

E: Yes, it brought me in because I wanted to do so many things but they wouldn't let me. When I was about 8 years of age, I was in Atlanta, Georgia and they was building a WT Grant store down town and I told my daddy and they had blacks doing it, I said "that's what I want to be," and he said, " they will never let you be that in Lakeland." So when I came back and I was working for one of them. I was a display manager and they wouldn't allow me to paint in the daytime. I couldn't fix the lights in the daytime but I was only making $25.50 a week. My wife was making $13.50. So, I take the $25 each week and put in a half. So the only thing that bid me was the people who lay the blocks out put the tile. Then my wife took a lamp, light, square, and a hand saw and we built that house. And we had to pay cash for it because they wouldn't allow you, they wouldn't lend you money. And they were tearing down a bowling alley on Florida Ave. And they had oak floors and so I bought those floors for $20. And paid the man $10 to bring them out to the house and we pulled the nails out of it. And we put the oak floor in there. And they would deliver furniture in wood crates and I had a bicycle and I would pull the nails out of the wood crates and I would tie them on my bicycle and ride them all about them way 2 miles to the house and that's how I made my sub floor. And when we got the bed room up and closed the bathroom we moved in. But we didn't have any ceiling or anything in the house during that time the city didn't make you have what they call a CO to get in the house. So each week we would put something in the house and that's how we built the home. That would be the 1st house we lived in.

J: When did you sell that house then?

E: No my granddaughter lives in it now.

J: Isn't that cool, I love it what year was that?

E: 1950. When we first married it took us about two years to build it and out of the $13.50 we gave my parents, we live with them, we gave them $5 a week and my wife and I lived off of $8.50.

J: Can you comment of any white officials that you remember that were particularly supportive to you in your career?

E: The Mayor Pat Flanagan Jr. was the major one. He was very good. And Mr. Wooton. I can't think of his name, first name but he was Major Protate and he was with us. And that's when we was made policemens under their administration. And my mother worked for Pat Flanagan and also I did too. He had a paint store and I would go there and work for him.

J: So, he was major and he owned a paint store?

E: Yes, but he, was one that said we should be able to arrest whites. He had an article in the paper that he could not understand why that they say that we cannot arrest white people.

J: What year do you think that was around?

E: That was the year that was around 1954.

J: So the paper was printed in 1954?

E: Yes.

J: What like the Lakeland Ledger?

E: That's correct.

J: What did they do to advance you in your career?

E: He didn't do anything only thing he was just there to get us on. And once they hired the mayor doesn't have the right to tell anybody how to work their…they are not supposed to do that.

J: Ok how about any people, any officials that were abusive towards you?

E: I didn't have any. Not commissioners or anything. None of them was abusive.

J: Do you think it was the way you looked at things? Like when you told me the story of your chief keeping you after hours so that you couldn't join the FBI. I looked at it as well that's really terrible and you looked at it as well he really cared about me. He wanted to keep me here. Was it the way you looked at things that maybe?

E: I think so. He wanted to keep me because he was showing me where I shouldn't go. And he knew he couldn't find anybody qualified to fill that position and he didn't want to lose it.

J: So you don't feel like you had anybody that was like any of your chiefs or any of your people that were abusive towards you?

E: Yes, Major Simpson he was very abusive. As I said I made a report to him and he failed to do anything about it. Then the Lacopolus uh, after Herb Straleycame in and demoted him he would always do a lot of profanity. And he was even with me when I got shot. But he was very abusive. Not only to me but any of the rest of the whites after he was demoted because they had to asked him to leave the department.

J: How did he react when you got shot?

E: He didn't. Well I felt like I was responsible for all of them getting shot because it was my gun. So they wouldn't allow us to be in the same hospital. The hospital was separated. And I was feeling down so they brought him in a wheelchair and he said that he didn't have any ill feelings towards me.

J: Oh so you felt like it was your responsibility because the man grabbed your gun?

E: That's correct. I didn't act fast enough and I felt like I was responsible for all of them.

J: So that visit from him did it make a difference to you?

