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TAPE1, SIDE1

CATHY BEHAN: It, it might be best uh, if you'd like to start out by telling me about uh, where you grew up, and

PRINCESS O'FLYNN BAREIS: Oh, I

CB: …little bit about (talking over each other)

PB: I guess I said, if I sit here, and talk to uh, Catherine Bent and she's told me of what she's trying to do. I find it quite interesting. Not the fact that I've lived nearly a hundred years, but the fact that I can remember.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: What went on. And the time that I am taped with, to, let you know that I do remember, and some I'm not so grateful.

CB: Yeah.

PB: But, at any rate it did happen, that way. So, I was born really not, in, this area, though all of my people, came from here. I was born in Madisonville, Kentucky in the year 19n12, and it was the first year, that uh, that had recorded, birth records. My mother had had two other children, that were born at home.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So I proved to be difficult, before and after birth. If it had not been that my mother could get to the hospital, they said I would have died and she would have died.

CB: Oh.

PB: Because I was determined, to be born feet first. And I had a very fine doctor once that I asked if he could explain it to me, in medical terms, and he said, "Yes," he'd be glad to. I was born feet first and have been running ever since.

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: That would be good enough. Why bother with medical terms?

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: So this brings me to say that history, that I studied, was so boring.

CB: Yeah.

PB: I think we needed it in more down to earth terms, and truthfully not so many lies.

CB: Yeah.

PB: {Chuckles} I think the reason they had to uh, do this, because they could not, admit truth, in the early nineteen hundreds. {Clears throat} But then, I liked, about, hap-, happening of the years, I have seen people to become more truthful.

CB: Hm, that's a good thing. What, what's the first thing that you do remember outside of your

PB: Oh, Now I'm going to tell you. I was born in Madionsville, Kentucky, but I do not remember,

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: Well, I can tell you I do, but I don't, and uh, as I watched Phil Donahue last night, I saw all those babies doing all those things, and I so feel sure I must have been one of those, {Clears throat}, but I did not learn very early. I found later I was born with a photostatic mind, and not having any idea, how I could just pass over the others, so therefore I graduated when I was sixteen, so I'm just going to ramble, and you can put what you want. So uh, my father was a railroad man.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And uh, my mother, of course, stayed home. No women, worked, in 1912. And, no business women unless you, did housework or had to.

CB: What was your father's name?

PB: Pardon?

CB: What were your parent's names?

PB: Uh, my mother was Alberta, Howard O'Flynn. My father's name was Rex Alvin O'Flynn, and he had uh, his home residence, the folks were in Utica.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So, after a while, why, we moved back, to Utica, when I was a small child. And uh, my grandfather, who was licensed pharmacist, owned, the leading store, grocery store.

CB: What was his name?

PB: Ferdinand O'Flynn. And I heard many stories about when his people came from Ireland. The O'Flynn itself tells that they're Irish.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And they had much wit. I think that's running out, down the road, but back then it was my delight to hear those stories about when they came from the first squire of Daviess County was an O'Flynn.

CB: Mm.

PB: And uh, my people have always been interested in education. And uh, these are a few tales I'm leading up to that I've heard my mother uh, tell, when she was born, uh, she, had four brothers,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: and three sisters, and my moth-, grandmother could nurse all the boys, but could not nurse the girls. All the girls had big brown eyes. All the boys had big blue eyes. But my, grandmother, wanted her older daughter to go to college, in, Russellville.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: They called it Bethel. And my grandmother, needed the money, and this was unheard of in that day. They took her, in a wagon so they could lead a cow, 'cause mother could not, grandmother could not nurse my mother, whose name was Alberta.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So she stayed there, for the year, to get, my mother's sister through college, which was unheard of, in that day and time.

CB: Okay.

PB: So uh, then they came back, and the most unheard of thing, my son who is named for my mother, who is named Albert Arnold, opened a store about eleven years ago, on the same spot, where my mother lived.

CB: Mm.

PB: And he had a little baby girl, named Cindy, so I think it's such a coincidence that his store is where my mother, lived, and she was so little, and they were trying to put down a carpet, so they decided to put the little baby in the window, and say "I'm your new jeweler, in

Russellville, Kentucky," so my people have always been different, than, most of the people you would find in the area, I would say more outgoing and maybe had a little more money. But I certainly did not know it, as a child, I only found this out later, because if I asked my father for a quarter, by the time he got through telling me how short money was, I was very happy to get a nickel.

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: And that was usually the extent, the nickel, because each nickel went a long piece in those days. So it would be hard for me to say what I remember. I suppose I would have to say the most thing I remember as a child would be, the church.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Every thing was small areas settled around the church and I would go back to my, ancestors from Ireland, naturally they would have been Catholic.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: But when they came over here, as the men married, then they settled where their wives lived, so you might say that family was divided, between the Catholic and the Baptist. So even to this day, they are almost half and half.

CB: Mm hm. What, what church did you go to?

PB: Utica Baptist Church, they, earlier they called it Oak Grove Baptist. That was the only church, I'm glad you asked, that's what they told me, that was the only church in the world.

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: I always said I'm like Jesus Christ. I never got out any further,

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: Than thirty-three miles, and so I had no dreaming idea

CB: Uh huh.

PB: There was any other church.

CB: What kinds of things did you do in church?

PB: Well, we, studied our Sunday School lesson, and we had teachers, we were all in one room around the stove,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And uh, our teacher and then, we would not have a full-time minister,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So uh, may be ever other Sunday, and so then different parishioners, would fill in.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: And sometimes, I remember letting the children sing. We thought that was, marvelous. So, I, I'm getting on a little faster because it's difficult for me to keep this all in my head.

CB: Yeah.

PB: But I began to take piano lessons, so I took for eight years, but had no music in me whatever. I think that it was to play so my grandfather could lead the singing, even though he stuttered, but never when he sang.

CB: Mm.

PB: Always when he talked. But one day I remember grandfather wanted to practice singing, and I did not want to go in, from outside, but I had to if my grandfather said so, that was a great difference in today, and, yesterday, because when your grandparents, asked you to do a thing, I don't think in my life we would have ever thought to say "no."

CB: Mm hm.

PB: We didn't know we could, so we went in, and I didn't, he wanted to sing very slow, and I wanted to play very fast, and he said that wasn't Christian, and I said, "Grandfather, I don't know why you have to sing so slow, to be Christian," but he said, "You do, you have to believe, grandfather," and I said, "Well, I really don't, " so he said, "Well, we'll turn to another song, " so that was "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand." Everybody knows that song, if there was ever a Baptist, "And Cast a Wishful Eye On Jordan's Stormy Banks" is the name of the song, and grandfather wanted to sing that on Sunday, and he said if I would play that, then I could go back, to, you know, playing. So I didn't want to play it, so I, I missed every other note, and grandfather would say, "You must start again." So I'd start again, and I was missing the notes, and so all of a sudden, grandfather, touched me on the shoulder, and he said, "Ssh, you can quit now, because, what you're doin', will make a-a-a-any man want to jump in the Jordan." {Both laugh} The ended my practices, so I, I got my point across, and grandfather had to give up. So I

think I got off awfully light, in fact, but as a child, I think the thing that impressed me most I knew nothing but love.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: I thought the whole community was Love. I was taught that at church, God is Love. So it seemed to me that everybody, that I knew, I had no dreaming idea that there were enemies. Now I knew that I could not go with blacks or these kinds of things, but I still, they waited on me hand and foot, and I still loved, I loved 'em, I even went home and spent the night many times which was unheard of, with a black, woman. My parents were more broad minded, than most people. And uh, so, I wanted to work very early, so I started to school at six, I learned my letters and numbers, and we didn't have the, nine months like you have. We had a period of seven months.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And I lived very close so I could go all the time. Other children were not so fortunate, and uh, so then if you had enough money, your, mother and father could send you, another two months, and that made you a little smarter, but I graduated at sixteen, and I've not known to this day, whether I was valedictorian, or that other boy that said he was. {Both chuckle} They didn't keep such accurate records.

CB: Where, where'd ya go to school?

PB: Utica. All to Utica.

CB: All, was it, uh, what was the school like?

PB: Utica.

CB: No, I mean what was the school like, was it, two rooms or

PB: Oh no, no, no, no. We had more than two rooms. In my graduating class we had thirteen, that just shows you, we had a high school.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: Oh yes, we had a high school. I don't remember when it burned down.

CB: Was it called Utica High School?

PB: Just the Utica School, and it's, it continues to stay today where it always was, which my farm now adjoins.

CB: Huh.

