Interview with Emmett Emmanuel Cheri

June 23, 1994
Transcript of an Interview about Life in the Jim Crow South
New Orleans (La.)

Interviewer: Kate Ellis
ID: btvct07064
Interview Number: 823

SUGGESTED CITATION

Behind the Veil: Documenting African-American Life in the Jim Crow South
An oral history project to record and preserve the living memory of African American life during the age of legal segregation in the American South, from the 1890s to the 1950s.

ORIGINAL PROJECT

COLLECTION LOCATION & RESEARCH ASSISTANCE
John Hope Franklin Research Center for African and African American History and Culture
at the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

The materials in this collection are made available for use in research, teaching and private study. Texts and recordings from this collection may not be used for any commercial purpose without prior permission. When use is made of these texts and recordings, it is the responsibility of the user to obtain additional permissions as necessary and to observe the stated access policy, the laws of copyright and the educational fair use guidelines.

http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/behindtheveil
Center For Documentary Studies At Duke University
Behind The Veil: Documenting African American Life In The Jim Crow South

Interview with
Emmett Emmanuel Cheri

New Orleans, Louisiana
June 23, 1994

Interviewed by
Kate Ellis

Unedited Transcript by
1. **Ellis:** This is Kate Ellis and I'm doing Emmett Cheri on June 23, at about 2:00 pm. So we can begin. Mr. Cheri, how long have you been in New Orleans. Did you grow up here?

2. **Cheri:** I grew up in New Orleans. That's approximately 70 years ago.

3. **Ellis:** Really? So you were born about 70 years ago.

4. **Cheri:** Seventy years ago.

5. **Ellis:** Okay. And where did you grow up?

6. **Cheri:** I grew up in New Orleans in the 7th Ward, in the Tremane. Okay? That's two places. I was born in the 7th Ward, but I practically grew up in the Tremane which was the 5th and 6th wards. I also went to church in the 6th Ward. I was married in the 7th Ward. I choose different Catholic churches. I'm a Catholic and I was married at Corpus Christi Church and that was in 1952. I got married in '52. I'm the father of six children. Five children, excuse me.

7. **Ellis:** Who did you grow up with in your household?

8. **Cheri:** My sisters and brothers. We grew up together until, we were all together up until 1941. I have two older brothers. I got two younger sisters and a younger brother, but my youngest brother is deceased. And my father passed at a very young age.

9. **Ellis:** Your father did?
10. Cheri: And my mother also was very young when she passed, but my father died when I was about 11 years old. And my mother died in 1952, the same year I got married.

11. Ellis: How did your father die?

12. Cheri: My father died of pneumonia in 1936. He turned 41. Let's say, a month after he turned 41, 28 days later on he passed and my mother died of a stroke in 1952.

13. Ellis: How old were you in 1952?


15. Ellis: Oh, you were. You mean on Christmas day.


17. Ellis: You remember what your father did?

18. Cheri: My father was a printer.

19. Ellis: I'm sorry.

20. Cheri: A printer. And my mother, before any of us was born my mother was a cigar maker.

She made hand made cigars.

21. Ellis: Hand made cigars? She didn't work in one of the Trellas?
22. **Cheri:** Was it El Trellas? I think it was El Trellas. I'm not sure which one. I don't remember off hand which one of the tobacco companies that she worked for, but I know that's all she done. She made hand made cigars. Only for the elites.

23. **Ellis:** And she did that before she had children?

24. **Cheri:** Before any of us were born.

25. **Ellis:** And he was a printer.

26. **Cheri:** He was a printer.

27. **Ellis:** So where did he work.

28. **Cheri:** He worked for the Unity Insurance Company and that's where his business was. The Unity Insurance Company, which is no longer in existence.

29. **Ellis:** And where was that located?

30. **Cheri:** That was located on Rampart Street, outside of Rampart Street in New Orleans.

31. **Ellis:** So he was sort of in the center of things.

32. **Cheri:** That was a famous street.

33. **Ellis:** Yeah, and it was fairly active for black businesses.

34. **Cheri:** Right.
35. **Ellis:** So you grew up in the Tremane.

36. **Cheri:** I grew up in the Tremane.

37. **Ellis:** What do you remember about that neighborhood when you were growing up? What was it like then?

38. **Cheri:** As matter of a fact, that neighborhood was a wonderful neighborhood. It was a friendly neighborhood, like I said before, and it was a mixed neighborhood.

39. **Ellis:** Mixed? Oh, that's right. You told me.

40. **Cheri:** Between white and black. We didn't have any separation of the races. There was as many whites as there were blacks in the same neighborhood at that particular time.

41. **Ellis:** Did they tend to get along?

42. **Cheri:** Oh, we all did. We got along very well. As a matter of fact, on each corner within that area they had some little corner grocery store and that was operated by Italians. And they all got along very well, you know. It was, during that period of time, you know, it was during the depression era that I can remember and most of these stores had what they would call a book that they would let each household and the mama would charge on the book and after payday they would go and pay off the amount that was charged on the book. And this went on for a number of years. And each one of these stores had a way of that. They controlled just about all of the children in the neighborhood. I mean, we weren't allowed to
go and purchase just anything we wanted to. We were only allowed to get just the necessities.

43. Ellis: Oh, the store. You went shopping for your mother.

44. Cheri: Oh definitely. See, it was almost like a family. All of them knew one another. Everybody in the neighborhood knew one another. So therefore I couldn't go to the store and just buy something like candy, cake, or nothing. No. That wasn't allowed. So you were only allowed the necessities that you need. And other than that you had no other problem. We had no problem. Like I said, we went to church together. The only thing we did not go to school.

45. Ellis: Now when you went to church together did you sit in separate sections of the church?

46. Cheri: Some of the churches, yes. Some of the churches you had here they only had just the rear pews for blacks. Other churches you sat where ever there was a seat available. Like St. Louis Cathedral and all those big ones, you didn't have any special seating and certain other churches, but mostly we had our own churches. There was churches all around the area and different churches for whites and different ones for black.

47. Ellis: What was the church you went to growing up?

48. Cheri: Well, the church I went to was Saint Peter Claver.

49. Ellis: Oh, was it on Claver?

50. Cheri: No. No. No. This was on Saint Phillips Street.
51. **Ellis:** And was that a black church?

52. **Cheri:** That was a black church.

53. **Ellis:** That one happened to be separate, but some churches you knew of.

54. **Cheri:** You had synagogues too which was located on Saint Claude Street or Nicholas Street that was a mix. Primarily, there were predominately more blacks in the area around Saint Peter Claver. Now Corpus Christi, now that's predominately more, well, that's a hard one. Because of that part of the city, it was a right difficult thing for you to distinguish who was black and who was white.

55. **Ellis:** Now tell me which part of the city this was?

56. **Cheri:** That's in the 7th Ward. That's around Corpus Christi Catholic Church. And it was rather difficult for you to tell.

57. **Ellis:** Because there were so many of them?

58. **Cheri:** Yes, well, so many of them that you couldn't tell whether they were white or black ( ) families such as my family. I have a brother and a sister and the brother that passed that's as fair as you are?

59. **Ellis:** Oh really? When you say the brother that passed, you mean the brother that died.
60. **Cheri**: I have an older brother too. I have an older brother and my youngest sister and both of them are very, very fair. I don't know if you've heard of Father Cheri. Well, that's my nephew.

61. **Ellis**: Oh, I have heard of him. Father Cheri.

62. **Cheri**: Yeah, he was pastor over at Saint Francis. Well, that's my nephew. That's my oldest brother's child. And I have pictures that I can show you of them.

63. **Ellis**: Well, I'd love to see pictures. Maybe a little bit later on.

64. **Cheri**: Yeah, I'll show some of the pictures of my nieces and nephews and the rest of the family. And, I have, you know, like I said my mother passed on. She was very strict. My father died. My mother was left with six small children. As a matter of fact, my youngest had even been three years old and she educated all six of us. She never remarried and she did that until she educated all of six of us.

65. **Ellis**: Now how did she educate you? She sent you to school?

66. **Cheri**: Sent us to school and disciplined us. I mean, we had restrictions and it's not like these kids are today. We had to be there, once I left school in the afternoon I had to be at the house and I had certain chores to do even though she wasn't at the house and my oldest brother took over as the man of the house even though he wasn't but three years older than I am.

67. **Ellis**: He was about 14 or something?
68. **Cheri**: My brother was 14 years old when he took over. That's right. Exactly, 14 years old.

69. **Ellis**: What did your mother do to support the six of you?

70. **Cheri**: My mother worked for the Lamene Pano Fello Funeral Home.

71. **Ellis**: Would you say that again?

72. **Cheri**: Lamene Pano Fello Funeral Home.

73. **Ellis**: I'm going to ask you to spell that.

74. **Cheri**: What Lamene? L-a-m-e-n-e. L-a-m-e-n-e P-a-n-o F-e-l-l-o. That's a funeral home.

   They were located on Rampart Street at that particular time. Now they are located out there on the Veteran's Highway.

75. **Ellis**: So what did she do?

76. **Cheri**: She was a cook.

77. **Ellis**: Okay. So she started to work there once your father passed?

78. **Cheri**: About a year or so later I figure, you know, after my father passed.

79. **Ellis**: So that's what she did to support her family. Did you get help from anybody else?