E: No it didn't because I still have that in the back of my head that I was responsible And anytime I speak to officers, I speak to anybody, I tell them that. That whenever they come out on an officer and say an officer acted too fast I let them know that an officers have a family that they want to go back to. And sometime whenever they react they might think they see something that is not there and they shoot an individual so you can't hold a police officer responsible for a lot of things that happen. And I just didn't act fast enough.

J: You say there were a number of officers that were abusive towards you, did you witness them being abusive to other African Americans?

E: Yes, they just didn't want it. They were members of the Klansmen. I knew who they were because there is one officer they didn't want him to be a police officer and they put him with me thinking that he and I couldn't get along. And he came out to be a friend. And he always keep me posted that what was going to happen. And that's how I was able to beat the system.

J: And he was a white officer? and he was in the Klan?

E: Yes, No he wasn't

J: Oh he wasn't?

E: No, he wasn't in the Klan but he is still a friend of mine that he every time he wants to go to a conference now and they will send him and he make a double bed in the room, he'll call me up and ask me if I want to go. And go along with him. They thought that we couldn't get along and he turned out to be a very good friend of mine.

J: Did you ever have to look the other way when they were abusing somebody?

E: That's where I got into trouble because wouldn't do it. That's exactly where I got into trouble. I can recall one day when one of the lieutenants picked up a black female and pushed her down on the tile and put his knee in her stomach. Now I told him I said, "I can handle her, get up off her, get up off her." And the captain called me in the office and told me said, "did you know that was a lieutenant you was talking to?" I said, " I don't care who it was." I say," He didn't have to do what he did." I say, "Because I could have handled her." So I had to fingerprint her. And when I was fingerprinting her I told her what my name was and I say, "If you go to court and you want a witness," I say, "you have them to subpoena me." And they evidently asked her what I said because they called her back in the office and they released her and didn't make any charges against her.

J: Oh, so you actually saved her?

E: Yes.

J: Can you comment on Pat Gordon?

E: Pat Gordon was the first to hire blacks. He was the one to hire Jessie Nesbitt and Wilson. And he lived in the black community. And he never did put himself above a black person. He was just a good old man. He was a country man but he was a good old man. And there's nothing bad I can say about Pat Gordon

J: What was his position?

E: He was sheriff. He was constable and sheriff.

J: Did you have any personal interaction with him?

E: Oh yes, we went off and got prisoners together and so forth like when he was constable then he would go out on different arrests with me when he was constable and so theres was just nothing wrong. He was nice man.

J: And fair?

E: Very fair.

J: Ok, with Pat Gordon, when he decided to run for election who was his main support of him?

E: The black community because he came on and said he would hire black deputy sheriffs and the NAACP got very active at that time and that's when the votes came in and all over the county and they were the ones that pulled him over that over that hill in order to make him sheriff.

J: Did he follow through with his promises?

E: He sure did.

J: Did he face any repercussions? Did anyone come after him because of him hiring blacks?

E: I can't recall.

J: Did he have to face any false charges or anything in regards to request or arrests that he made?

E: Yes, he was strictly arresting people for moon shining he had his own bloodhound dogs that he raised. They would say that he would go out and steal dogs and find them on the road. They were just after him and he finally went off to the institution and made time and he came back and he ran for constable and made it again

J: You mean he went to jail?

E: Yes, he did.

J: How long was he in jail?

E: I don't know how long he was in jail.

J: Do you know what the charges were?

E: Something about finance and he said when he went into the prison system and the fellows found out who he was they wanted to make his time because they knew how he had treated people out here. So he said he didn't have any rough times in the jails with the prisoners

J: So, he made friends in the prison and out of the prison?

E: Yes, he did.

J: Is that unusual for policeman to be able to make friends with prisoners?

E: That's correct

J: Okay the next person I'd like to ask about is Monroe Brannen.

E: Yes. I remember him as is when I was very young he used to work at the ice house on 5th street. And from there he went to the police department and he was shot by a black fellow in the early later part of the 1950's. And they shot his eye and he left there and went on to be sheriff. And he took Pat Gordon's place when he ran and he made it and he stayed sheriff for about 12 years. And Louis Mims came in and beat him out.

J: Did he get a lot of the support from the black community?

E: Well, yes he did.