PB: And uh, but the school was always right there.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: And it was an old uh, concrete 'n block, building, as I remember it. So it shows you that I was a bit daring, to…, you can put down whatever you want to. I had uh, a friend out there, that just did odd jobs for people. He never worked, at least never understood, his name was Clapper?. Can you imagine, a mother, calling her son Clapper? But Clapper never worked except these little jobs, but everybody loved 'em. So his birthday's the same as mine, so I'd always wanted to cook, so I made Clapper a big box of candy, and took it up there. His mother lived right next to the school.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So I told her I had Clapper a present for his birthday. She said, "Well, he's not here. He's fixing the roof on the schoolhouse." So, I said, "Well, okay, thank ya," and I went up there and I walked right up that big tall ladder, to the very top of the schoolhouse, where I went to Clapper, and I said, "I've brought you a birthday present." He nearly jumped off the schoolhouse building. He said, "How did you get up here?" I said, "I walked up that ladder." He said, "But you should never have done it." And I said, "Well, why?" He said, "Because you might get killed." But you know he got me so scared, I liked to have never got down. I had no fear going up. It shows you ignorance might be bliss. It could be. So I did very daring, things when I was small. But uh,

CB: Tell me about the store, that's one thing a lot of people having been asking me.

PB: Okay.

CB: What, what that was like.

PB: It was a small shopping center.

CB: Oh yeah?

PB: If you'd like to know the truth. Probably the first shopping center I ever saw, and I'll tell you why I call it that. I began to work there when I was seven years old. I always wanted to grown, and make money, and I still do. And I'm still trying to grow up. Not sure I like it yet. I've always been uh, undecided on anything, because I've been able to see two sides, which I think is fortunate, for many people see only one. And I'm glad I've recovered that. I did not learn that in Utica. I learned one, and one only.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: And so this store, was there, my grandfather worked there and that is why we came back to, to Utica, you might say, to be, for my father to be with his father, in the business.

CB: Did your father work there often?

PB: Oh, yes, all the time, and then he was postmaster.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So we had the store, so let's start with telling you that uh, I loved the store, and my father would pay me five cents an hour, but I must work two hours straight. If I missed five minutes before, I did not get my ten cents, so I always worked five minutes over so nobody could say I rode the clock longer than they did. And uh, I wish we had more of that today, too. Discipline. That is something I will, say I learned there. This store started with my grandfather, opening it, and they called it uh, a grocery and dry goods store, and I don't know when my grandfather graduated from, being a pharmacist, but he was, probably the highest educated man, he and my uncle, who was a doctor, because his office was right there at the store, and his home was his office. So, but the store was, let's just stay on that subject, I guess grandfather must have had the drug store from the beginning.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And uh, so, you can now see I've given you a little drug store, I've given you a grocery store and I've given you a dry goods. Now the sides had, going down one side is where they sold feed in the front, for, animals,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And you entered that, come up the side. In the middle of that long room was where they kept the cooler. My aunt did that, Mrs. Burt Haley, and that was the joy of my life to help her. I maybe got a nickel for all day's work, but you'd have to be clean, and often you sucked it up in your mouth, and it was AWFUL.

CB: {Snorts}

PB: Tried, you know, to get a ??, but I never learned really how to do that, but I thought it was fun, 'cause we cranked the thing and separated the milk from the, cream, which I'd never done. So you see then we had a cream station. Then you went back, to the very back which was the drugstore.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: That was on the right hand side of the uh, let's say the west side of the store, if you're facing it. You went in a middle door, so I think right now, before I forget it, I am going to insert this: There was a man named Matt Owen, who everybody in this community knew, a half-wit. But who knows, Matt might have been, the smartest of any of us, because he never worked, and we all took care of him, but he slept between, we had double doors in the store, and, at even at that time we had two sets of doors, and in the winter, Matt slept standing up, between 'em, because he had no house. He had a little house, about four by six. He also stood up and slept in his house, but I, loved to open the store. That was the greatest fun for me, to go and unlock that store, and see Matt just fall out. It never ceased to tickle me. But then Matt would wake up and we'd talk. But my grandfather, went down there one morning, and uh, he said, "Matt, are you hungry?", and he said, "Yes." So grandfather said, "Just show me what you want, and I'll give it to ya." So he points right up there to a, can, and grandfather hands it to him. And he says, "Thank you." And he looked on it, and it was tomatoes, big red tomato, and he said, "T-O-M-A-T-O, apples, by God, I like apples." {Both chuckle} It was round like an apple, so all those things fascinated me, and another man, so I don't forget it, had epileptic fits,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: But no one told me, what that was, and I prayed for this man so hard.

CB: What'd you think it was?

PB: I didn't know. I, I did know about a mad dog, though I knew about a mad dog because in that day and time you heard of mad dog, so I thought this man was maybe, but I felt so sad for him, that when I got my money, I always, got my ten cents, I wanted to buy him a coat. Because I thought maybe that, would keep him from, you know, being whatever is was, I didn't know what it was.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So, you went on in to the store, you entered the store, from the front, which faces the north. And uh, on our left, as you turn in, was where the dry goods, on the center aisle. You see, we had a center aisle, with a big stove in the back.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: The post office was behind it, see, I know it so well that it's difficult for me, to draw the picture for you. The post office went across the back between, the two wings, that would make a picture clear for you. Here's the wing I've already described, now I'm describing, the, east wing.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And so when you went in, that was the dry goods. In the middle of that, was the city scales. We called that the city scales, so you had to drive your corn and everything in to the window, and he weighed whatever had to go over that, and behind that was the paint, like the paint department, for the houses. So uh, this is why I call it the small shopping center, so in the front we sold the gasoline,

CB: Uh huh.

PB: And the oil, and had feed, just like you weighed a hundred pounds of seed or whatever, that was sold out of the feed room.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: I've described that before, so uh, of course this was on old wooden shelving,

CB: Uh huh.

PB: And uh, but in fact I knew, it was, it just like the finest thing in the world because I hadn't been anywhere.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: And everybody thought we were very rich. I had a boy who's now dead. I'd give anything if he was living. I wish we had recorded, we had never a 1929 reunion, so we tried to get it together but only a few are living, and the night we were going to have it, one of 'em died fell out and the other's knee came apart. We tried it several times so then one night I just cooked a big roast, and said, I called Shirley Grant, who's now dead. And I said, "Shirley, do you want to come to the 1929 Reunion?" He said, "Well, I haven't been invited." I said, "I'm inviting you now. I'm having it." And he said, "Who's comin'?" I said, "Nobody, you."

CB: {Snorts}

PB: "I'd be glad you come. I've cooked a big roast." And Shirley said, "Well, I'd be honored to come." So I said, "In this house we did what we want to do," and uh, so he came over, and if we had recorded that talk, I would have given anything. He said that they were very, very poor croppers. Everybody looked alike to me, remember. I didn't know poor from anybody else, and so uh, I think I was always stuck on the boys, always, but now most everybody knows, I've had three sons and three husbands, and, they, initials have been A, B, and C, and my last husband says if I get another one, it'll be a dummy. 'Cause most people know D follows C. {Both chuckle} So, but anyway, my life's been an open book. I don't mind saying that, there's nothing I've ever done, but, tried to help, but uh, Shirley came, and we discussed Utica. Well, that was, the first time, in my life, that I had any idea that people thought that I was

untouchable. When Shirley told me this, I laughed so hard. They had to turn, up a little alley, before you got to my house. Well, I knew those people lived up that alley, but as I recall, I never much went up there. I think mother told me not to, and I didn't. Shirley's mother told him, not to go past that alley, because that's where the richer, people lived. So I said, "Well Shirley, I always wondered why you never got struck on me." {Both laugh} And he said, "Well, let me be truthful, I always was, but I was so poor, I didn't think you'd look at me." And I said, "Isn't that funny? And I had no idea you were any different." But he went on to college, worked his way through college, and his mother went to college with him, and kept house for people.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Now see, I didn't have to do that. Now, but I think the great part was my mother and father were smart enough to let me know, or see that I was exactly like everybody else. I doubt if they could have changed me, let's put it that way, because I'm that way today. I have many wealthy friends and many poor friends, but the great thing possibly in my life was the go in connection with that store would be my uncle, Dr. Westerfield.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: But everybody would find fascinating, and loved, he was a very brilliant doctor, and the thing I remember most is when they operated on a boy on our kitchen table, and I held a lamp. He had appendicitis, and the doctor couldn't come from Owensboro because it was a dirt road. See, when I was ten years old. I'm going to be seventy-four in November. So I held a lamp, and I don't know whether I prayed for the lamp not to go out or prayed for the boy, but I know I prayed, that was all I knew to do. Pray, pray, prayed, that's what I grew up on.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And so they operated that boy. And he lived.

CB: He did?

PB: He absolutely lived, and his, daughter, later grew up to be a quite a prominent, citizen, the granddaughter.

CB: What was that, boy's name?

PB: Groadee. G-R-O-A-D-E-E. I think it was Willard Groadee.

CB: How old was the boy?

PB: Why, he'd be older than I am, so, because I remember, and I'm so much older. But I remember it so well, it was so unbelievable, because we were the people where anybody, we

kept all the preachers, if we kept anything that had to have one nice room. Because we had a spare room, we had a big house.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And my dad always said he wouldn't mind keeping the preacher, but mother always felt she had to paper. And he never understood why he had to have new paper just 'cause the preacher was comin'. So, he learned later that mother just used that for an excuse.