80. **Cheri**: No.

81. **Ellis**: That was it, huh?
82. *Cheri:* No, in most cases everybody thought that my father left my mother well-off. You see, but what had happened they didn't realize it that he lost everything during the depression from what we can understand, you know. The banks folded and everything else and they lost all of that.

83. *Ellis:* So he had had some savings.

84. *Cheri:* Oh well.

85. *Ellis:* In other words, he had done fairly well for himself.

86. *Cheri:* Before that, before the crash in '29. Yeah. He was a veteran of World War I. This is just from what I gathered from you know, from my mother talking and explaining things to us.

87. *Ellis:* So nobody in the family let on that you didn't have what people thought you had.

88. *Cheri:* Right. No one. No one knew.

89. *Ellis:* Was that a matter of pride in some sense?

90. *Cheri:* I wouldn't exactly say that. Really, you know when you mention that word of pride, I know my mother had a lot of pride, but in as far as that it wasn't. No. It was just one of the things about him. My father was a very intelligent man and he had certain things that was done and certain things that was related that we found out later that it was untrue in a certain sense to us. And there were really a lot of things that we really couldn't understand, because from what I could understand, like I said he was a printer, but he was also a part of the

Emmett Chaff
United Insurance Company. Now whether he was a stockholder or what was he when he
died, I don't know. I do know that my grandfather had his own funeral home here and he
also had a print shop. So that's how my father was a spin-off from my grandfather who was a
printer and a funeral director.

91. Ellis: Your grandfather was?

92. Cheri: Yeah, he had his own funeral home, but I didn't know him. He passed away before I
was even born. So therefore, I don't know him. All of this is more or less here say and
things that we've seen. Now we've had the paraphernalia from the funeral home and the
printing shop and stuff like that, but what happened to the presses we don't know, you know,
because we were very young at that time. And not any of us had likings to become a printer
or to follow in my father's footsteps.

93. Ellis: So none of you did follow in his place.

94. Cheri: None of us. Not any of us followed in my father's footsteps.

95. Ellis: What else do you know about your grandparents?

96. Cheri: Frankly, I don't know anything about my grandparents. As a matter of fact, we tried
to find out something about them. My sister do have all these records about when he was
married, who he was married to, and when he was born or we figured that out. When he was
born, when he died, how old he was and so, and things like that, but I think they denied us for
going any further.

Emmett Cheri
97. **Ellis:** Who did?

98. **Cheri:** Well, the city. You see, I didn't think they'd allow us to go any further in the records from what I could understand and so she said she tried to inquire about it and I think they told us we had to have an attorney or something that we could go in to open the books to do this. You see, the reason for this as from what I could understand during that period of time, that was during the reconstruction era, of course, well, our grandfather, I think, was married to a white woman.

99. **Ellis:** He was, I'm sorry?

100. **Cheri:** Married to a white woman.

101. **Ellis:** Oh.

102. **Cheri:** Okay. We do know of this ...

103. **Ellis:** So your grandmother was a white woman.

104. **Cheri:** Was a white woman.

105. **Ellis:** Okay.

106. **Cheri:** And she had, what was it, eight children or ten children.

107. **Ellis:** By your grandparents?

108. **Cheri:** Uh huh.
109. **Ellis:** And your father being one of them?

110. **Cheri:** One of them. I know of her, but other than that that's about the only thing. That's all we can figure out. Well, they wouldn't let us go any further to check on it. See my sister did get a little bit further into it.

111. **Ellis:** Do you know how your grandfather died?

112. **Cheri:** No. No. No. I really don't.

113. **Ellis:** Do you ever wonder about it?

114. **Cheri:** Well, not really, because I felt it didn't have any interest to me, you know. But my sister ( ) she has all that, when certain portions of the family changed their names, and you know. They didn't exactly change their names, they just changed the spelling of their name.

115. **Ellis:** Some portion of your family?

116. **Cheri:** Oh yeah.

117. **Ellis:** Because, why?

118. **Cheri:** We haven't the faintest idea as to why, but it was in the paper. All this was documented. We saw those records. We have all this on record.

119. **Ellis:** Your family records.

120. **Cheri:** Yeah.
121. Ellis: And this was in New Orleans that your grandfather.

122. Cheri: Oh yes. My grandfather was from New Orleans. Well, actually the part we were trying to find out, was he originally in New Orleans, was he born of slave parents. This is what we were trying to find out, because I do know that he was a big man here from what I could understand from the places I worked and everything else that he was crowned by Queen Victoria for the Mason. It wasn't given to him, but he represented the Masons at that time and he was crowned by Queen Victoria. They had all of this in the Mason's Hall and all of this sort of stuff.

123. Ellis: Is that information still there?

124. Cheri: I don't know. I can't say for sure, but I do know that, you see, the older people are dead. Like my uncle and all of them passed on.

125. Ellis: And they're the ones that might know and your father would have known.

126. Cheri: Oh definitely. But the only thing about my father that I can remember my father always telling us that he didn't want any of us to become a Mason. And his father never allowed any of his sons to become Masons.

127. Ellis: Why?

128. Cheri: That's one of the things that they've never explained. So we all became Catholics.

   Everyone of us became Catholics and during that period of time a Mason could not be a
Catholic. So therefore, this is the way it was. It was beautiful, you know, to listen to some of the things and conversations that were said and talked to us by others.

129. Ellis: About your family?

130. Cherí: About my family. See, I had there was so many elderly people that knew my grandfather and they would picture him the man walks around with the derby and the cane and the broad stick pin. Very elegant fellow. Well, they claim he was a playboy and all this stuff. Yeah, well, they tell me I'm more or less like him.

131. Ellis: Oh really?

132. Cherí: Yeah. He had a great personality which I would loved to have met him. My grandfather. As a matter of fact, I only wish my grandfather would have lived long enough that we could have learned a lot more about his family. I don't know. I had an uncle that lived, he lived to be about 84 years of age. But seems everything you asked him he, it was something he looked like he just forgot completely about it.

133. Ellis: Really.

134. Cherí: Yeah, seems as though he didn't know anything about it. As a matter of fact, we have tried to find out, we asked him about his mother. What was her name? And he didn't know his mother's name.

136. **Cheri:** We found out what her name was through some research. We found out what her name was. A lot of things that you question your people, I have an uncle and he should be about 80 years old, but he come up along around about 1918 or something like that or 1914. I think he was born around 1914, between 1914 and 1918. And I know he was, my father was teaching him the trade.

137. **Ellis:** Cause your father was a lot older than he was.

138. **Cheri:** Oh yeah. My father was teaching him the trade and I do know that he was with my father. He worked in the office while we were in school. He was with my father. But later on, during the war, after the Unity Insurance Company I think folded, he went into a service that he worked for the government and that's where he retired from.

139. **Ellis:** This is your uncle?

140. **Cheri:** That's the one that's living.

141. **Ellis:** Oh, he's still living. Where is he now?

142. **Cheri:** He's in the city of New Orleans. In the uptown area. Then I had the other uncle, the oldest one, which was my daddy's oldest, he was suppose to be the oldest child. That's the one that was about 84 when he passed. And I questioned him but all he ever done was drive limousines. That's all I ever known him to do was to drive a limousine. He said he drove the hearse for his father. So I don't really know.

143. **Ellis:** Oh, for your grandfather.
For my grandfather.

What do you know about your mother's family?

Well, I know my mother had two sisters that I do know of and I had a great-aunt and
I never met my grandfather on my mother's side or either my grandmother, but I met all of
her uncles and some of her cousins.

Where were they from?

Well, my mother was originally from Paincouville and her father was from
Dorceyville. That's Bayou LaFouche. Her father was on one side of the bayou and her
mother was on the other side of the bayou. See, they were just like you cross over from one
side to the other. Dorceyville was on one side and Paincouville was on the other side. That's
all down by Bayou LaFouche. So that's where my mother was from.

What bayou?

Bayou LaFouche.

How do you spell?

Oh God knows. I don't know.

Bayou LaFouche.

Bayou LaFouche.
155.**Ellis:** Yeah, okay.

156.**Cheri:** I'm not quite sure, that's the French term.

157.**Ellis:** Do you know what people did in her family.

158.**Cheri:** Well, from what I can understand my grandfather was a railroad man and her mother was just a housewife.

159.**Ellis:** Yeah.

160.**Cheri:** What my great-uncle done, I don't know. I really don't know, but I know he was still out there in that country.

161.**Ellis:** So when did your mother come to New Orleans? Do you know?

162.**Cheri:** I really haven't the faintest. No. Now let's see. When did my mother get married. Now let's see. My brother was born in '22 and I think my mother came here. She was married two years, what, two years before they had a child. I think she was married in 1920 and I'm not sure if my mother came here in 1919 or 1920. I can't remember and I'm not quite sure. So I don't know. Then I had one aunt that lived in Chicago and she passed away. And she called down here. I had one aunt that lived up town and she died four years before my father did. So I do know her. That was my favorite aunt.

163.**Ellis:** Really?

164.**Cheri:** Oh, yes.
But you were young when she died.

But she was a favorite aunt. Yeah, she was a beautiful person.

Let me go back to where I was asking you a minute ago. Where did you go to school?

I went to school here in New Orleans? I went to Joseph A. Craig Elementary School.

What was it called?

Joseph A. Craig.

Oh yes. Okay.