E: He was in and he stayed in the black community. Every time there was a funeral you would look up you would find Monroe Brannen in there. Whether he knew you or not he was at that funeral.

J: So even though he was arresting people from that community he was still respected by the people.

E: Very much so. You can arrest a person if you give them respect. Respect come right back to you on some of em. And they really respected Monroe Brannen and Pat Gordon.

J: On Mr. Brannen what made him different than any other sheriff?

E: He just would get around the black community and he would be with us everywhere we go and he was just like I wouldn't say like us but he was in the community. You just couldn't find any difference in him. He was called out to a meeting he would come and stay until it was over. Most whites when they were called out; they would say they have a previous engagement. You have to let them speak and then they'll go. He wasn't that type of fellow.

J: Was he leading in realms of how he did his police work? Did he set the bar, raise the bar for other police departments to follow?

E: Yes, he did. Because he allowed the blacks to arrest whites. And he raised it up to that. You could see that even during that time you had to furnish your own car to be a deputy sheriff. And I don't know but I heard that he would not allow them to ride on bad tires. He would make sure that they had descent tires on the car.

J: What can you tell me about Louis Mims?

E: The blacks put him into office but then he failed to do his duty and come into the black community. So when he ran the second time he lost. Because he just wouldn't be the sheriff that he should have been. And as I say I went to school with him. I helped campaign for him and I told him he lost the position because he wouldn't come back into the black community. He had gotten so high that even he wouldn't return my phone calls. And he knew how important It was that we helped him get in the position he was in.

J: What was his background before he ran for sheriff?

E: He was a state trooper. A corporal for the state trooper. For the Florida Highway Patrol.

J: How long did he do that?

E: I don't know. I met him in one of the classes at Polk Community College. That's how I met up with him.

J: So would you say the black community played a great role in regards to getting these men elected?

E: Yes, they did.

J: Did they vote in other elections besides local elections?

E: No, they was just in those because they was organized by the NAACP. And they was going from door to door. They was giving em free rides to the polls. And they was campaigning in the community. They were going into the churches. And that's how these people got a chance to get a position that they had.

J: Did you see the black community participate in other elections besides local elections?

E: No, mostly it was local. They would vote but it was more local. The only one, I retract it, with Lawton Chiles. He was a native so they made sure he got into office.

J: What did they do in particular to assist him?

E: Campaigning, finance.

J: Did you, when do you remember the first time you or your family voted in say a national election?

E: My father stated that the first time they allowed him to vote he voted. And uh he was 99 when he died. And he never missed a election. He would get a absentee ballot. I had to get it to him. He would compel us to vote. The children and my mother. And they all voted until they passed.

J: How old, what year was that when he started voting?

E: I don't know what the year they had that, they allowed him to vote. Blacks couldn't vote but whenever they did he took control and he started doing it.

J: So what was one of the first elections that you remember the black community rallying behind the votes was with which major candidates?

E: Pat Flanagan. In 1954.

J:` Do you remember the first national election that maybe your father would have voted in?

E: No I don't.

J: In the 60" when you became a police officer you voted back then?

E: Yes, I voted back then.

J: So it would have been in your young adulthood?

E: Yes, I guess I started voting when I was 18.

J: And how did the black community feel about going out and voting? We're talking civil rights movement and during that time frame?

E: They some of em would do it. More people was going out to vote in those days than what there is now. Because they was proud that they could vote. The younger age now they don't care. And we try to get them organized to go vote. But they just won't do it. We have different registars to come to the church and register em . They are registered at the church but they still won't go out and vote. So the minorities are not doing what they should do in the voter's rights. If they did they would be more able to compel some of the people in high office to do certain things. But they know that they are not behind them so they don't care.

J: Did you see a big difference in the last election? In the 1960's when you were voting and they were getting people out they would bus voters to polling places. Did you see that happen in this last election?

E: No I didn't. We just had a different group of people. They was more mature and we had taxi cab companies we used to own those in our community. And they would take time out and they would take one of their cabs just to go around to pick up the old people to carry them to the polls. And we had volunteers, they had churches that had cars and vans that would go out carry you to the polls to get you voted. But they don't do that anymore.