CB: {Chuckles} Well, tell me about this, this operation. Was it, uh,

PB: It happened because they opened and took out his appendix.

CB: Really?

PB: Yeah.

CB: How'd it, look to you? Was it

PB: I don't even know. It was unreal, 'course it looked odd, just to anybody, wouldn't it, on the kitchen table?

CB: Yeah.

PB: With us holding lamps, around, and not knowing, you know, what to do or anything, but my, uncle, he was right next door.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And I don't know yet why it happened there, but these things just happened.

CB: Was he, was the boy?

PB: That was my grandfather's house, my grandfather's house. We lived out, but anything that went on, I was there. Anything. I don't know how I, I had, I had, well, I had some kind of lead, but I think it must have come to me, to be there, because I wanted to see everything.

CB: You wanted to see that, the operation?

PB: Oh sure, anything, anything that you can learn, that is what I liked. I was with my uncle.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: And he called me his helper. My uncle doctor, he had no children. My brother was in a wheel chair with arthritis, which was unusual at that time, and died at the age of nine. And uh, so my uncle and aunt raised me, and they were good to everybody, in Utica.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And you might want to insert one cute thing that any old people will remember this is the honest to God truth as they always say. My uncle had a horse named Keno.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: He also had a, Ford, a Model T. And he was so generous, with my cousin, because his father was very tight with him, and he would let Leo Haley drive his car. And when Leo sold his tobacco, he put an accelerator, on Docy's car, which we didn't know what that meant. 'Cause before you fed the gas, from up on the steering wheel. So Leo thought that would be a very nice thing to do for his uncle who'd been so good to him, for many years. And he was going to tell him, the next day, but Docy was called out in the night about one o'clock, and he said to my aunt, we called her, everybody called her Miss Hettie, I called her Sister Hettie, she was my mother's sister. And she said, "Are you going to take the horse, Doctor, or the car?" And he said, "No, I think I'll go in the car. It's just a short trip, and the roads are good, and I won't be long." But before Hettie hardly, got back in bed or anything, Docy was back, and she said, "Well, Doctor, what are you doing back?" And he said, "Het, the damn car ran off with me." She said, "Doctor, you mean Keno?" He said, "No, Het, the car. It's down on the church steps." The church was right behind his stable, so she said, "Have you been drinking?" And he said, "No. Come out here and I'll show you." Docy didn't know that accelerator was there, got his foot on it, ran right through the back of the stable, and it went as far as it could go and that was the church steps. That's the truth.

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: Everybody knew that story. So we had to get Keno. So we always said that's why we couldn't have a back-up,

CB: Keno was the the horse?

PB: Absolutely. Everybody knew Keno.

CB: {Snorts}

PB: He was a high-steppin' horse, and he was always there ready for my uncle to go. In that day and time, when you called the doctor, he went. Day or night, rain or shine, very little pay.

CB: About how old were you when this happened with, your, the car?

PB: Oh, goodness, I was about twelve years old then.

CB: Oh.

PB: I remember it very well. That's when the oil business, see, I know so much to tell you that it'd be impossible.

CB: I was wondering about the oil business?

PB: Alright, I am just going to get into this one minute,

CB: Okay, go ahead.

PB: It's the most unusual thing that ever happened in Utica, that's when Dr. Westerfield had a baby. They'd always thought that they could not have children, so when they told you that, you believed 'em. Nobody ever thought of anything different. But uh, my aunt's stomach began to hurt, began to, hurt her, bother her, so Docy said, "I'm going to send to Mayo." That, you know what Mayo is, everybody knew then what Mayo Clinic was. So Sister Hettie went to Mayo Clinic and there were only three phones, in Utica then, the doctor, and the store, and the druggist, I guess. And so, my Lord, they called back, and while Sister Hettie was there, Docy thought she had a tumor, the tumor began to move. They had a baby. Sister Hettie was, what you'd call, set a record in the Daviess County hospital. I think she was forty-seven. They had their first baby, and Docy was fifty-six. So somebody was talking to me down at the store that day, and they said, "Well, Docy won't love you, any more. Docy won't love you because he's got a little girl of his own." And I said, "Shoot to to Dickens, Docy didn't want her. He just me a nickel today. He couldn't help it." {Both chuckle} I said, "Well, I he couldn't help it. Hettie just go her home." And that showed me how different we were, how simple. We didn't doubt, we just trusted, we believed. And uh, so then, we were getting, as I say, a little older, still our life was centered around the store, the church, and basketball. I showed you my picture. I, I was a very outstanding basketball player. Meant to be, loved every minutes of it, but when the oil boom came to Utica, when I was a little girl about twelve, but they did not hit oil on my father's farm {Chuckles} which was very discouraging. My colored girl used to say "disencouraging." I think that's a cute word, "disencouraging." Daddy was very disencouraged because everybody the farm, got oil, but him, so he wondered what he had done that the Lord had set such judgment on him. So one night they thought they would play a prank on him, and called, and when they blew the whistle three times, they heard they called him "Mister XX" that means that we have hit the oil on your farm. They picked the coldest night, the rainiest night, and daddy got so excited, he got up, and went down, and fell in the railroad ditch, and nearly froze to death, and they had..

END TAPE1, SIDE1

TAPE1, SIDE2

PB: And, I have lived, to be as healthy as anybody I know. 'Course basketball, that's why I don't trust people.

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: Sometimes I don't know why they thought we could not be a lady,

CB: Oh.

PB: And be active in business.

CB: Really?

PB: So I think I was born, like I am, determined, to be a business woman, which I've always been. I've liked it. I liked the oil men, because they were busy. They all drove big cars.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: This impressed me. They parked 'em around our store. Eight of 'em had new Oldsmobiles. One family had eight boys, eight men, and they ALL got new Oldsmobiles. Each one said the other one won't out do me. So they set these Oldsmobiles around the store and said, "Prince, if you want to drive 'em, the key's in it." I came to Owensboro once, I want you to put this down, got my father's grocery at eleven years old. Wholesale.

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: By myself.

CB: You were eleven?

PB: Eleven years old.

CB: And you drove?

PB: Absolutely. There was no driver's license. I drove before that. My mother wanted some bread, and she wanted me to go the store, and when I came back, she said, {Clears throat} because she and daddy were standing in the backyard, and that scared me, 'cause I drove a

tractor, from my house down to the store, and I got a whippin'. {Both chuckle} Because I shouldn't have done that, but I was crazy about mechanical things, and I still like 'em. So I learned to drive very early and it was a big help to my father. We had no meat, and you can't take all this in. We had to kill a calf, every week, and my dad said if I can skin that calf, because I wanted to be there with the men, if I skinned the calf and would not cut the hide, he would give me all the money. And boy, seventy-five cents, if you think I would have cut it, no way. No way. I skinned that calf. They hung it up, and you took uh, like uh, brace of uh, straight razor, and I took that, and what's more I brought that hide, to Doll and Whettsinger. That's who it was. And I got my money, {Chuckles} and I felt like I was rich, and, I haven't changed too much. At that time, when I would get money, I felt I must do something, to, so I didn't know much difference in people, but I could see if a colored woman was dying of something, that she must have, you know, some little to comfort. I felt very sorry for the blacks, I don't know why, just must have been inborn, and I still do.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: If they're mistreated. I feel because of the color of your skin you cannot help it. And I did not learn that, in Utica. It had to be inborn, because they could not come into our church, they could not ride, in our cars.

CB: How did you feel about that?

PB: Oh, I told my mother, and I got a whippin' for that. They had to sit on the back seat, in our church, and when we took Communion, they would never, let them take Communion.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: But they talked about love,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: All through the sermon, and I told mother, I didn't think God was pleased with that, and that's why I was so different as a child. I would cross my parents, you know, if I thought they were wrong. And that, you know, if they were good enough to help us all of the time,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Why couldn't they, you know, do like we did.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And all she would ever say, "It cannot be done. It cannot be done." And we, didn't know anything about, well the oil field, I think you should put down, a man came through there,

with nitroglycerin. Now, we knew what nitroglycerin was, blow you up, that's about all we knew. So this man was going up the Graveyard Hill. Now, to us the only thing that Graveyard Hill was for was to bury the dead. And also to kiss your date good-night. You were never allowed to kiss your date. They acted like they never heard of kissing, so you rode up the Graveyard Hill, and kissed your date good-night, straightened your hair, completely, and came home as if you'd never seen a boy. And this was done all the years I was in, there. But this man was goin' up the Graveyard Hill, with a load of nitroglycerin, and ran in the ditch and turned it over. So that was known, county wide for us, everybody to get out of Utica. 'Cause it could blow up any time, but some how, some way, with horses or mules, I don't know what, they got it moved and Utica didn't blow up. It's still there.