Albert Wicker High and Mac Donald 35.

What was the second one that you said?

Albert Wicker. Albert Wicker Junior High.

Oh yeah.

Which is no longer in existence. They do have an Albert Wicker but it's an elementary school now.

And then you went to Mac Donald 35.
Cheri: At that particular time that was the only senior high school in the city of New Orleans, public, for blacks. Which we did have Xavier, Garnett's, and, what's the other one. I think there were three.

Ellis: Three?

Cheri: There were three of them. There was Garnett's Elbert Academy.

Ellis: So you went to Mac Donald 35. Now tell me, you grew up you said in the 6th Ward.

Cheri: In the 5th and 6th ward. Yeah.

Ellis: That's downtown.

Cheri: That is the downtown ward. That's in the downtown area. Anything below Canal Street they always call that downtown. Anything above Canal Street. Don't ask me how they call it north and south, because that should be east and west but they call it north and south.

Ellis: I know. I thought of that the first time that somebody was explaining it to me.

Cheri: I never figured it out too. Don't ask me why.

Ellis: Well, I've heard about Mac Donald 35 and that was where kids from the uptown area and kids from the downtown area first kind of met and came together.

Cheri: Even though it's across the river in Algiers all of them went to MacDonald 35. They didn't have any high school. They had elementary schools over there, but they only had one
junior high, two junior highs. They had Hoffman and Albert Wicker High. the kids from
uptown went to Hoffman and those downtown was at Albert Wicker which was on Canal and
Tutee. Which Pan American Insurance company is on those grounds now. And Gilbert's
Academy, S. D. LaSalle is on those grounds. And Claudette's is where Howard Johnson's is
on the grounds.

189.**Ellis:** Oh really. Now where was MacDonald 35?

190.**Cheri:** MacDonald 35 was on Rampart and Irandell.

191.**Ellis:** So that was sort of near you.

192.**Cheri:** Not Irandell. I'm sorry. That was, oh, I can't think of the name of that street off
hand.

193.**Ellis:** But it was sort of part of Rampart that was sort of downtown.

194.**Cheri:** No, that was in the uptown area. That was right by the L & E Railroad. It's the
street before Julian Street and I can't even think of it off hand.

195.**Ellis:** How did you get to school everyday?

196.**Cheri:** Walked.

197.**Ellis:** You walked.

198.**Cheri:** We walked every morning. Every morning and every evening.
199. **Ellis:** With your brothers and sisters?

200. **Cheri:** Well, no. Not really. I didn't walk with my brothers and sisters. As a matter of fact, my brothers was a couple of years ahead of me in school. So when I was in Albert Wicker high, they were in MacDonald 35, and by the time I got to MacDonald 35 they were graduates. See you only went to the 11th grade. We didn't have 12 grades during that period of time.

201. **Ellis:** You were saying earlier that you grew up in an integrated neighborhoods where whites and blacks got along and it just happened that you went to different schools. But you had whites friends as you were coming up.

202. **Cheri:** Oh yes. Oh sure. That's who I played with.

203. **Ellis:** Did you ever talk about the fact that you went to separate schools? Did you ever sort of?

204. **Cheri:** Well, I think that was instilled into you as a child. You know your parents told you which you could do and which you couldn't.

205. **Ellis:** What did your parents tell you? What do you remember?

206. **Cheri:** I really, truthfully, like I said, I don't remember my mother. She never actually said anything as far as I can understand, but I get it from being in the streets and playing with others and other people. You knew the difference and you understood what was going on.
You had that respect. Well, that's the only thing they'd tell us. We had respect for our elders regardless of what color they was.

207. Ellis: This was one thing you knew.

208. Cheri: That's one thing. Any one of them could chastise you or reprimand you for anything. So therefore, that's one of the things. Show that respect.

209. Ellis: Could black adults and parents reprimand white kids?

210. Cheri: Sure. Oh, there wasn't no difference. It didn't make any difference. It didn't make any difference. If you were caught doing something wrong, no matter what color you was or who it was, as long as it was an elderly person that caught you, don't care what color you were. You were chastised.

211. Ellis: Do you remember what other people, what other white families and black families did for a living? How they were able to live.

212. Cheri: Well, most of them, like I said, the ones that I knew, they were either firemens.

213. Ellis: I'm sorry?

214. Cheri: Firemens or policemen or they had a little store. Some of them that I knew had taken in sewing. That's about it. I didn't know anything else personally. All I knew is like I said, most of the men that I knew most of them were firemens or policemen. I didn't know whether they worked in department stores or what. All the salesmen I don't hardly remember.
215. **Ellis:** It's interesting what you're saying about how there are certain things you just kind of knew. I mean it's interesting to me in a sense how and in some sense indescribable how kids learn the rules as far as what you do and what you don't do. And I think I've sort of asked people do you remember what you were told and it's sort of like, I don't remember really necessarily being told anything, but you just kind of.

216. **Cheri:** That's right. That's right. Really, you were really not told. During that period of time, it was you just move along with the group. You followed what others were doing. So I guess, you know, you understood that.

217. **Ellis:** Do you ever remember a time of questioning it? Of asking, like, say you were, I don't know if you ever did, but say you were going to ride the street car with your mother and you had to sit in the back of course. Do you remember ever saying why?

218. **Cheri:** Not really. Let's put it this way. During my time, you wasn't too good at questioning your parents. You only asked certain questions and they had better be the right ones. Because you were not allowed to be in the same conversation with the elder men. That's why a lot of black families as well as white families there they lost a lot because the older people didn't confide in their children. Like we do today. We let them know just about what's going on and what's here and what's there. And they didn't do that. That was not for you to know, you know. You have time for this, you know. Strange as it might seem we didn't have as much pregnancy as they have today.

219. **Ellis:** Have as much pregnancy you said?
Cheri: That's right, because, you know. They didn't explain nothing to a child. They never explained nothing to a young girl. The fathers never sat down and talked to the young man. But today they have all this and yet I can't understand why it's like it is. We never had the problems like we have today. We did have fights. Yeah, we fought each other. We fought. The blacks and the whites fought against each other in different parts of the city. We fought one another. We played together. It was just like any typical American kid. We was all the same. We had restrictions. We had certain things that we know we was suppose to do, what we couldn't do. We had police officers that patrolled the area which we didn't have any black policemen at that particular time, but still and all, we knew most of the policemen that was in that particular area and we knew what we were doing wrong. It didn't make any difference how old you was. You knew when you were doing wrong and you'd try to get away with it, but most of the time you did. But if they caught you, then sometimes they would strap you and they'd bring you home.

Ellis: You mean the police would?

Cheri: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. But you didn't want him to bring you home.

Ellis: Because you'd get it worse from your parents?

Cheri: Oh, you had better believe that.

Ellis: Let me stay in the precinct.

Cheri: Well, they wouldn't never take you down. They wouldn't never take you to the precinct, unless you had to do something real bad. He would spank you. Wouldn't try to hurt
you in that certain sense but just to let you know that he was an authority. My father probably would have killed me if I had a went to jail. Dared him. He didn't believe in that. There was no need for that. You know, you always said he would do the best he could. He would always try to provide for us. That's the way it. I can't complain about my life. I had a wonderful life, a wonderful child's life, you know. The only trouble that I got into was the trouble I put myself in. And I've never had to go to jail, or be picked up by an officer. I did not learn from some of the older people, but I've been around certain areas. I've learned certain things. They have taught me well. Those elderly people that was doing certain things that they knew was wrong. I never jumped in that. If they would catch us doing that they would kill us, break our necks. So it wasn't worthwhile for us to do it. A lot of things that they were telling us I didn't understand what they were saying until I reached this age now, but at that particular time I didn't never know what in the world they were talking about.

227. Ellis: Like what?

228. Cheri: Well, like they were using drugs.

229. Ellis: Older people?


231. Ellis: In your community?

232. Cheri: Right. But they wasn't like these kids are today. You didn't even know that. You didn't even see that. You didn't never know that they were doing this.
233. **Ellis:** What kind of drugs?

234. **Cheri:** Well, the one that after I reached a certain age, he was using heroin, because he used to tell me....

235. **Ellis:** He was an older, an older person in your community.

236. **Cheri:** Oh yeah. A very good looking guy. He used to always tell us and we never could figure him out, why a handsome fellow like that would care. But he used to tell us all the time that he would pay $3 a day for something to eat and never use a spoon. And we never could figure out what that was. So then we went to what we called the Dago Grocery Store. It was an Italian grocery store that we used. And we had to go over there at nights. But Tony, what are you talking about. And most of the time he would chase us out of his store because the stuff was always laying around there. So why don't we just stand up there and ask him. So he told us what it was.

237. **Ellis:** He told you? About how old were you when he told you?

238. **Cheri:** I must have been around about, what, when he told me that, must have been about 12 years old.

239. **Ellis:** And he said to you this man is using drugs.

240. **Cheri:** Well, he just told us what he was. It was a drug. He didn't tell us what it was, just told us that he was a drug addict. We knew, we knew they had addicts. We knew they had drug addicts cause you heard it so much, you know. So that's what it was. Oh, we didn't
know what he was using. We had heard of, we knew of cigarettes, you know, that these guys were smoking marijuana, well we knew it. Well, they didn't call it marijuana at that time. It was known as weeds. So we knew what that was, but I mean.