J: You said there was a pride in the fact that you could just vote"

E: Yes, they was very proud.

J: Was there ever the idea that your vote was really going to count that it was gonna make a difference?

E: A lot of them would say that the votes wouldn't count that the white people would throw them out. So we had to convince em that that wasn't true. That if anybody was running for office they wasn't gonna let you throw out their votes just because it was a black person. But that would be the saying over the community that the votes wasn't gonna count.

J: What were the main people that you saw politically that reached particularly out to the black community?

E: Pat Gordon, Mr. Flanagan, Monroe Brannen, uh Glen Darty

J: What can you tell me about Mr. Glen Darty?

E: He was just a prosecutor so I just more or less go to court when they prosecute the cases. The first time I went into the courtroom to testify on fingerprint they didn't want me in the courtroom. So I could go on and identify the print. They arrest the person. But they would send the print all the way into Washington. And to have Washington to say that I had made it. So when they would get a subpoena, they would have to subpoena a FBI agent from Washington. They would fly into Tampa then they would have to put him up in a motel for him to testify. So the way I got into the courtroom, I was to send a fingerprint off and I didn't send it off. And I knew the fellow was gonna plea not guilty. So when it was time for it to go to court the captain said," Ed, we got a subpoena to go to court." Said, "Have you got your back from the FBI?" And my heart began to beat because I knew I hadn't sent it off. I said, "Captain I forgot to send that print off." He said, "Well who in the hell is gonna go in the courtroom and testify?" I say, "I'll go." He say, "You know damn well you can't go in that courtroom and testify." So he called Mr. Glen Darty and told him that I hadn't sent the print off and the only thing I could hear, " Yes, Yes, " and Mr. Glen Darty he said, "You all have the problem. I don't have a problem. He can come in and testify." And that's how I got into the court system.

J: And from that point on you started testifying for your prints from that point on?

E: Ever since then I was testifying.

J: What year was that?

E: That was back in about 1969.

J: So you went almost 15 years on the force before you could actually testify?

E: On fingerprints but I could go testify on other stuff. They wouldn't let me go on the fingerprint.

J: So what would you want to say about Mr. Glen Darty and his personality?

E: He was a very nice fellow. That's all I can say. He was a man to his word. And he didn't try to force you to do something you didn't have to do. And he wouldn't tell you to say something that you wasn't supposed to say. So he was a good prosecutor.

J: So he was fair and did you set a precedent? Was that the first black American allowed to go and actually testify against say a white person?

E: Yes, because they didn't have anybody else in the county qualified. I was a fingerprint expert. I had to take a test. I could testify anywhere in the state of Florida or Georgia. So they never did have anybody even in the sheriff department white or black to that could testify because I was the only one qualified one in the county.

J: Were there any examples or times that you spent with him that stick out in your mind? Any particular case or?

E: No.

J: How about Mr. Terry Hill?

J: Jerry Hill?

E: He was about the same as Glen Darty. I never had any problems with him. And he never did say, "you couldn't go into his courtroom to testify." But he was a man who really wanted to prosecute. He didn't want to play around. That's the way he is today.

J: So is he a state prosecutor?

E: Yes, he is the State Attorney.

J: What year did you start working with him?

E: It was after Quillian Yancey left. I don't know the year. He been the State Attorney ever since Quillian Yancey. See it was Glen Darty, Quillian Yancey, then Jerry Hill.

J: What about Quillian Yancey what can you tell me about him?

E: Oh he was nice. He used to be a State Senator. And the governor there's something happened and the governor had him to come in, I think somebody died, something and he came in and took that position until they had to run and Jerry Hill came in and took the position over.

J: So Yancey was a senator before or after?

E: A State Senator before. Yes

J: And what type of person was he?

E: He was a nice person. After he left he wanted me to help in another election. I forgot what it was, I think he wanted to go back as State Senator. But he didn't make it.

J: Why do you think?

E: He just didn't get the votes. Uh somebody from (inaudible) the guy who ran against him did.

J: A democrat won?

E: Yes.

J: How about Walter Manley?