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: But it scared us. So when they would shoot, that would bring me to say, that was such a novelty to us, and we had nothing to do in Utica. And so we would all go, though they told us, not to get close to the well. "Get back now, we're going to shoot the well." I don't think I really understood what "shoot the well" meant, you know. Because I, shooting was a gun, to me, but we'd stand there until we hear this awful rumbling, and these rocks would come, MAN, we'd RUN like a deer, and I don't remember to this day of one getting hurt. The oil would come up. People would say, "Thank God, thank God," you know, we'd holler. I didn't what I was hollerin' for, but I hollered. I was thrilled to death just like everybody else, because that was liquid gold, as we'd say now.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And so that kept Utica, you see, from really having a Depression in 1929.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Because that's the year I went to college, so I grew up in that store, and, one day, two or three girls said to me, "It's very hot. Let's go swimming." And I said, "I can't, because, you know, I don't, Dad, won't let me have the car." And uh, so they said, "Well, didn't you say you could drive one?"

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: I said, "Well, I guess." And uh, but I said, "Dad told me not, to do it." And they said, "Well, let's take it and go see, and we'll get back and he'll never know it" Livermore was nine miles. Bad roads. So dumb like, we got in that car, and jumped in Green River. I don't know anything, nothing but the Lord could have saved us. You know, it's the deepest river in the world, for its width. And we just jump in. No one ever gave us swimming lessons. We just

swam. Hurry back, we hurried back, before Daddy miss us, uh, Daddy was standing out in front of the store, {Chuckles} when I got back, I got locked up for two days in my room, so I never touched another one of those cars again. But I learned very quick, I will say that. I'm very daring but when I learn, if somebody, is bigger than I am, then I have to say I'm wrong and give in.

CB: Yeah.

PB: But uh, they all knew me because I was in the, store,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And I loved selling, always loved selling.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So I grew up just among all of the oil people, that, and of course it was the greatest blessing that God could have ever sent, if that is, how'd you word it. I don't know how else. I, I wish everybody could have hit it. I was lucky enough to do it.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And uh,

CB: Do you remember the Flood of 1915?

PB: Oh, when?

CB: Or was is 193-

PB: 1936.

CB: 1937.

PB: Uh, do I ever.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: I can, anything you name, I think I can tell you. I had left my husband, and I should have never come back to him.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: But unfortunately, I had left that time, and as I say, went south. To my mother's and father's, see, that's twelve miles to Utica.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: And that's where I was during the flood, and my son, is now 53, so he must have been about four or five.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Well, trying to, go and do good to help anybody in the world I could, well, they brought all the people from the lowlands to the schoolhouse. See, the schoolhouse was center of everything, church and schoolhouse. And so, they were, had no clothes. We gathered up everything we could, you know, but I couldn't get to Owensboro, because the water, was over the road, and so uh, anyway, the doctor came, and said we had to take typhoid fever shots, because we were going to get caught. My Lord, the shot gave me typhoid fever.

CB: Really?

PB: And they thought I was goin' die. So I had to quit helpin' the people, I guarantee you. So my uncle really thought I was going to die. I had such a reaction to it, but they all stayed there in Utica, and I remember it very, very, very well.

CB: Mm hm. Do you remember any of the people in particular?

PB: The people in the flood?

CB: Yeah.

PB: Well, everybody in that area. You couldn't get from, you know where Town Square Mall? Well then you go on, and we called that Panther Creek.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: Well, that was completely under water. No way, could you get through that with the flood.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And the water came up to the store. See, my husband was in business, Mixie Arnold.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: He was in business when I married him. I was only eighteen, and he was twenty-six. So the water came clear up in the store, but I was in Utica. It's strange to be asking about Utica area 'cause that's where I was.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: During that flood. And uh, it was a terrible thing, worse thing that I'd ever heard of. They'd go out and get the men in boats, and some of them drowned, and uh, the people would be on top of the roofs, you know, when they would go, to get them, just like we've heard about. If you were going to have a baby,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Why, they, you'd have to get on top of the roof, {Chuckles} and they'd bring you up, straight to my, mother's house, or my, uncle's house or somebody like that who had a big enough house that could help ya.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And uh, it wasn't, uh, one of the worst things I've ever seen.

CB: Mm.

PB: Horrifying to me to see. People laying all over the floor in the schoolhouse. You can't imagine how it is. I mean, to, somebody kinda, well, I wasn't so young. I was twenty when General was born, so I was under twenty-five, and yes, that is young. Compared to seventy-five. I was horrified, I know that.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And I couldn't understand such a tragedy that God could let this happen. See, all I knew was Love of God.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So this puzzled me that such a, tremendous thing could take place. And that God himself did not step in.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: To do that, and I'm puzzled today. I've never gotten past that, but I've learned accept, as I grow older.

CB: Speaking of the, tragedy, how about, World War I and, also World War II?

PB: Well, my father would always take the messages, to people because he was the postmaster. And I said we always cried first, because he, knew who it was. My father and I

were the closest, we were more like sweethearts. And uh, this is like, the flood. It was, a horrible thing. I could not take going to war. Again, I knew nothing but Love.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Could not imagine shooting your rifle straight at someone who hadn't even hurt ya.

CB: Did you have, did you know any people who

PB: Were killed?

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Oh, of course, you'd have to know many, many people were killed. And uh, these were just things that happened. They just told you it was war, and, you know, that was all you could do. But yes, I remember it very well.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: But there was something I was going to tell you that im-, impressed me so much as a child when I was standing, looking out the window. I don't know how old I was. You see, because I was so large, I can't remember, but I was looking out the window, and the train always came over,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: There, right in front of the store. You could see it, when it came, and so, I saw Mrs. Mahan. She was a woman I knew very well, an older woman. I never saw her husband, but we always called her Mrs. Mahan. We called everybody "Mrs." We didn't know "Miss" from "Mrs." "Miz," that's what we called, M-I-Z It sounded just like that, 'cause I taught school at seventeen. They called me "Miz." And so anyway, I was looking, and my dad was in the post office, and, I think I must have been quite a prankster, too, but I said, "Daddy, the train hit Miz Mahan," and he said, "Baby, you must never do that. Don't ever do it." I said, "It hit her, the train hit her." And so, 'course everybody could hear me by that time, so we went, run, it knocked her straight up into the air. She came straight down into that, ditch. She was carrying an umbrella. She was going to the bank, and you'll never believe this, it laid the umbrella on the bank, the bank book, like a letter, and her glasses. I can see 'em today as well as I could then. Oh, I will never forget that day. So Mr. Hendricks was the section hand, manager, whatever you called him, of the railroad.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So he liked, {Chuckles} he had always let me ride on that, what do you call those things you pushed? Hand cars.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: See, I was the little girl that most people loved. Because I would help them. I love to do it, or I'd take 'em sandwiches. You know, "If you'll let me ride on the hand cart, I'll give you sandwiches, 'n", I think I was bargaining, probably all the time, but getting to do what I liked to do. And so Mr. Hendricks and I ran, to, my grand-, to get uh, well, I must have been over twelve, 'cause we were living, to get a cot to put Miz Mahan on.

CB: Was she, dead or?

PB: OH, 'course she was dead, and I was shaking. I didn't cry. I was just shaking. Mr. Hendricks used to talk about how brave I was. And so we ran to get that, and, I thought that I must get something to lay over her.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So I grabbed up like uh, a counterpane, we called those things on a bed "counterpane," to lay over her so nobody, 'cause it'd be awful for anybody to see her. And, and you know I am that way today. I, if I'm in big trouble, I wouldn't want somebody just staring at me. I'm horrified sometimes at your pictures.

CB: Oh, yeah?

PB: In your paper. I am.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: This seems to horrify me, that if I'm completely undone, that other people are going to look at that, when

CB: Was she, was she, uh

PB: Oh

CB: Bruised up or?

PB: Oh, naturally a train, a cow-catcher on a train, you know what a cow-catcher is? A big iron thing sticking out there. Up and down, into the railroad ditch.

CB: So she was really broken up.

PB: Why, every bone in your body would have been broken, and cut and everything in it. And uh, so that was one of the worst things that I can, think of that I really, actually, saw as a child. The other thing that was quite active in Utica would have been the old mill, where you ground the flour. Everybody knew Mr. Wilhite, and uh, can you turn that thing off, while I tinkle or is that going to be in there?

CB: You can go.

PB: {Chuckles}

{Tape is turned off}

PB: …but it'll all fall together. And I told 'em that they had meant, to, to our community.

CB: Yeah.

PB: Because it's unreal, what, how they did and how they went on. So uh,

CB: Uh, I, I guess

PB: You can ask me anything you want.

CB: Okay. I want to ask you a little bit uh, well, let's see.

PB: I, I was goin' mention that mill, was where…

CB: Right, right.

PB: For young people to hang out. We had no place then to hang out. But the only reason went to church was to kiss you beau. We didn't say that much about church then. That was all we had to do, but the mill. Mr. Wilhite was awfully good to us. They had no children, and

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Only the Lord had to take care of us. We climbed all over that thing. Spider webs, with the flour in 'em, looked BEAUTIFUL, probably as beautiful as Mammoth Cave does.

CB: Uh huh. How old were you then?