241.Ellis: And these were just people in your community?


243.Ellis: Did you see them doing it or was it just that you knew the people were doing it?

244.Cheri: Oh, no. That's what I said. No. No. We didn't know. This is what they told us.

No. No. Like I said. I have never witnessed anyone of them ever using it. I've never even seen any of them smoke the cigarette. Only from what they've told us.

245.Ellis: The older people actually told you what they were doing?

246.Cheri: They told us, yeah.

247.Ellis: And they told you not to do it.

248.Cheri: Not to do it and what they would do to us, that's when we were small, you know. And wanted us to stay in school. And over at Joseph A. Craig School, I can remember, we had a principal which the school was right across the street. It's named after her, Mary Dora Cargile. She was a principal.

249.Ellis: What was her last name again?

250.Cheri: Cargile.

252. Cheri: She was principal of Joseph A. Craig School and these men would congregate on that corner and if they were making noise, she would come to the front of that school and clap her hands. And that was the end of it.

253. Ellis: They'd leave.

254. Cheri: Would they! You had better believe it. They all had that respect for her.

255. Ellis: When you say men, do you mean men in their 20s?

256. Cheri: Oh yes. I'm talking about full grown.

257. Ellis: As opposed to men in their 40s or something.

258. Cheri: They were just elderly fellows, you know, 21, 23 years of age.

259. Ellis: That's where they congregated.

260. Cheri: Just somewhere they congregated on the corner and they were making a little bit too much noise and they could hear it because we had no air condition at that time so the windows would be open into the school room. I wouldn't exactly say it was anything obscene or in the way of obscenity, but they were just gathering. They were making too much noise and they probably were disturbing the kids and they were dispersed without any problems. And also they wouldn't, they had shrubs all around the school, well kept, and they wouldn't allow you to go in there ( ). No sir you don't destroy nothing in there. If you drop
a piece of paper on that ground, you pick it up. That's the way it was during that time compared to what it is today. I told my sister, I passed around her neighborhood Saturday because we were singing that night in Armstrong Park.

261. **Ellis:** You were? On Saturday you were?

262. **Cheri:** Saturday. We was at Armstrong Park.

263. **Ellis:** Oh, the ( ) Festival.

264. **Cheri:** Yeah. That was that gym team.

265. **Ellis:** Yeah. I went there later on.

266. **Cheri:** Yeah. Well, we sang for that. We sang around about 4:00.

267. **Ellis:** Okay. We missed you. Well, anyway.

268. **Cheri:** Now where the Armstrong Park is, exactly where they have the building that's where my mother's house was.

269. **Ellis:** Oh, you lived in that block.

270. **Cheri:** Right there. Right there. I lived on Tremane and ( ). Right opposite the ( ) Club. They tore that house down for that, to put up the park.

271. **Ellis:** So you were just saying that when you were with, I think you said you were with your sister singing at the park this Saturday.
272.**Cheri:** Yeah. I just visit the area. The Tremane, the old Tremane where I was living at and I seen, oh by God, all the dilapidated houses and all of them boarded up. The people. The people are so different and so strange. I don't believe they are the original people that was born and raised in the city of New Orleans.

273.**Ellis:** So they're different?

274.**Cheri:** Oh my God! Like night and day.

275.**Ellis:** Describe some of the differences.

276.**Cheri:** Oh, everything. To upkeeps of the house, upkeep of the neighborhood, the people. You didn't have that kind of a set up where you'd see people hanging all over. We didn't have that, you know. There were people that sat out, you know, because like I say, during that period of time there was no air condition. Very few people had money enough to buy a fan. So nights when it was hot like that they would be outside. And at one time they could keep their front door open and they would sit in their front door or they would open windows or something like that. But, oh my God, today is, gee whiz. That's pitiful trash. It's a refuge right there and they're throwing trash on the street. I've never see that. Destroy everything. Doors on it are just falling apart. It never was like that. And I asked him, I don't understand that. We had respect and we all tried to out do one another.

277.**Ellis:** Really?

278.**Cheri:** Oh definitely. In our neighborhood everybody tried to, we had steps and see whose steps was the cleanest or whose steps was the whitest. I mean, this was a challenge and it
was a pride thing that you had, but look at that neighborhood now. My goodness gracious. Even where the funeral home was it's all dilapidated. When the funeral home moves it, then it's a terrible neighborhood. Well, they tried to bring it back. This is what ( ) and all this is all about to bring back the old Tremane. But there' so much of that drugs that's being distributed around in that area right now. It's just terrible and you have the pastor from St. Peter Claver which is trying to do the best he can right now, you know.

279. **Ellis:** To revive the neighborhood?

280. **Cheri:** Who you going to get to come back into it?

281. **Ellis:** I'm sorry?

282. **Cheri:** Who would come back into that area or who would go back into that area the way it looks right now? Who would try to invest anything into that area? You wouldn't invest $30,000 or $40,000 into an area that's not even worth $5.

283. **Ellis:** It's too bad because it's right across from the French Quarter.

284. **Cheri:** Well, it's not far from the Quarter, but the idea is you had the Tremane which is a beautiful area. It's an old area. It's got history to it. It's got a lot of history to the Tremane. Congo Square had a heck of a lot. Where you're heading right now where Tremane is they had Beauregard Square and you had Congo Square which is one and the same from what I can understand. They had a big beautiful swimming pool there at that particular time. The reason for them closing it is because of the integration. But before that time there was a big swimming.

Emmett Chedi
285. **Ellis:** They closed the pool during integration?

286. **Cheri:** Yeah. It was strictly for whites at one time. See, there was MacDonald 22 or MacDonald something or another. There was a school that was on Saint Anne and Saint Claude that was for whites. Elementary school. Right opposite there was the park which we called the Beauregard Square or Congo Square. The pool was there and they could go swimming during the summer time. Play ball and do everything. We wasn't allowed to go in it. Well, you could walk to the pool, but you could not stay. You could stop and watch them do it, playing or swimming, but you were not allowed to go into the pool or nothing like that. And that was right where the Municipal Auditorium is right there. It was right behind the Municipal Auditorium. And then they closed that pool and then they closed the one on Dense City Mall.

287. **Ellis:** They closed those pools during integration.

288. **Cheri:** They didn't want the blacks into the pool.

289. **Ellis:** So they closed the pools.

290. **Cheri:** I'm not sure. I know that pool, the one that's in City Park was closed under the new administration of Skee Room. I don't know when Beauregard Square, I don't know if it was under his administration.

291. **Ellis:** What did you make of when you'd go by the park and you'd see a white kid swimming and you knew that you couldn't. I mean, how did you?
292. **Cheri:** You felt a little, you felt different. You wonder why, you know, why you couldn't, but you never questioned it. See, they did have a pool, they did have a pool, but it was not a pool, we didn't have a pool out in this area, but they did have a pool up in the uptown area at Tomy LaFone School. Had a swimming pool, you see.

293. **Ellis:** Oh, so that was the black swimming pool.

294. **Cheri:** Yeah. Oh yeah. Now they had one, I don't remember if they had it at the Y, but I do know that they had it up there at Tomy LaFone, but we didn't have any one down in this area. No, no swimming pools.

295. **Ellis:** Even though there was a large black population in that area.

296. **Cheri:** Oh yes. Yes.

297. **Ellis:** So you sort of feel different inside.

298. **Cheri:** You felt a little different, yeah. There was nothing much you could do about it. And if you went up there to Tomy LaFone which was up at where the pool was you more or less had to fight most of the time. But it's like little gang fights, you know.

299. **Ellis:** Oh really?

300. **Cheri:** Oh yeah. Because there's nothing up around Shakespeare Park and all in there. So you just had to have a little fight which was the normal thing. If the white fellows were up at the Irish Channel and they'd come to ours down at say Midgette Fields around what we used
Emmett Cheri
35
to call the fire station. Those white guys there, we run them all the way back up there. They
had to do some running.

301. **Ellis:** So the white guys would run back.

302. **Cheri:** Would run the other white fellows. If they come from out.

303. **Ellis:** Okay. The white Irish fellows.

304. **Cheri:** Anyone, if they come from a different area.

305. **Ellis:** I see. It was like a territorial.

306. **Cheri:** Right. Right. Right. It didn't make any difference. It wasn't like where these kids
are now, going out there and shooting one another. Now they did have a few cuttings, and
stabbings and something like that, but nothing fatal. But like it is today, you can't walk
outside your house. Then you had all your theaters. That's another thing. We, the theaters,
they were all in the neighborhood, but the whites were sitting down stairs and you sitting up.
You could go to the theaters on Canal Street, but you still had to walk up millions of steps.
They didn't have what you would consider just an all black theater or an all white theater.
All they wanted was a Singer Theater. The Singer Theater which is on Canal Street right
now. The Singer. Well, the Singer Theater is the only one that was predominately white.
They didn't allow no blacks in there at all during that period of time. But like all the rest of
them, the Opium, the Lowell States, and all the other theaters all around the city, you know,
the blacks was up and the whites were down.

Emmett Chë6
Emmett Cheri: How was that?

Ellis: Well, that's the way they had it set up and they want you to be together, to sit together, but it's all right if you were up above or below because they were separated in a certain sense.

Ellis: Did you ever go to the theater with some white people and then just get inside and one go, you go to the top part and the white friends go to the bottom.