E: Walter Manley was a private attorney. And he stood out from all the rest of the attorneys. And if a woman wanted a divorce that's who they would go to. And he was known to sink a man.

J: Can you elaborate on that?

E: Just, one of the members of the church I was going to; he and his wife was getting ready to get a divorce. So he went and hired Walter Manley before his wife did. And he told Walter Manley, ' The only thing I want is the record player and my records." He said, "Well I'll tell you what, you get the records and you leave her the record player." He said, "I was hiring you for me not for her." So that's the type of man he was. He just did not want a man to beat a woman out in the courtroom.

J: And what can you tell me, any personal interaction that you had with him?

E: No more than one case we had during that time Polk County was dry. You wasn't supposed to have sealed liquor in the city.

J: Was that during the Prohibition?

E: Yes,

J: What year was that?

J: In the 1970's?

(Polk County was a "Dry County" by local option)

E: And we had a lady that they were trying to get and so they finally found one half a pint in a house. So the officer put the half of pint of liquor in his rear pocket. And she came up behind him and snatched it out and hit it over the sink and broke it. So he took his handkerchief and he mopped it up, took the glass, put it in his handkerchief and took some aluminum foil. And when he got to court every time he got to open it Walter Manley say, "I object. I object." He did it for about ten times. And finally J Harden Peterson (He was the city attorney) said, "I'm tired of these objections." Said, "Let him show us the half of pint." So when Tom Hodge opened it up, Walter Manley looked over there and said, "Judge, the only thing I see is aluminum foil, a napkin and broken glass. I don't see any liquor." So he won his case.

J: Did you ever see him in court anymore, ever again?

E: Well yes, he would stay in court. Everybody would hire him. His name was all over town. Walter Manley, Walter Manley. And uh, he was with the railroad, somebody got hit on the railroad. I saw him on that case. And he was arguing so that the one attorney, that's kinda what turned me against attorneys because they act like they was gonna fight in the courtroom. So they had a recess.

J: What do you mean? Like they were physically gonna have an altercation?

E: Yes, and they had a recess. And he came out the courtroom and say, "I know you got me beat but I got to go back and argue for my money." So it kinda (laugh) gave me a little damp with attorneys.

J: Did you see any other cases? Were you ever involved with him?

E: No.

J: Did he ever run for office or was he involved in politics?

E: I don't know. I know he didn't run for office.

J: Did you ever know anybody personally represented by him?

E: Yeah, William Freedman. The fellow I said was going for a divorce. My daughter went to get a job with him but they told her that she couldn't work there because of her demeanor. She wasn't mean enough to write up a report on a man. They told her she was very knowledgeable but she wouldn't put it down, in other words when a lady went there and ask for a divorce you almost have to narrate it yourself, the secretary, and she wouldn't narrate it like that so she couldn't get the position.

J: She wasn't mean enough?

E: Yes. She was a straight A student but because she worked for the Prime Minister of the Bahamas and all that stuff. But she just couldn't fill in that position.

J: So this gentleman you said he almost got into physical altercations in the courtroom, he was known for socking it to men in the community, How did the men in the community act towards him?

E: Oh, just his name was up Walter Manley. The women would say, "you mess with me I go get Walter Manley."

J: Ok did you know Lawton Chiles?

E: Yes, I did.

J: How did you meet him?

E: I had a case a personal case and he handled it. And uh we became very good friends. And he didn't even charge me for the case. And then he went to be a Florida State Senator. He was on the commission and I told him he needed to be governor. And the next thing I knew, he went to be the US senator. And I went to Quantico and I was up there at the airport and my plane was 2 hours ahead of his plane behind his plane so he came into the airport and he saw me and he said, "How long you been up here.' I say, "three weeks." He said, "Well why you didn't come to my office?" I say, "I didn't know you would allow me to come." He said, "Don't you ever come to Washington again and don't come to my office." But the moral of the story is he never will forget you. And he tried to get me on the same plane he was going to Orlando. Mine was going to Tampa. But they booked out and they couldn't change me over. So he was a very good man. When he got to be governor and he came out and I campaigned for him, when he got to be governor.

J: So sounds like he was a very fair man?

E: He was a very fair man.

J: So. He represented you in a case?