PB: Oh, Lord, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. And I don't know. And Mr. Wilhite had LONG whiskers down to here, and after I'd been married, I heard Mr. Wilhite hollerin', and I went running. Mr. Wilhite's whiskers was going in the, in the grinder.

CB: Oh my.

PB: He wanted me to turn if off. I said, "Where, where is it?" {Chuckles} So I got Mr. Whilhite, and he didn't know how to get 'em out, {Both chuckle}, get him out.

CB: Oh no.

PB: I had to go get somebody, to get Mr., I was so frightened. You can imagine.

CB: Oh, I bet.

PB: It looked like down to there. His whiskers were down there, and so they had flour all over 'em, so it always looked so white, see, and so, anyway, I never will forget that. And then I must put that they baptized everybody in the mill pond, the Jordan Baptist Church. So I told you I didn't miss anything. I didn't care if you're baptized, or buried or what.

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: And so, we went. And uh, so then my dad, and my job was to lead that cow up there to drink every day. And so I was leading her one day, and I was barefooted,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And so, I was looking real good, and Lady, we called her "Lady," and little bitty fish were swimming in her mouth. I thought, ah, how can she drink those fish? So, I thought that must not be fish, so I'd thought I'd step over closer, and that cow raised up her foot, put it on my foot, and {Chuckles} I couldn't move.

CB: Okay.

PB: I couldn't, I pushed her, I said "Please," {Chuckles} I prayed again, but she just stood, and my foot, I don't think it's ever been the same, so I couldn't get over that they baptized those people, and the cows drank in it, and we skated on it in the winter, and we waded in it, and sometimes if you were thirsty enough, you drank it.

CB: {Snorts}

PB: You knew if wudn't clean, but it was the mill pond, and we thought that was the purest thing we had, because it was the mill pond. I don't know why it seemed different than any other pond. Well, we named that Mill Street.

CB: Oh, I see.

PB: That street was named after, Mr. Whilhite. So I told you I knew everything that was going on, so they used to have two blind boys, came out there.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Blind as a bat. One of 'em played the piano, one of 'em played the violin, so, Cousin Mug, we called her, would always have me meet, the blind boys, 'cause see my father had to go, up there anyway for the mail. So I would meet them. {Chuckles} And, and I would run ahead, they lived up Mill Street, and you had to kinda turn and go back. So I'd run in to tell Cousin Mug, "The blind boys are here." She'd say, "Wait, wait, wait, Princess, wait til I light the lamp." They were both blind. {Chuckles} She thinks the train came out about five o'clock in the afternoon. And it'd be dark, in the winter. She'd say, "Wait, wait, Princess 'til I light the lights." {Chuckles} So I had to tell Phil and Murray, that was their name, everybody come in their name, Phil and Murray. I didn't even know a last name.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And oh, Lord, we thought that was great. Another thing we all prayed for Floyd Collins. Now he was about twelve years old, and got caught in that cave.

CB: Mm.

PB: So that's what I remember, radio wudn't but one or two people, if that.

CB: Do, do you remember when uh, women go the right to vote?

PB: Oh my gosh, what year was it?

CB: Uh, I'm not, 1928 or something?

PB: I remember when they marched up and down Frederica Street, about fifty.

CB: Oh yeah?

PB: For sure.

CB: Tell me about that.

PB: Oh gosh, I thought that was the most ridiculous, most unladylike, the most unchristian. I just thought that was awful.

CB: What was that, they were marching?

PB: So to get, to get rid of whiskey, I guess.

CB: To get rid of whiskey or about, against Prohibition?

PB: Against Prohibition, I suppose.

CB: But why did they?

PB: What they, what they be doin'? I can see them now walkin' up and down Frederica Street, and oh, I thought that was the worst thing I ever saw. I don't think that I really understood. I just didn't think women ought to be out there WALKING. See, I'd never heard of, anybody doing anything

CB: Do, do you remember how old you were then?

PB: No, I cain't. I just cain't remember. But now you remember, we didn't have but, even when I was in high school and I graduated at sixteen, and we had dirt roads. You might think from Utica to ??, that's three miles this way, so that'll let you know how bad the roads were.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And many people run in those two big ditches on the side of the ground, and killed. NUMEROUS, numerous people, were killed on the Livermore Road. It was just known as a treacherous road. It was very narrow. Very narrow. Then we had an old wooden bridge. Over Panther Creek. And my sister could drive better. She's three years older than I am. And so, she, told me I could drive the car, and I said, "If you'll let me drive, I'll stop {Stomps her foot?}, and let you go over that bridge."

CB: Mm hm.

PB: 'Cause she didn't trust me, and I knew then I wasn't gonna stop. When I got the car, so made it and she jumped out into Panther Creek. {Laughs}, and I went on across the bridge, and she had to come over there. And uh, we both taught at seventeen, my sister and I. We went to college one year, that's all you had

CB: Really?

PB: to go to college. I had

CB: Where'd you go?

PB: Bowling Green, Western. That's all

CB: College?

PB: That's all decent women did then, teach. So uh, I went, one year, and my sister went two years and got a life certificate, but they were short of teachers, and I wanted to make money as I told you. See, my life's been the same all the way through. And so I had fifty-eight students, all in one room.

CB: Where?

PB: All eight grades. Red Hill. That's four miles from Utica. I made the fire, I took care of the stove, I taught all the children, and they declared I was the best teacher they ever had. Seventy-two dollars a month.

CB: Wow.

PB: I paid fifteen dollars a week for my boarding room. Right there on the corner. The house is still there, and people are still living in it.

CB: Huh. Did you, you stopped doing that, though, why'd you stop?

PB: It, because I had little enough sense to marry.

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: It broke my father's heart. And bull, walked right along by me every morning, and I was very afraid of a bull.

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: The man said "He's trying to be friendly." {Chuckles} And I had to walk in mud that deep.

CB: Oh, gosh.

PB: I'd go in the daylight, and I taught 'til dark. I made the fire in the stove, all by myself. I had three children older than I was.

CB: Oh, really?

PB: Mm hm. I was not supposed to be teaching because I wasn't seventeen. I had, you had to be eighteen and older, seventeen, but I was in November.

CB: Oh, so they could get, so they, started

PB: Yeah,

CB: you early

PB: So they just started, like we do now, and acted like we didn't know what we were doing. Well that, I was tall and big boned. I liked teaching.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: I've, been a substitute for many, many, many years. I think you're also a natural born teacher.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: I'm enjoying the German boys, and their English have improved one hundred percent.

CB: Yeah.

PB: But I like teaching.

CB: You know you were talking about that, the ditches being full of water, and um, walking through mud there. There were some real hard winters back when you were,

PB: Oh.

CB: A child.

PB: Well,

CB: I mean, there's just…

PB: But you see, we had so much black help, and I lived right in Utica.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So I was never allowed to get up, until the fires would all be goin', and ah, everything like that. Now the thing that I would remember that would interest you, remember we had no Kleenex, no Kotex, no, anything that you have today. I mean, well, we did have to learn to do, more on our own, which I think might be a good thing. {Coughs} But we had no bath like you have. So we had a tub, and since I was the middle child, I never that was fair, but I had to take a bath separate, never, but that went on. My older sister took the bath first, I took it next and then my younger. I'm glad I wasn't last. {Coughs} And you know, she resented it all her life.

CB: That's… {Chuckles}

PB: She did. But you see, I don't know where they got their sense of values. It was strange ones, but that was the way we did. In the summer, we called what we had a "bath house" out back.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And that's where we took it, the colored people, see, took care of us

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Lived there, Aunt Minnie, we called her. Aunt Minnie lived with us, her son lived on our farm and her daughter worked for me for twenty years. Three generations without every a cross word.

CB: Did that, how much did you pay them?

PB: I don't think we paid anything. I can't remember. It'd been so little you wouldn't, couldn't imagine it.

CB: It would, would had to have been something.

PB: A quarter a day.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: It's so unreal that I just, now they were good, they were good, mother and daddy were good, to, well, Aunt Minnie lived there so wouldn't need anything. But Aunt Minnie, now to show you how good they were, if we didn't, if I got ugly and didn't want put on what she wanted me to put on for mother, she'd say, "You're not gonna go out here and embarrass your mother," and I said, "I don't care if I embarrass her." {Chuckles} And she'd say, "Well, you're not gonna embarrass Aunt Minnie." So I'd have to put on, see, because if their, people didn't look nice, that was an embarrassment to them. They wanted us to be dressed nice, and of course, mother would leave instructions, I'm sure, with her, and my mother was a very beautiful woman. She didn't learn to drive until she's seventy-two.

CB: Oh, yeah.

PB: Seventy-two, and my father waited on her hand and foot, all of her life, and the colored people. And uh, she had beautiful naturally curly hair, curly hair, and she never could understand how I'd get mine to look as bad as it did. No matter how hard I worked, I'd go out, and my mother'd say, "How in the name of Heavens do you get your hair looking like that?" {Chuckles} And all she had to do was wash hers. She was a very impatient woman, so after, the saddest thing in my life was when my father killed himself.

CB: Oh.