Cheri: I don't remember if I ever went to that theater, we walked to the theater and then one went up. I don't remember. I don't remember. As a matter of fact, I read an article about Charlie Caruso in there, but I don't remember if they went to, which theater they went to. ( ) and the one on Rampart Street and the one on Claborne Street. Really, I can't even remember then.

Ellis: So when you went to the theater and you'd go to the top part did you have the same kind of feeling that you had when you went to the swimming pool.

Cheri: Not really. Not really. Not really. We knew that. The whites were downstairs. The blacks was upstairs. So it didn't really, that didn't have nothing. We knowed we was seeing the same thing. So I guess really that had no bearings. Nothing at all. But sometimes when we questioned the fact that what is the difference? What's the difference. I mean we all have the same books. We have the same teaching and everything. Why, many times we used to wonder about that, why. You know, we played together, and you know, sometime we wondered why.
313. **Ellis:** Why you had to be separated?

314. **Cheri:** Yeah. Well, a lot of things when you small, real small, you was wondering, you know, why she's this color and why is it not this color and why is it texture here, why have this kind of. And it creates a wave.

315. **Ellis:** Uh huh. ( )

316. **Cheri:** Just faded away, because who you going to question. You couldn't go to your parents and ask them questions like that, you know. So, you know, it just faded away.

317. **Ellis:** I heard something earlier when we were talking on the phone that was interesting to me. As you were just saying, you didn't think that much about it when you were growing up, but then when you were older you said that you started to think about it. I got the feeling from what you said that you were more conscious of it or something. I guess what I'm asking is was there a sort of shift in the way that you thought about segregation or what you know about it.

318. **Cheri:** Well, you say I shifted in the way I felt. That's probably true. Today I'm, well, I will be 70, you look at it and you're saying, why in the world that things couldn't be like it is today than it was yesterday. You see what I'm saying? What I'm trying to say is that what's the difference? There is no difference as far as the races is concerned. We'd be together now. You haven't done anything. You haven't caused any complications. So is that during that period of time they had to change the races. And then when I was reading, doing reconstruction, you had that. What we're having today, you had that during reconstruction.

Emmett Cheri
So then you had another period. You had a period of slavery, then reconstruction, then you had segregation, and now you got the de-segregation.

319. TAPE ONE -- SIDE B

320. Ellis: .... that's what you had just said. You had just said wouldn't the world be a better place. Wouldn't it have been a better place then if you had what we have today.

321. Cheri: Right. Because, I mean, you know. People at that particular time there was so much hatred. I guess to those people. Like I said we didn't care. I've never had that, to carry that kind of a hate.

322. Ellis: The white people....

323. Cheri: Well, some of them. Well, let's put it this way, you figure New Orleans, like I told you over the telephone, we lived in all four corners of the city of New Orleans. Okay. This is not like Baton Rouge or Shreveport or any of the others where the blacks on one side of the tracks. We lived all over the entire city of New Orleans. So therefore you could understand. You had white people all over. So naturally we all went together which we had a problem with most of the people from northern Louisiana because they didn't appreciate the way we was and the way we got along.

324. Ellis: You mean like whites.

325. Cheri: Whites. They didn't like this the way things were going there.

326. Ellis: So the whites would come in from out of town.
Cheri: Well, they would have their says. You know, like you shouldn't had let this one be. This black person should be here. This black person should be talking to you. Something like that. Those things was crazy. But this is one of the things like I said, I person that was originally born and reared in the city of New Orleans during that period of time I'd say from 1918 up until 1950, original people. We had no problems. I could go next door there and tell the lady, look, my mama said she needed a cup of sugar.

Ellis: And she was a white woman.

Cheri: She was a white. Or they'll come over and ask my mother for it. It didn't make any difference. I would remember the lady and that the lady was next door to me when her husband took sick. My mother was over there. They were over there. They helped one another. They lived together. But now you know. Well, I can understand more. The white people had moved out of the neighborhood after certain people moved into the neighborhood. I don't fault them.

Ellis: You don't? Why not?

Cheri: Well, I mean you look at some of the people that come in here. Look at that area that I was telling you about.

Ellis: The Tremane.

Cheri: That's right. Look how they destroyed it. They care less about it.

Ellis: Now when you said they, you're talking about black people.
335. **Cheri:** Black people. Black people. I'm talking about black people. That's what's in that area. There isn't any white people in there and it's not to say that when the white people walked out of there that they left that in that condition. No. When they walked away from it, those were beautiful homes. Well kept homes. And then when they walked away, that's because, you take the projects. They have one of the beautifullest things, especially this one that's right over here, the Desire Project.

336. **Ellis:** What's it called?

337. **Cheri:** Desire.

338. **Ellis:** Desire Project. Uh huh.

339. **Cheri:** The one that have all the problems there. They had the most beautiful things in the world in there. The flowers in that place. They was out of sight.

340. **Ellis:** So you saw all of this as it was coming and was developed.

341. **Cheri:** Oh, gee. I remembered every one of them. Now the LaFeet Project was the best. Now this one here, it's about one of the only projects that's left in the city of New Orleans that's half way decent.

342. **Ellis:** LaFeet?

343. **Cheri:** LaFeet. But, all the rest of them. My God! Who destroyed it? The people destroyed it.
Ellis: Why do you think that is?

Cheri: I haven't the faintest idea why. If you have hostility, you don't take it out on that. Take your frustration out elsewhere. Don't destroy. I walked into one of them there and I questioned one of the fellows about the house, the project. And I said why is it you have a wall with a hole in it like that. He tell me, both of the kids want to go through the door at the same time and they couldn't go through. So he went through a wall. I asked a question, what did you do about it. Didn't do nothing about it. Now would I want him to be in my house. Would I want his family to be living in my house. No. If he did that, I mean, he wouldn't care whether he walked through the walls. These are the things when you look at it a lot of people want to say that hey, they didn't get this to the black person, they didn't do this for the black person. This world doesn't owe anybody anything. you got to get out there and do it. I've made a living for myself. My mother struggled and educated six of us. I struggled and I sent all five of my kids through school. Everyone of them. Everyone of them. They all got college degrees. There was no other one. My wife never worried about, my wife never worked. In the thirty years that we stayed together, she never worked.

Ellis: What was your occupation? When you got out of high school, what did you do?

Cheri: When I got out of high school, I went into the service. And when I got out of service I worked for Liutz Ehen Funeral Home for the first portion of it.

Ellis: You did what?

Cheri: I worked for Liutz Ehen Funeral Home.
350. Ellis: What was the name of the funeral home?

351. Cheri: Liutz Ehen.

352. Ellis: The Liutz Ehen.

353. Cheri: And then after that I went with a little parcel service and then I went in the trucking industry. I worked for Herrin Transportation Company and McLean Trucking Company.

That's where I retired from. McLean Trucking Company.

354. Ellis: Did you drive a truck?

355. Cheri: Yes. I was an 18 wheeler.

356. Ellis: Really. So you probably traveled a lot.

357. Cheri: Well, well, at that time when I first started out there they didn't allow blacks on the road out there.

358. Ellis: What year was that that you started?


360. Ellis: And they didn't allow blacks on the road.

361. Cheri: No. See, there wasn't any accommodations for blacks on the road. You went, but, I mean, you was on your on. And you know, most companies didn't want you to go through the back doors and all this kind of stuff.
The companies did not want you to do that.

No. No. Because you know that could create a problem.

What do you mean?

Well, I mean, you know, you driving a truck and you park the truck, then you have to come through the back door to get something, you know. Something like that. You weren't allowed in none of the truck stops to do anything. It was in 1970, in 1960, 1970, they let you on the road and you was over the road. Then you didn't have too much problem out of them.

1960 you say.


That's when you started.

I started running on the road.

And that was when it became profitable for black people to go up to the front door.

Yeah, you could go in the front door.

And use the facilities.

Use the facilities.

Stay in a hotel.
375. **Cheri:** Right or whatever it was and then you were served. Some places you still had a little problem, but at the majority of the places you didn't have any problem.

376. **Ellis:** Do you remember having problems?

377. **Cheri:** No I don't. No, no problems.

378. **Ellis:** But there were problems.

379. **Cheri:** Oh there were problems. Well, when they first started off, when they first started, when they changed it over here in the city of New Orleans where you were allowed to go into any place any one of the restaurants, you had a little problem once in awhile. You would run into some of the sort of fellows, you know, even the other white fellows called rednecks. They didn't believe in, you know. You had a problem with them. But you didn't have, most of the time you would go into a place like that you would be together with white and black. We would go into the restaurants very seldom. They would give you a little sass some of them.

380. **Ellis:** A little scare you say.

381. **Cheri:** Oh, they wouldn't stare at you. Some of them wouldn't even serve you, especially the one that was out here on Frenchmen and Gentile. She would use derogatory remarks.

382. **Ellis:** Would she? When you'd go there.

383. **Cheri:** Oh yes indeed she would.
384. **Ellis:** What did she say to you?

385. **Cheri:** She'd call you all kinds of names. She would call you a nigger just like that. We don't serve niggers in here and all of that. Just right in front of you.

386. **Ellis:** And you, this was a restaurant.

387. **Cheri:** Yeah.

388. **Ellis:** And you'd go in there with white people?

389. **Cheri:** Oh yeah.