E: Yes, I think it was I got hurt in an accident, in a car wreck. And I went to him and he had to represent me with an insurance company. But he didn't take anything. He just went on and he settled it out of court.

J: So he represented you before he went into the state senate and that was like in the 60's is that right?

E: That's correct.

J: Ok and then he went for the US Senate?

E: He went to US senator first then he came back and ran for governor.

J: The US Senator was 1970? And then he became the governor?

E: Yes, but I don't know what year it was.

(Lawton Chiles served in the US Senate from 1970-1988. He was also elected governor in 1990 and was reelected for a second term in 1994.)

J: And you campaigned for him in all of his…

E: All his, all of em.

J: And what exactly did you do to help campaign?

E: Just put his name out, the signs out, and gave out cards for him.

J: Did you do that within the black community or all over?

E: Black community.

J: And do you think they came out in full support of him?

E: Yes, they did.

J: And what do you think makes him such a great person?

E: We just called him "Walkin" Chiles. He was just a man that would walk in any community give you a smile. And if he said, he was going to do anything, he did it.

J: What legacy did he leave behind?

E: Uh, That he was a good person.

J: And was there not a school named after him?

E: Oh, yes correct my grandson went to Lawton Chiles Academy they left that. It's a very good school.

J: And they specialize It's a magnet school isn't it?

E: Yes, it is.

J: And it specializes in is it technology or arts?

E: Technology. That was the same time I was instrumental in getting Lincoln and Rochelle then they put Lawton Chiles School there.

J: Now how do you feel about education?

E: I feel that everybody should do the best they can with their education. As I say before that I was very limited in what I could do because we could not go to any colleges in this area. And my parents didn't have the money to send me off to any school. I wasn't in any sports to get any scholarships. But the main thing is to read, and that's where I learned everything that I knew. I taught myself. Today, I still read, and encourage different ones to get a book. Everything you need is in a book. And, I read and also, that I came up with an invention that I had in. I was not

able to obtain a patent because of the price so I went to two engineers to make sure that I was on the right road. And they told me yes. So, I went for a patent on it and they told me I needed $18,000. And they carried it to their engineer. Their engineer say that it was perfect and they needed it over in Iraq. But with the finance it's still in limbo. And it was to protect houses from hurricanes. I learned how to do electrical work by reading. Plumbing, mechanic anything that you need in building a house. I built three churches and never charged one cent on building. I'v saved them thousands and thousands of dollars. And I just wanted to make sure that my race of people learn how to read and be something. And that's all the take is. To read if you can't go to school, read. But now there's opportunity for schooling that we never had. And they are wasting their time.

J: Do you know about the African American College that they have here in Florida?

E: Yes, they have Bethune Cookman , Florida A&M and they have Florida Memorial in St. Augustine. And I worked hard to try to go there and I had $300.00 and I went to Florida Memorial in St. Augustine but they had it on the outskirts of town and the whites didn't want any parts of it. They wouldn't even send water out there. They had a reservoir with no top on it and birds would fall in it and I couldn't take that. So when Dr. King came through there they wouldn't allow anything to go out there and they had to close St Augustine down and it's in Miami Florida now. I think Jackie Gleason was very instrumental in getting it out of St. Augustine and putting it into Miami.

J: What about Bethune?

E: My daddy couldn't send us all to school so he sent one girl to Bethune Cookman. My sister, because he couldn't afford because we were staggered right out of school right behind each other. And he didn't have that type of finance to send us all to college at one time. So my sister went to college.

J: How do you feel about the integration of Caucasian Americans attending the all black college?

E: I feel like it would be an education for everybody.

J: You know they give full ride scholarships to white students who are willing to go there?

E: Yes, Yes, I feel like anybody that's born has a right and should be treated right. And that is something that I never can see. We are all the same. And that is I have just as many, or more white friends than I have black because I am just that type of person. And by going to the different seminars and all around and all the whites and I was well respected around there. I just can't see..They just recognized me last week at the city commission. They gave me a proclamation in the Black History Week. Then the Plotter Division and the National Association recognized me three months ago over in Tampa as being the first president of the organization.

J: How long have you been president?