PB: In 1957. That was, will be, {Crying} and that was, that was, make me cry, but he was the leader. There's no doubt, even, when the man preached his funeral, that was the subject, the outstanding, man in uniform, but, I think it always worried Daddy, that he had more, you know, he was so afraid that wouldn't look Christian, so he was such a good, kind man, I think anyone will tell you that, and he, loaned and he loaned and he loaned. I think he, when he died, he had $17,000 out in a, on a brown sack, if somebody wanted to borrow, they, Daddy just loaned it to 'em. Because he, felt like he had more than he should, {Crying} so I think it really pushed hard on him, and I don't even know why I'm crying now, that's unusual for me, I thought I was past that.

CB: I'm sorry.

PB: Well, maybe, maybe you never get past that.

CB: It's a hard thing.

PB: Because, it, because, it was very hard. But then it, caused, a great change in my life, and uh, I did, then, myself, enter a mental hospital, a very, very fine, which doesn't have to be in there. I, I wish everybody could know what helps, in those times, because I had, a horrible marriage, had a drunken husband, three children, I didn't, I was trying to work and make a living and I didn't really know what to do. My Dad never thought that it was good to give me money, but after I was married, and because he thought that was uh, interrupting, disturbing, and he just, you know, he had certain principles and he wouldn't change 'em. And I, I have a lot of principle, like daddy, but not quite as good, but I have uh, a lot of 'em that I think, are good. But uh, I then, decided I definitely must have help, but I could not go on, but I had found the church would not give me what I needed.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: That was not true, that you can pray, and you'll get, financial, because, I think God will answer for me just as quickly as he would for you or anybody else. But there comes a time when you need professional help. So uh, it was very fortunate for me, I had been in a wreck, and with Miss Miller, the richest woman in Owensboro, and that she had, seen to it that I got five thousand dollars and I thought then that I was afraid to take that because I felt I shouldn't, really deserve that, and uh, she said, "Well, you're gonna have it anyway." Today they would get five million. That shows you how times how changed, just in that little while, and so, we had seven doctors on this street, and so finally Dr. Harrison said that I was just not going to be able to stand it, you know, if I didn't go away, you know, he tried to talk me into going to Lady of Peace

where they gave shock treatments, but I had a horror, because I had had a good mind, and I've always wanted to keep it.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So I didn't want to go that route, so he said Menninger's. {Phone rings} And uh, I said uh, "But I don't know what it is, so that was, {Phone rings} Oh {Tape stopped} I said, "Do you think I'm crazy?" He said, "No, but how you keep comin', I will never know. But you're gonna be." And I said, "Well, how much does this place cost a day?" He said, "Fifty dollars a day." And I said, "Dr. Harrison, are you crazy?" See, we're talkin' about 19n5-7, and he said, "No, but that, didn't you say that you didn't feel like you deserved that money?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "What did they tell you when they gave it to you? They said, 'Take it and do what you want to do.'" But I said, "I, I, I don't know whether to do this, Dr. Harrison." But things got worse. The drinking got heavier. So I got back with Dr. Harrison, and I thought all you had to do, was call and tell him I'd be there, for my room.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: But uh,

CB: That was your first marriage, you're talking about?

PB: Yes, that's how dumb I was. I was in that marriage thirty-one years, had three sons. But uh, I had no dream about the place. So he kept trying, and trying, and trying, but couldn't get me in, there, and, uh, at that time, it cost fifteen hundred a month which was unreal. And uh, so, then I began to collect, literature and read, and I was fascinated by the place, 'cause it gave no, shock, and, I read about Dr. Menninger, was a Sunday School teacher and I have taught Sunday School ALL of my life, and now I don't even enter a church building, but at that time, I had. But, we had much difference of religion. I would like to bring it up, the Catholics and the Baptists have been fighting ever since I've ever known, in this area that we're speaking of. The Catholic Church was down the road three miles, and uh, it's, it's, sketchy, but you'll have to remember it has not been over thirty years ago, I don't think, since they let anything come into Utica but the Baptist Church. So I passed, and I see this building, and I said, "What is that?," and somebody later told me. So I went to the Methodist Church. So I went on home and told my mother, that I was so glad, that they were getting another church. She said, "I think you must be crazy. I do not know how I could have raised a complete idiot." And I said, "Mother, I just don't share your feelings, about church, and I'm glad, that another denomination is coming in." And I said, "You know, I think that you have this Christianity

END TAPE1, SIDE2

TAPE2, SIDE1

PB: "Come, please, let me come to Menninger's. I have been a Sunday School teacher. I see you're a Sunday School teacher, and I said I think we have much in common, and I'm, I need help, PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE." I sent that letter, on Monday night, went to the post office at three o'clock. Most women would never got mail. Mailed that letter and on Thursday afternoon, they've already gotten my room, in Louisville, and a call comes from Menninger's, and says I could come. I'm in the basement with my maid, ironing some gowns. And she said she had to talk to my husband. And I said, "No, you must talk to me. I will be entering myself. I'll be paying, my own way." And she said, "No, but it's our policy," but I, I said, "No, but you must tell me, because I must cancel another room." And she said, "Well, I seldom do this, but I will." So she said, "You can come Monday." And I said, "Now, I'll give you my husband's number." So I went and stayed three months. And, three years ago I went out there to celebrate Dr. Menninger's ninetieth birthday.

CB: This is in Topeka?

PB: Pardon me? Topeka, Kansas.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: The greatest man I've ever known. Had the greatest influence, next to my father. My father didn't, not have the education. See, the doctor was your psychiatrist, and my, school teacher, my principal, was our psychiatrist.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: This was all we knew. In other words, we just called that "good training" or "good breeding." So it was a great joy to work with such great professional people.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So I was lucky to go and stay three months and be able to, come home and live a full life. I could not have gone on without it. So uh, now if you'll just ask me.

CB: Well, let's see, uh, it's been, it's been a little more than an hour, but let's see if there's something. I did want to ask you, you were, probably, a teenager when things were getting pretty fun in the Twenties. Uh, what was that like, with the, did the Roaring Twenties roar in to?

PB: No, no I married in uh, uh, '30. No, I taught school in '30. I married, I graduated in '29.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Went to college in '30. I married in '31. And as strange as it seems, I was a very serious, girl, very serious. I would not have hurt God for anything in the world, or my parents.

CB: Mm hm. Do, do you remember uh, well then, you're probably younger than that, uh, do you remember, when people started bobbing their hair or was that?

PB: Oh, yes, when my mother cut hers off, my dad held a napkin up in front of his face. Mother cried, and Daddy wouldn't look that way. No, she came to the table, and he didn't know it, 'cause she cut it off. And he held a napkin up in front of his face, and we laughed, and Mother cried.

CB: Really?

PB: Yeah, that's exactly how strange it was. I remember when the horses rared up to the trains, you know, it scared them to death. So I'm so happy that now I can fly to Chicago for lunch and get back, by three o'clock. That I've really experienced all these.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: This is so funny, I, I was, I told you I did not want to be, shown, I wanted to learn. So when I, my music teacher moved to Owensboro, she moved over on Cedar Street, 1500, nothing but corn fields, from the, dep-, from the railroad on out. So I got off that train, I had my seventy-five cents for that music lesson, I started out to find my teacher, but I'd get so scared, every time, I'd say, "Lord, no, I'm gonna go back, so I can," see, I wouldn't want that train to go off and leave me, see, it went back and forth, in the afternoon. All I could smell was a hamburger. I'd, spent my whole seventy-five cent, they were a nickel, for a hamburger. Never found my music teacher. Out there in that corn, I'm tellin' ya, I was scared to death, but I could smell those hamburgers, {Chuckles} so that would draw me back to the depot, that was right in front of the depot. So I got on there, and got another whippin', 'cause I didn't get a music lesson and I ate up, all my money. So I didn't know what else to do, you know, I wanted to be sure, I was afraid that train would leave me. So the other train story you should put down by ALL means, uh,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: When uh, my uncle, whom everybody loved, and one night we had a man that drank a lot,

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And uh, he wanted to carry my General home.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Whom I worshipped, and uh, so I got, I didn't want him to, 'cause he was drinking, but he pulled him over, and this upset me, so I got on the train to come home, and I called my mother when I got there, and I said, "Charlie Hibner is drunk." He is drunker than I ever seen him.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Mother said, "No, you're just." I said, "He may do something before the night is over, Mother." So she said that I was just imagining things. That night he went to my uncle's, the doctor, and said, "Doctor, I need your gun for a little while." Doctor said, "It's in the top drawer, get it." He went down the road, down the railroad and killed three negroes, and the other one nearly died. And when people would ride out on that train, everybody would get up and look, "That's that house, that's that house, where he killed the negroes." And he only went to the penitentiary, seven years. But my father and I went to see him, about every six months.

CB: He used your uncle's gun, to do this? Well, why'd your uncle?

PB: Came back, the Docie didn't know he was gonna do it.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: He came back, called the Sheriff, put this in there, the Sheriff didn't even come, until the next day.