390. **Ellis:** And what would you do when she did that?

391. **Cheri:** Most of the time you would ignore her and go on about your business. Okay, it's your restaurant. You have that right. Cause they have a sign up there. They have the right to refuse service to anyone.

392. **Ellis:** And they exercised that right.

393. **Cheri:** So it was their right. So it didn't make any difference. They would walk right on out and we'd all go some place else. It didn't matter.

394. **Ellis:** Now was this in the 1960s, that you're describing this?

395. **Cheri:** Yeah. This was right after integration. This was before '60.

396. **Ellis:** Before, like in the '50s.
397. **Cheri**: Yeah, that's what I'm talking about.

398. **Ellis**: Did you experience more of that, more insults like that when there was segregation? Did you have more experiences of having white people do?

399. **Cheri**: No. No, not really. There was only a selected few that would come. Well, see one of the things about it that most people felt that doing that, that was a slap in the face and they would fight. No matter what. It would be a slap in the face to call you out of your name, you know, and call you that. That was room for a fight and rather than to go through all of this, no, they didn't do it. They didn't. They did it more afterwards than they did before. The only ones that would call you like that would be the police officers.

400. **Ellis**: The police officers?

401. **Cheri**: Oh yes. They was to come, they would never call you. They'd either call you boy or call you a nigger or something like that.

402. **Ellis**: What, when you were coming up?

403. **Cheri**: Oh yeah. When I was coming up. That's the police and they had little respect for the families.

404. **Ellis**: You mean for the black families.

405. **Cheri**: Some white families too. Oh yeah. It all depends on what the area they was in. They didn't have the respect. Well, really truthfully most policemens was ignorant. They were ignorant. They didn't have an education, but because they were white they got the jobs.
And this family member, I know this family member who know this chief, and then they just put them right on. They couldn't even pass a test. That's the way it was in the city.

406. Ellis: So you're saying that when you were coming up, when you were first talking earlier about growing up in your neighborhood when you were young the policemen knew people in the family.

407. Cheri: They knew them. They knew them.

408. Ellis: I sort of got the feeling that there was a sort of family relationship there in a sense. I mean, you knew who the policemen were. They knew you.

409. Cheri: Oh yeah. Most of the policemen lived right in the neighborhood.

410. Ellis: But now, so are these the same policemen you're saying that had no respect for.

411. Cheri: Some of them. Some of them.

412. Ellis: So some of them were insulting.

413. Cheri: Oh, yes.

414. Ellis: When you were growing up?

415. Cheri: Right. Right. Not all of them. It's just like it is today, you know. Not all of them. Some of them were very respectful. I mean, you know, they'll come to you and talk to just like you, you know, and they wanted you to respect them and they respected you. But others, you can't please.
416. **Ellis:** And others.

417. **Cheri:** They just came along and it didn't make any difference what they'd said or who they said it to.

418. **Ellis:** They would call you boy or they'd call you?

419. **Cheri:** Oh, anything. It wouldn't make any difference. It wouldn't make any difference to them.

420. **Ellis:** Related to that, did you ever grow up feeling that you needed to watch yourself around police in particular, because otherwise they could hurt you. I mean.

421. **Cheri:** Oh, I know. Yes. Yes. You knew how to conduct yourself around the police officers. Some of them. Now, some of them. Sometimes they were very nice, you know, and if they were by their self, you know, but we never did really take advantage of any of them. But there was one policeman, there was a bunch of guys. They were pretty rough, but they, you know, mischievous and everything else. So we called him Sergeant Robina.

422. **Ellis:** Robina?

423. **Cheri:** I think that was his name anyway. We had Mr. George. We used to call him Mr. George because he was always the police officer at the dance, every dance that we'd give, public dance, Mr. George would be at the dance. Well, at 12:00, see all dances ended at 12:00 on a Sunday night and Mr. George would be the first one to leave. Mr. George would board the street car and forget about it. But he was a nice police officer. If you didn't have
no money, most of the time he'd give you that little money to go into the dance. Fifty cents or whatever it was. He'd pay for you to go in. You didn't even have to pay. All he had to do was just walk up there and let you go into the dance, but he would give you the money and all. But he was real nice.

Ellis: So he was a nice man.

Cheri: He was a real nice guy. Now Sergeant Robina was not a bad guy. He had the baseball team and everything around there, but it was just that these guys were, mischief, you know. The policemen was nice, but the fellows in the neighborhood was just kids.

Ellis: And so they would antagonize them.

Cheri: Oh, definitely. They'll throw rocks at him. They'll do all sorts of things. At the policemens. No, the black mens would take and throw the rocks and see, the policeman was there. He was all right. The black dudes would. It was ( ) kids.

Ellis: And they would antagonize him.

Cheri: And that would make him, get to him.

Ellis: Okay, but tell me about the other fights. About policemen who might abuse you. I mean, when I was asking you a minute ago about when I said did you ever feel that you had to conduct yourself in a certain way around policemen, because they could take advantage of you. And so you knew that.

Cheri: Right.
432. **Ellis:** So you had friends and you knew people, black men, who would sort of be mischievous. But as far as, I guess I'm trying to get a sense of this. What did you, I get the feeling that you almost knew.

433. **Cheri:** Yeah, you knew not to antagonize the policemen and not to do anything that would set him off. Oh, you mean whether he would be abusive to me? Oh, no. I never had the experience of that.

434. **Ellis:** I guess I'm asking in a sense what was the code of conduct among, was their a code of conduct in some sense among blacks at least with something ( ). And I guess I'm asking what that was. What did you know, even if you never said, what did you know that you needed to do or not do around the policeman.

435. **Cheri:** Well, one of the things about it you knew you had to respect him for one thing.

Okay. And when I'm saying that, don't just think that when you were close enough to a policeman, doing things such as using obscene language.

436. **Ellis:** You wouldn't do that around them.

437. **Cheri:** You wouldn't do that around them. You wouldn't disrespect or say something to some elderly person or to a white person, especially a young lady.

438. **Ellis:** A young white woman.

439. **Cheri:** Yeah. A young white woman. You knew better.

440. **Ellis:** Right. But at that time you and I would not, probably, meet in the same room.
Emmett Cheri

441. Cheri: Well, I wouldn't exactly say we would be in the same room, but we would be in the public. Like this. This wouldn't happen then. No. No. We would never be together in public.

442. Ellis: So, if a white woman passed you on the street in your neighborhood.

443. Cheri: She could speak to you.

444. Ellis: Yeah. Okay.

445. Cheri: But it wouldn't be no problem. There wouldn't be no problem, because the females that you know you probably would call by name and call each other. so they know that you were a part of that neighborhood.

446. Ellis: So we might know each other.

447. Cheri: We might know each other. But as for you to go out of the neighborhood and you would speak to some one or to bump into a white woman or something of this nature, then you could have a problem.

448. Ellis: Right. So when you left the neighborhood.

449. Cheri: Once you left the neighborhood that's when you had to be careful about who you talked to and where you went and what you were doing.

450. Ellis: What would you do? I mean, would you just kind of look away?
451. **Cheri**: I don't know. I guess you just knew how to conduct yourself and they knew how to conduct them self. They wouldn't put themselves in a position where you would come in contact with them or you wouldn't put yourself in a position to come in contact with them unless you just had to. Like the fellow that was delivering the groceries or stuff like that, he'd come in contact, but, you know, some of them wouldn't allow you to come inside their house. Some of them, you know, wanted you to go no further than to the front door. Some didn't even want you to come to the front door. They wanted you to go to the rear. And all this kind of stuff. You knew this, because when I was in school I worked in a grocery store and I had that kind of problem.

452. **Ellis**: What kind of problem?

453. **Cheri**: Well, one day I'd bring the groceries there and they'd tell me to bring them to the back and she'll say put them in the kitchen. I do that and the next time they wouldn't even let me come in the door. (phone interruption)

454. **Ellis**: So when you went back, you went into the kitchen to deliver the groceries. The next time you went back to the house.

455. **Cheri**: The man would be in there and he said I told you I don't want you coming into my house. Now the wife had already told me what she wanted me to do. She didn't want me to come to the front door. She wanted me to come in the back. Told me over the telephone. Said put the groceries on the table.

456. **Ellis**: So this was her husband?

Emmett Cheri
Emmett Cheri: That was her husband. The next he'll come in there when I was standing at the door. Then I'll knock at the back door and he'll come. Well, boy, you know better than that. Put the groceries on the table. Well, see you had to understand this and lots of times I would go back to the store and I would tell the owner about it. He said, you don't pay no attention to him. I said, no, it don't worry me.

Ellis: Was the store owner white or black?

Cheri: Uh huh. He was white.

Ellis: He was white.

Cheri: Mostly all of those little grocery stores was all owned by Italians. Then we had one German that had a grocery store. You don't let that bother you. Most of the time you just overlook that. Some of them I used to go tell early in the morning. They had their milk and donuts and stuff like that. I would deliver that to them.

Ellis: To white folks?

Cheri: Yeah. Very few blacks I delivered to. Very, very few blacks. Most black people, they didn't buy that much groceries in the first place because they didn't have the money. So most of these were more or less the whites that had husbands that was working. Whatever they were doing, they would get paid at least maybe once a month or every two weeks or something like that. They would make enough groceries to help keep her over to the next pay day and I would deliver that to them. Because everything was at the little stores, you know. They didn't have these supermarkets or nothing like that.
464. **Ellis:** They didn't have those big places.