J: I was just president for one year. But I was the first black and the first member of the Florida Division so they elected me the president in 1980.

J: Do you have any more information you want to share with us in realms of education or anything that ties into that?

E: No, It just, I want to say that it was very hard for me to get an education but as I say, I taught myself. And that it's hard to get people to get an education. One of the best things in the world is education. And if you don't have that you're lost. And as they keep improving they are going to be really lost. And we are losing our black race at this date. Because they don't want to go to school and they need to go. And the boys are on the street and the girls. So we have already lost one generation. And we don't want to lose another one.

J: Do you think that it has anything to do with the upbringing, heritage behind that or do you think it has to do with lost opportunities, what do you contribute that to?

E: Children having children. They cannot handle it. Because, I'm raising my grands and great-grand because they don't take time. These boys are having children uh, producing children but they are not taking care of the children. They are independent, they wearing the pants down, they just won't do it. And they don't really understand what a parent should be. We was taught back in the days how to be parents. But now the parents can't teach the children because they not parents themselves.

J: What do you think of the black man march that they have? Have you ever participated in that?

E: No, I never did.

J: Have you heard of it?

E: Yes, I heard of it but I just wasn't for it.

J: You weren't for it? Why is that?

E: I don't think you need to march. You do your duty.

J: So action not words?

E: That's right.

J: In regards to black men you've talked about them making babies and not carrying out the responsibilities, what do you think a black man's responsibility is to society and to family and to the community itself?

E: A black man should be a husband, a father, he should be a role model, he should teach these children and teach themselves how to dress, how to work. They should be more on the I don't know if you are but more on the Christian side. They should be more on seeing that people get an education. They are just not doing their jobs. They should get a job. We can have more inventions. We have some smart black men in jail. They can draw, they can fix cars. But they have taken their talent and put it in the wrong places. And until that happen, then we gonna

lose em. The same as our ball players. They gonna make all this money. Then they come out there broke. They have to go get involved in things. They just had on the other day they get involved with the uh kidnapping this child. They just won't do. They won't invest their money. the little boy I have is at this time, I've had him since he was five. But I teach him how to play stock market. I give him two hundred dollars a month and I tell him to beat the S&P 500.

J: You taught him how to beat the S&P?

E: Yes,

J: And he is going to Australia?

E: He's going in June. And he is a financial whiz and he wants to be a pilot and an astronaut. Sports he doesn't care for them. He look at the history channel. He look at the cooking channel. And he is very instrumental in helping me and my wife. He can cook. He can do most anything. He can fix anything. He is a very intelligent young boy. So he stays there at the airport after school. He goes out there to school. He gets out at 2:00 but he stays out there taking college courses at this time. And so I think that's the type of children we need but it's gonna take the older people to show the younger ones what to do. Because his parents are not doing his daddy is in jail, he stay in jail.

J: I have a couple of last questions that I would like to ask you. If there was a record of your life's accomplishments and deep thought of what the world was and what you wish it to be what would you say?

E: I wish that it would be a more loving world. That people would learn how to get along regardless of what race, color or creed that they are. That they would learn to walk together, to talk together, and learn to live together.

J: What do you want the world and your family's future generations to remember about you?

E: That I've done my best. That I tried to bring up my children in a way that I think they should be. And I'm proud of my children. My son is my pastor. My daughter work at Dr. Phillips School in Orlando. And uh, I want them to remember me as a father that stood behind them and did the best that I could do for them.

J: Do you have any advice or information that you would like to pass on?

E: "What to the Community?"

J: To the community, to your family?

E: To my family, that I want them to learn to continue to live together. To respect one another. I want them to be as knowledgeable as they can on anything. I want them to continue to work with one another mostly. And remember me that out of all of my days that there was nothing that I wouldn't have done for them that I could.

J: And is there anything you'd like to leave legacy wise to the community?

E: Yes, I would like to have something in the community named after me. They did dedicate the lab for me at the police department. But I would like for something to stand out in the community to let them know I had been through here.

J: We'll that's awesome. I really appreciate you meeting with us today, with me today, and answering and sharing so much of your life and your experiences.

E: Ok, Thank you.

J: Thank you.