CB: Why, because they were black?

PB: Huh?

CB: Because the people were the black?

PB: I don't, you can guess it as well as I can. One of 'em dragged up there with his whole intestines, hanging out. The others were dead as a hammer.

CB: Why did he kill 'em?

PB: Gamblin'. They were gamblin'. Been drinkin'. White Mule, they made white mule.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: Around Utica. But that's the other train thing that everybody, talked about. Now you see, you had the closing of the bank. I believe my father and basketball was the greatest things.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: In Utica. 'Course we had an unusual team, a very unusual team. {Turns papers} And uh, we talked about the store, we covered that, and we went, I told you, to Lexington, and that's the furthest he'd ever been, in our life, to Lexington, Kentucky. And uh, and, 'course this is just about the discipline, in the early church in the early days. Now discipline was a must, we, in our family.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: And with our teachers. Because one night, as good 'a basketball player as I thought I was, we walked down the railroad, so cold, and we didn't take a lot of people extry, we couldn't do it, we wanted to get their ourselves, and we played uh, little town called Scottsville, across the river, and we crossed, the ferry couldn't run that night, it was so bad, we crossed in little boats. My gloves froze on my hands, and there were posts, great big posts, in this gymnasium. Now, this will show you 'bout how we lived, and a big stove over in one corner. Well, we'd play, come hell or high water, as they say. So, every time, I'm jumping this girl would jumper me up and hit me in the stomach. And I said, "You've gotta quit that," and I'd say "that's against the rules", so I stopped the ref, and I told him, "That's against the rules. She'd gotta be fouled. She can't keep doin' that." We just go on the game, and at that half somebody said, "You're not gonna do a bit o' good, that's, he goes with her." And I said, "Well, he's drinkin' anyway." Drinkin', see, upset me, even then. So we go back in, so I told her, I said, "Now listen, if you start, hitting me, in the stomach, I'm gonna wrap you right around one of those posts." So I said, "Don't say I didn't tell ya." So we get in, and she does pretty good for a little while, and we were playin', and all of a sudden she rams me in the stomach, I take her by the shoulder and just slam her across that post. I didn't care if it broke her back or what I did. I don't know what I thought, but I did. So he put me off the floor, which he shoulda done, but my coach didn't say a word, and I thought, I think Mr. Skaggs knew she deserved that. He doesn't say a word all week to me, so we're playin' Beaver Dam next week, and needless to say I was the star player, if I do say so, and I have a beau over there, and I was dyin' for that night to come to show off, you know, so I get to that door, and they all stood around, just, around the door, on the floor, had no seats. And so, he just taps me on the shoulder and said, "You won't be playing tonight." OH, I said, "Me, Mr. Skaggs?" And he said, "I said you won't be playing." And I

said, "Why?" And he said, "You know why." THAT was the most correction, and I will NEVER forget it.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: He didn't have to do a lot of yellin' and hollerin'. I remember to this day I know when I do wrong. And everybody else knows when they do wrong.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So uh, there are a lot of, psychology, that I found, fifty years later, that my coach, used all the time.

CB: Pretty well.

PB: And that my dad used. And so I was glad to see that other people can get professional help and I have been educated, today.

CB: Yeah.

PB: For most people. That is, if you want to learn. If you don't, why, then it's fun to be ignorant.

CB: {Chuckles}

PB: Because you really don't feel so responsible.

CB: Well, I think we ought uh, stop here, now. {Tape stopped} Will you tell me about that again?

PB: All right, we had many poor, black people, and when they got sick, they could no longer work, and people seemed to forget what they had done, so they just had to make it on handouts. No welfare, no nothing. And so this man's cancer was of the lymph, and I was not familiar with cancer, but I knew it was a terrible thing to me, and all I could think of was the Bible, 'cause it ate your fingers, off, and that, I thought Ed had leprosy, and nobody bothers to tell me, you know, so one day I'm talking to Ed, and he says, "They don't know what's the matter with this man", bit now we know it was cancer, so he wore that red bandana handkerchief, and the flies would get around him, so nobody wanted him to come around, see. So again, when I got my money, I would get Ed, a Coca-Cola, 'cause anything cold, would tasted so good. So then, down, down, down by that railroad, {Chuckles} where I was talkin' about, there was another black woman. But I don't know whether people didn't have pity or whether they were afraid, I didn't never understood it. But uh, she was dying and in bed, and oh, it smelled so bad, and so many flies, no screens, no doors, and so uh, she would get so hot, so, people would fan

her, the black people. So, I didn't mind fanning, so I'd fan, you know, and, and, talk to Coot. That's what we called her. And she'd tell me about little things I did when I was a little, girl, you know, and everything, and how she used to work, and that fascinated me. Older people always fascinated me. I think it was a learning period. So one day, I took her a bottle of orange pop. And I'll never forget how she LOVED that, see, she had so much fever, and that cold pop. And people were good. I don't know why they didn't do more. I really do not, but this is just to show you how the blacks lived.

CB: They weren't allowed to see the doctors?

PB: Oh, they wouldn't have any money, and so they just felt that it was their fate to come into life to live, and to die. And that was it. And uh, they always had these little funerals up at that black church, very simple, there's a little bitty black cemetery. But that's the, craziest thing, I never, that's about my second crying spell, so I'm certain I wouldn't go through that again, I seldom do that. But uh, I thought I would make a talk, that's what I wanted to tell 'em, how long, I had lived, and how much they had meant to that community, but for this generation realized it.

CB: And that was the last black man?

PB: Black woman.

CB: Woman.

PB: Yes, that tall black man that was out at Heck's.

CB: And he's still there.

PB: He's still, no, Heck's is gone.

CB: Oh.

PB: But he is probably with Krogers. His name is James Ayer. They are a credit to every community, any community, so I expect, my dad and I never missed a black funeral, and I have tried to continue that.

CB: Why?

PB: Because I, think Daddy would like to have done, and it's just money given to the church, that I do. That's one of the things I like to help, because I think they really, MADE that community.

CB: Yeah.

PB: And they got no credit. And they just died and we thought nothing much of it. They just died. But uh, that's what they had to go through, and you just can't imagine how that affected me as a child, you know, to see this, and think there must be a better way.

CB: Did it make you angry?

PB: What?

CB: Did it make you angry?

PB: Yes. And it made my parents angry, because, I would think,

CB: They were angry with you?

PB: Yes.

CB: And they didn't accept?

PB: And my other sisters wouldn't say a thing, they wouldn't say anything.

CB: Did they agree with you or did they not?

PB: No, no, the parent, but it, I's the only one that would work in the store, and I was the only one had that money, so see, if I wanted to buy a nickel for that Coke, and I don't think I deserved any CREDIT at all for this, because it seemed to give me more joys, like keeping the joy, I've gotten much more joy, than they would, out of it. But when I worked at the Menninger's, I thought it would be fun, maybe, if I knew a little bit about myself as a child, so I wrote to a lady who's now dead, and I'm so sorry, I threw her letters all away, but she wrote me back that, the one thing that she remembered of how I would help, everybody, that somebody came to uh, wanted some shoes, in my grandfather's, store. See, that was with the dry goods, shoes. We didn't mention that, but that was there, that all went in, in my day that, covered your clothes and everything. And so this little girl cried 'cause she couldn't, you know, get those shoes, and so I ALWAYS kept my money separate, in a little box, always my money was mine. And I'm still a lot like that.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So, I knew exactly what I could do, for her, so that I went, over there, and got a quarter, to give grandfather so she could get those shoes. So it, I don't think any of us know why we do, what we do, and I'm enjoying Phil Donahue, for the last two nights, because really he has come near, bringing, mental health to the public.

CB: Yeah.

PB: Than anybody I know.

CB: That's probably.

PB: And most of my friends literally despise him. Well, see they want act like they didn't know what sex was, they didn't know anything, but they're lying.

CB: So, how'd you find out?

PB: Well, I'll tell you, I'm glad you mentioned that. When every-, I got married, well, everybody was running off, 'course see, of this big division in these churches. You shouldn't marry a Catholic, this and that. Well, Jimmy happened to be a Catholic, that didn't make him any better, any worse, he just was a Catholic, but my dad, certainly did not want me to marry, and I had planned to go on back to college. And I really thought I would, but he was eight years older than I was, and back then, I don't know who talked who into getting married, {Chuckling} and I tell ya, with one, feeling, of emotion, I was scared to death that I would hurt God. See, I didn't know exactly what sex was, but I knew if you had this feeling, you must get married quickly.

CB: Mm.

PB: Quickly. I did not go to bed with a man. I'm not ashamed of it, it was just my way, of life. I didn't know any better, you waited until you married. Now most people, no, not everybody, but for ME, see, that was all I knew. And so uh, then I thought well, that's the thing for me to do. And so, then, they didn't want me at a Catholic Church. I was not allowed to walk down the aisle, not even set my foot in there. Well, that upset my father very much.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So then the second thing was that I had to sign over my unborn CHILDREN.

CB: To be raised Catholic?