465. **Cheri:** No. No. They was all just little corner grocery store. They had one on each corner.

        There was a grocery store.

466. **Ellis:** Did the shop owners treat you pretty well?

467. **Cheri:** Shop owners? What do you mean, the department stores like?

468. **Ellis:** No. I meant the little grocery stores.

469. **Cheri:** Little grocery stores? Just like I said, little grocery stores had interest in you, because they all know you.

470. **Ellis:** What about the department stores?

471. **Cheri:** Now the department stores was another thing. The only thing that you were allowed to do in the department stores was be a porter. You were not allowed to be a salesperson.

        Now I've heard in certain stores they didn't allow them to try on any clothes or try a hat on or anything of that nature, but I've never experienced that ( ). I worked for a shoe store in the business district. I worked for that just before going in to the service, because it was hard, it was very hard finding a job.

472. **Ellis:** Really?

473. **Cheri:** Oh yes, indeed. And that time I was making as much as, an average man was making $10 a week.
474. Ellis: Really? An average black man you mean or an average man?

475. Cheri: An average man, period!

476. Ellis: In New Orleans was making $10 a week. Around when? What year was that?

477. Cheri: Oh, this was 1939, 1938, '39, and '40, '41. And in 1945, a man was making $25 a week and that was top salary.

478. Ellis: Really. And that was doing what?

479. Cheri: That was 1945. Right after World War II.

480. Ellis: And what were you doing?

481. Cheri: At that particular time, I was working for Liutz Ehen at that time, but in the beginning I was working for Red Goose Shoe Store.

482. Ellis: Okay. Liutz Ehen. That was the funeral home.

483. Cheri: In 1938 and 1939, I was working for Red Goose Shoe Store and I was making $10 a week. And in 1945 I was working for Liutz Ehen Funeral Home. I got out of the service in October 24, 1945 and I went to work for them in November of '45, because I wanted to keep active ( ). And as far as going back to school, I don't know why I didn't go back to school which I don't have any regrets and sometimes I do, you know. Many a times I sit down here. I'm doing nothing since I retired and I say, oh, I should go and register to go back to school. Why don't I go. I went up to the school once and then I decided I said, oh. I never was
ashamed. I always felt this job was competitive enough that I could be competitive enough to challenge any youngster sitting there. I don't know. I gave it up. I'm 70 years of age and I know that my thinking capacity has reached its fullness. I don't believe that computer can work any longer.

484. Ellis: Let me ask you about World War II. Where did you go during World War II, were you stationed overseas?

485. Cheri: Oh yes. I was in the European Theater. Okay. So I landed in Glasgow, Scotland. Then I was in South Hampton, England, and then I landed in Normandy Beach Head. Then we went all the way in through St. Lou, Lorene, Paris, all the way. Belgium.

486. Ellis: How was that?

487. Cheri: Really. When I study it, I talk to a lot of people. I can show you a lot of pictures. I never realized anything.

488. Ellis: What do you mean you never realized anything.

489. Cheri: I never realized there was any danger. I felt as though this was just a game. I don't know why, you know. I realized later on this is really the reality, you know.

490. Ellis: Many people did die.

491. Cheri: Oh yeah. And I look in there and see the destructions and everything else. And then I went in, I think the hardest was when I was in ( ), France, they changed us from one unit to
And I was driving a truck and I fell off the mountain. Came right straight down off of the mountain and there was ice all around me.

Ellis: In a truck?

Cheri: Yeah. And I stayed there cold, freezing. Well, they came, they got me. And I told them I said, acted like I had a job. I told them I'd quit.

Ellis: Say that again. If you had a job.

Cheri: Like I had a job. I was quitting this job, but I'm in the service. And I told them I wasn't driving that truck any more, because I fell off that mountain, off that icy mountain. I didn't have any experience on driving on ice and snow and all of this kind of stuff. Never had seen it, so. But after that I went into Tulle, France. From Tulle, France, and after that I went into. What place was that. I don't remember, but I should remember that one good because we went down through like a, it was a little river but it wasn't very deep. And they were shelling us and I never will forget the lieutenant that was in charge of the company. He was so scared. He was a rich man and he was a very rich man. He didn't want to die.

Ellis: Really?

Cheri: No, he really didn't want to die.

Ellis: Was he white?

Cheri: Yeah. Oh yeah. We didn't have any black officers. It was a segregated army. The Army was segregated and we didn't have no black officers. And one of the things that really
affected us. Now when I first got into the service we had no problem because every soldier in my outfit had a high school diploma. So we wanted to know why, why we didn't have an officer. And the first thing they put us in a like a quartermaster corp, a labor unit. And well, we decided hey, wait. I don't need to know the nomenclature of an ax handle. I don't need to know the nomenclature of a spear.

500. Ellis: Of a what?

501. Cheri: A spear. It's a shovel. Anybody with common sense, I mean, a kid that just came up knows what end to put in the ground. I don't need you to tell us that and I don't see no reason for that. But before in the beginning when I first was drafted and they had me up on reprimand and dries at the center, induction center, giving your orders to when you were leaving and where you were going. So they separated me from the rest of the group that was going to the Army and the Navy, you know. They didn't have any blacks in the Marines at that particular time, or the Air Force or nothing. But it was just the Navy and the Army. So they put me into the Navy section. So I told them I said, no, I'm not going in the Navy. So he told me, the only way you can go to the Army if we get somebody else to go to the Navy or we're going to take you in the Navy. We had to meet our quota. And so that's where another argument. I told them, I said, not me. I said my parents was a slave, but I'm not going, I'm not going to be your slave I said. And I know what the Navy is all about. All I can ever be in the Navy is to be a servant.

502. Ellis: Really.
503. **Cheri:** As a matter of fact, I told them I said, I don't even serve myself. My mother serves my dinner to me. It was true. So then finally somebody come along and said to me, it's okay. Okay, you can go into the Army ( ). But that was an experience then. And after I got into the service I was standing there for awhile and I had a little problem just before going overseas. Every morning I wake up, I'm on kp. For what? Wait. I'm mopping the floors, washing the dishes, peeling potatoes. Now this is not right. So we went to court. They had a summary court martial. This trip they gave me 14 days.

504. **Ellis:** What?

505. **Cheri:** They gave me 14 days.

506. **Ellis:** 14 days?

507. **Cheri:** 14 days of hard labor. That's what they gave me in the slammer is 14 days because I went to the service. I went to court because I wanted to know why I was going to, why I was going to kp doing extra duty.

508. **Ellis:** So just by complaining they gave you more ...

509. **Cheri:** By the Second Article of War they can charge you with anything. They could charge you with smoking. Anything you do. All right. So I got through that, well right after I finished the 14 days I made corporal. I mean, no PFC, not corporal. Made PFC. Right after that. Ain't this crazy? So I was on guard duty. I had a second lieutenant out of Rome, Georgia. So he called us all in and he made us leave our rifles and he locked up all our rifles and he gave us all pick ax handles.

Emmett Ché60
510. **Ellis:** Pick ax handles?

511. **Cheri:** Yeah. We walked guard order with a pick ax handle. So here he comes to the post I'm on. Well, nobody has ever told me how to salute an officer with a pick ax handle. So I just put the ax handle down and saluted. So they charged me with willfully leaving my arms in the barracks. It was an entry and it stuck.

512. **Ellis:** This stuff went on your record.

513. **Cheri:** Well, it didn't go on my record. I was convicted. They took my stripe away from me and then they gave me 14 days which I didn't do anything. The only thing they had me taking one piece of coat from this bin, put it into that bin. Well, at that time I was young and I had a bunch of friends and they would go out there and get pitchers of beer. We'd sit down there and have more fun out there. This same particular officer, we were going through to the gas chamber and one of the fellows just snapped. He totalled snapped.

514. **Ellis:** What do you mean?

515. **Cheri:** He just went off. He just went berserk going through the gas chamber. I don't know if it was the mask that he had on, but you had to test it to see how long you could stay in that gas chamber. He did panic.

516. **Ellis:** Couldn't take it.

517. **Cheri:** No. He was jumping the gun and this officer kicked him, in his rectum.

518. **Ellis:** Kicked him?
519. **Cheri:** Yes he did. When that guy was acting, this other fellow that, I don't know where this guy was from, but I didn't know who he was, a black guy. He didn't look like, really, he didn't look a black American. He didn't even talk like one. He had a funny accent with him. He was smooth, but he was a real, real black man with nice black hair. Big guy. Well, handsome looking guy. When he swung at that officer, our sergeant stepped in there and his eye came clean like, I thought his eye had come completely out when he hit him. But he missed the lieutenant. So then we all had to go to court, because they had charged us with mutiny. So finally when they got to court when they brought it all on up there they did something to this officer, but then they shipped us right over.

520. **Ellis:** Right over?

521. **Cheri:** Overseas. We went right overseas right after that incident. We went over. We didn't stay a second. They shipped us out. So after I got over there, you know, and like I said I didn't take things real serious and when I got to Schemen, Holland and that's when I was shot. Schemen, Holland I was working at Schemen, Holland and I didn't do nothing anything else there.

522. **Ellis:** You said you were shot there?