PB: YES. And that upset my father VERY much.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: So to the point that I told him I didn't do it. The first real lie I ever told my father knowingly.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: But I thought, well, Daddy's gonna lock me up, or something, you know, if he knows I'm this bad of a woman. So, Daddy must have known more than I thought, {Phone rings} because, he said, "I do not want you to run off and marry. You know, whatever you want to do, we'll agree with that. {Phone rings. Tape stops} So I put washers on the railroad all day so I didn't have to see Mother, I was so scared of her. So, he said, "I don't want you to run away." And I said, "Okay." He said, "I'll go with you to get your license." Well, my, others had run, and, their fathers and mothers would bring 'em back, meet 'em at the train. They weren't married IN the church, see, all that yet. So uh, Daddy was very hurt that I couldn't walk down the aisle so we had to be married in the rectory of Fourth Street Methodist Church.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: My sister said that they should start it with a "W." Not an "R." So that's were I got married at eighteen. But I wanted babies. I loved babies. So I actually think, I thought, in the nine months to the minute, I would have a baby. I think I was so ignorant, I, I, I believe I had to be the most ignorant person with an education I've ever heard of, in my life. I'm so ignorant that even Menninger's couldn't believe it, and still had perfectly good mind, but I think that I was afraid to ask. This is what I was afraid of, sinning.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: See, that was the thing that scared me to death. So uh, my dad, went with me, and uh, so then nearly everybody I knew, in about five months, one girl fell up the steps and had a baby. Another one fell down the steps and six months and had a baby. And here I was doin' nothing. {Chuckles} I hadn't done, I'd done what I thought you's supposed to do. We got married, but I had no baby. It was two years, and I thought surely that the Lord had damned me, 'cause I'd been so bad, you know. My mother used to say, "But you're such a BAD little girl,"

CB: Mm.

PB: And I thought, well, surely God had damned me. I'll never had children. 'Course I really expected it to happen instant, like just I'd heard, you know. In nine months you'd have a baby. And I, I was a person that just believed, what, they told me. I can't understand it yet. I think I must have been the strangest human woman that's ever lived. Well, I think it's been on record at Menninger's, I did have to be one of the strangest. And in all this time, and all his drinking and Jim never wanted to be married, back then, I'll just say this, gays married, and they, walked the line. Never in those thirty-one years, did I go with another man, but you see, I was afraid of God. I'd just say, "God, if you'll let me raise my three children," {Chuckles} that's all I wanted to raise was those three children, and I was just as narrow a Baptist, as he was narrow a Catholic.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: I'm just as guilty, as he was, except I wanted, to be married, and I adore my, son, and uh, now two of them I think have joined the Catholic Church. That doesn't bother me a particle.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: But at then, my whole life was Baptist.

CB: Yeah.

PB: I just wanted then {Chuckles} to get those boys raised, and, and I say, this is so terrible, it shows what Christianity, when he was so drunk, I used to think, I hope he has a wreck and gets killed before he gets home. See, I really thought, that was the thing I needed to prayer for, they said pray for what you wanted. So here, I didn't want him to get home, and cause another big, commotion. So after we finally got on, well, his drinking got much better. People often would say, "Did he ever marry again?" And I'd say, "Are you kidding? Took him thirty years to run me off." So, 'course he never married again. We know now. We know better. So knowledge, I'm gonna write a book, one day.

CB: {Chuckles} You probably ought to.

PB: I'm gonna write a book. They begged me at Menninger's. And if I had written then, I'd have been one of the richest women, 'cause nobody was telling the truth about the law.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: See, I'm one of the first ones that went, to say "Something's wrong", and I don't know what it, when they showed me these pictures, oh, I got sick, deathly sick at my stomach, and I had to leave, see, they record everything you do. And one night my doctor said, "You're not leaving this thing." I said, "I can't, I cannot look at that. I cannot look at that." Everybody said it's horrible, it's awful. And he said, "But you're gonna look. That's what you've done through life. You've turned your back on everything you didn't want to see." And he said, "Everything in life is not good, everything is not beautiful, everything is not nice. You're gonna look." And I said, "Well, if I have to look, I know I'll hate it." {Chuckles} So I think for one month, I had to look at these horrible, hideous, pictures.

CB: Of what?

PB: Filth. We'd call it pornography.

CB: Oh.

PB: Gays, everything. See, I had NEVER been exposed to anything like that, and it took them six weeks to believe me. I wouldn't have looked at another man, but I told ya, I wasn't good, I was just afraid of God. And I didn't want Him to do that to those children.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: I wanted my husband to die. That's how good a Christian I was. I hoped that if anybody had to go, it' be him, not me. And I couldn't stand to leave them with him, so it all worked out very beautifully, 'cause I've had two beautiful, wonderful, husbands, my last husband was Max, the brilliant scientist. And I, it wouldn't take anything for my education, even today, because it has me a rounded person that I'm happy, that I have become. When I married my second husband, when I went, my mother was so ashamed, in 19-, to let anybody know that I was in a mental hospital. She told everybody she didn't know where I was. And here I'm writing people all the time, but mother said she didn't know where I was, so, this man came from California and had uh, an apartment with my cousin. And so, I'm telling you, he was adorable, and she was dying for me to meet Mr. Cooper, and I said, "Della May, I wouldn't marry, any man, in the world. I'm working every day. I'm renting rooms. I'm making my living and I just don't have time to be bothered." So she just kept begging me to come out, so I did. And I'm telling you, Mr. Cooper was darned attractive. And uh, so uh, he looked at me and my father called me Princess and most everybody else says "Prince", and he says, "Princess, would you like to go?" I haven't had anyone call me that, since that my sweet father died, and I ADORED my father. And he looked straight at me, and said, "So did my other wives." {Chuckles} And I thought, BOY, somethin', I had to go on home pretty quick, and I hadn't any more than gotten home, 'til my cousin called. She said, "I want to ask you a question." I said, "What is it? I think I can answer it. You've got good ears with ya." She said, "Did Mr. Cooper say wives?" I said, "Of course, Mr. Cooper said wives. He's lookin' straight into my face," and I said, "He might have a third one if he doesn't watch out." {Both laugh.} Because he's pretty darn cute. See, he was my age. So in two months and one day, Mr. Cooper and I got married. But I was glad that I learned, what I did, when I first knew Hugh, and I had thought I had learned then. And he said, "I'm an arrested alcoholic." Well, the word alcohol scares me to death. So uh, he could see I was really frightened, and he said, "I am an arrested alcoholic." And he said, "Would you like to go to a AA meeting this afternoon?" I said, "On Sundays? Do you think that I would go to one of those things on Sunday?" And he said, "We aren't gonna get along. We aren't gonna get along." And he said, "I'm very fond of you. I haven't known you, but two weeks." But uh, he said, "We're just, let's just, uh, you know, let this thing drop." And I said, "Well, why aren't we gonna get along?" And he said, "I don't want to be insulted, and you're just not as smart enough woman, I thought you are." Well, I said, "I don't want to be called DUMB," and he said, "Well, you are. In some ways." And I said, "Well, why? Because I won't go to that meeting?" And he said, "Yes, that upsets me, to see a woman, as smart as you are." And I said, "I'll go then.

Then, I'll go." And I went, and that was the best day's work I ever did in all my life. I LOVED the AA program and I worked hard. He only lived six years. He died of cancer. Brought this brilliant man to Owensboro, at that time. But all of that to say after, I went, and I saw how honest they were, even on the first meeting, that I came back about a week later, and I said, "Hugh, well, you were so honest with me, I think I should tell you, something, that you probably don't know. I'm an ex-mental patient." And he said, "I thought you were awful sharp for some reason or other." That's all he said. See he just took it, like it was, and for me, nearly scared me to death, when he said the AA, so, I think we all learn, from each other.

CB: Yeah.

PB: So I did keep it, wide mind up, by saying Dr. M. begged me at that time to write, because we were just then getting on, just then, beginning to come out of the closet, particularly with mental health. There are six, parts of our body, or what terms, of course, we're supposed to not like sex.

CB: Uh huh.

PB: See, and if you did, you were just a bad woman. But they could not believe in that thirty years, that I had not been with some other man. But it wasn't hard for me, because I'm so afraid of death.

CB: 'Cause you're, that was the way a good girl was?

PB: That was the way I grew up, and that's the way I felt I wanted to be, because I wanted to say, "Thank you, God, for those three children," you know, that meant so much to me. So my life has been very different, than most people's.

CB: Mm hm.

PB: But, I'm certainly glad that's all rounded out the way it is, and then I got Max and we traveled and we went to Europe, and had marvelous, times, so, uh, there's somewhere in the Bible that says, "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first." And I always say, I never know, which, which end I'm in. Because I have had a wonderful, you know, past life, and it was a joy to live with such, a BRILLIANT man as Max.

CB: Yeah.

PB: Brilliant, highly educated. Got his Masters Degree in Physics in 19-, let me show you Max on your way out.

CB: Okay.

END TAPE2, SIDE1