523. **Cheri:** Yeah. I was shot at Schemen, Holland, and I didn't do anything else from then on. That was the end of my war, because they brought me to the 25th General Hospital, well, it was the 25th Field Hospital and then from the 25th Field Hospital to the 25th General Hospital in Tongress, Belgium. And when I left from Tongress, Belgium I went to Antwerp, Belgium, from Antwerp, Belgium, I went to Munich, Germany and a few other places in...
Germany. And the General Post decided, well, I was wounded in the foot too then. It swelled up so big on me like that and I fell. It really was hurting me so bad I couldn't even take my shoes off. Oh, God, I cried and that's when they shipped me back in. They wouldn't let me go no further.

524.Ellis: Let me just clarify something. This is from the, what you just told me about, in the gas chamber during that training when the guy went berserk. The officer who hit him was white and the person who went berserk ...

525.Cheri: Was black.

526.Ellis: Was black. Would you say that there was a certain of racial tension.


528.Ellis: A lot of black soldiers did?

529.Cheri: Killed a lot of white officers.

530.Ellis: Oh, blacks were killing white officers, in your outfit.

531.Cheri: Not in my outfit but the one right next to me. Not any of the officers that we had, because he didn't come with us when we went overseas. This second lieutenant didn't come, but we had a lot of officers ( ). In the other company ( ).

532.Ellis: When you were finally over in the war zone or what ever.
533. Cheri: They killed them. Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

534. Ellis: What would they say? Oh you were killed by the enemy.

535. Cheri: Most of the time no. No. They had a few of the soldiers that was executed and everything else for killing an officer.

536. Ellis: One of the white officers?

537. Cheri: Oh yeah. I had several of them that was friends when we went in service that moved from one company to another that was charged and had dishonorable discharges. I think the government just rescinded the discharge and give them an honorable discharge. But they had dishonorable discharges.

538. Ellis: For killing a white officer.

539. Cheri: Oh yes, indeed. Yes. Oh, they caught quite a few of them. I'm certain when you are abusive, you know.

540. Ellis: What I was going to ask, my question wasn't why would they kill the white officer. You said the government later on rescinded the dishonorable discharge and gave them honorable discharges.

541. Cheri: So that they could gain benefits.

542. Ellis: Okay. Even though they knew that they officer had killed a white.
Well, see, in most cases you'd have a preliminary hearing and they go from that, but eventually later on, hey let's review this. If one of the guys persist upon why he did it and why he was involved into it, well, that may open the case up again and then the government goes through it and finds, here this officer was really abusive and he was completely at fault and just motivated. And then they said well, okay, it was it could have swung any way.

Almost like it was self defense.

Yeah, in a certain sense. You know, they could only take so much and that was the end of that. But I have quite a few of them that lost their lives. Some of them lost their lives just foolishly, you know, in drowning.

You mean in the war?

During the war. Yes. A lot of them, you know, accidents, an automobile accident, vehicular accidents, killings and stuff like that. My mother had my two older brothers, myself. Well, my youngest brother went in later on, but and my oldest brother was very lucky.

What do you mean?

Well, he was cut in his throat.

In the war?
Cheri: Yeah. He was in the Pacific theater with the Japanese, yeah. And my second to the oldest brother, well, he was in this riot. Well, you wasn't born at that time. There was a riot during in Alabama. Yeah, they had a race riot in Alabama.

Ellis: Yeah. What year was that?

Cheri: This was in 1942 or '43. Something like that. The race riot in Macon, Alabama. Well, they had one here in Louisiana. The 93rd Division in Shreveport and Alexandria and that's when they shipped them over. That was an all black outfit. That was an entire black outfit and they fought in Italy, Sicily, and all like that. But I was appointed to that one in the beginning and then I switched over to the 3rd Army. Oh, yeah. That was field artillery. See, I started off in the Search Light Battalion.

Ellis: In what?

Cheri: In the Search Light Battalion. See we were supposed to have continental duty. I mean, we were suppose to protect all of the area, the area of the United States with search lights.

Ellis: You said that you brother was lucky in that he was in the riot in Alabama.

Cheri: Yeah, because he could have gotten killed. He was wounded. He was wounded, but he didn't get killed.

Ellis: When you got back from the war did you expect things to be different in New Orleans in any way?
559. **Cheri:** Yes. Yes. I really thought, well, things were a little different.

560. **Ellis:** How was that?

561. **Cheri:** Well, some of the people a heck of a lot different, but when I first got back here my experience was that I went up to, I was going to buy me a pair of shoes and on the street car on my way back, you know, at that time they had the separation of the races. They had a little, well, it wasn't a screen. It was just a little piece of wood. Well, I didn't put much in that. I was sitting behind that little piece. I had three young white boys come up there and they wanted me to move out of the seat that I was in.

562. **Ellis:** And even though you were sitting in...

563. **Cheri:** Behind the screen. Well, this presented a problem, but I had, the other fellow I was with, he just told me they kept me and everybody else, that there was two white ladies on there. they came over here and were talking to me and they just kept, you know, cooling me down and so.

564. **Ellis:** They kept you calm.

565. **Cheri:** But, because they knew I had and just like I told them, these two fellows come up, they got plenty of seats up here. But they just wanted to sit where I was at.

566. **Ellis:** And they were antagonizing you.

567. **Cheri:** Oh yeah.
568. **Ellis:** What did you say to them when they asked you to move?

569. **Cheri:** I don't remember, but I do know that I was angry enough to hurt them.

570. **Ellis:** Oh. Did you?

571. **Cheri:** No I didn't, but I was angry.

572. **Ellis:** You were angry. I see. You were angry.

573. **Cheri:** See, at that time you got through rehabilitation and everything else because you were instilled with this, you kill or be killed. This was taught to you daily. This was the way things was to you, you know. You didn't show no fear because of this guy here. That's a human being. You're a human. You didn't worry about that. That's an enemy as far as he is concerned. He's going to take your life. So you try to take his. Protect your own self. And all of these things just flash back into you and this guy here is trying to hit me for a piece of wood for no apparent reason. So I got to try to protect myself, you see. And that's the only experience I had when I come back here. I never experience anything else only in that. But, before I left, when we got into New Jersey. I believe it was New Jersey. Yeah, they had a little orientation. Well, before that, no Virginia, it was in Virginia. We had an orientation and the officer there sat down and he told all of us, he said, I'm going to explain something to you. You've all come back. The war is over. You've all put your lives on the line for this country. So you have that same right as every one in this country to have the same fare. Don't take a back step.

574. **Ellis:** Wow. This was a?
**Cheri:** A white officer. He was having the orientation. He was the one doing that. So, and he said you've been there now. You all have been there now. Ya'll been taking a back step for a long, long time. Well, it wasn't just blacks in there, both blacks and whites in there in that orientation class. So when I left, I left Nassawadox, Virginia and I landed at Harrisburg, Mississippi. So I went to buy some, I think it was deodorant. And I stood in line and this young white girl she wouldn't serve me for the love. She would take every one of the white soldiers that was coming. This particular white fellow, a sergeant, came to me. He said, what's wrong. You don't have what this young soldier wants? She said, I don't know what he wanted. He said he's been standing up here all this time and I've heard him ask you for something. I asked for that deodorant. And she told him something. He said you mean to tell me you're not going to serve him. He said look at yourself. He said just take a look at yourself. If it wouldn't have been for him, you probably wouldn't be here. Not in this position. He said so now you plan on serving him. So she gave me what I wanted and I thanked her. I wasn't going to create a problem. I was just going to move on out, you know. It wouldn't have made no difference to me, cause I wasn't a person to create a problem. I could walk away from it, it didn't make any difference. It didn't hurt, you know. It hurt inside to a certain extent to know that you'd gone over there and you've been hurt and everything else and yet you come back here and you still getting hurt. But we were happy to come back to New Orleans. It wasn't too hard. I knew where to go. I didn't have any problems. I worked in a white neighborhood. Then when I worked for Liutz Ehen that was all predominately more or less parish men and it was white.

**Ellis:** Oh really? In the funeral home?
577. Cheri: Yeah. Yeah. In the funeral home. That was a white funeral home. Oh yeah. It
wasn't a black funeral home. That strictly was a white funeral home. Now it's no such thing
as a white funeral home now.

578. Ellis: Yeah. It's all mixed.

579. Cheri: It's all anything. They bury everybody now. If you got the money they bury you.
You go to any cemetery. At one time you only had certain cemeteries, but you go anywhere
now. They'll put you anywhere if you got the money. When I worked for Liutz Ehen, then I
worked for, after I worked for him I left and I worked for, like I said, this Haps parcel
service. It's a parcel service. Then I left from there and I went into Herrin Transportation
Company.

580. Ellis: Was it called Herring?


582. Ellis: Herrin?

583. Cheri: Herrin. H-e-r-r-i-n. And then McLean bought out Herrin. Then I retired from
McLean.

584. Ellis: When did you retire?

Emmett Cheri

586. Ellis: Well, we have left a little bit out just as far, looks like we may have gotten partly on the topic of where you could go or couldn't go with the trucking company. What did you do for them while you couldn't drive trucks? Did you, I mean you joined a transportation company, but at first you said that you couldn't travel.


588. Ellis: Right. You couldn't go on the road.

589. Cheri: But you could drive locally.

590. Ellis: Oh, I see. Okay.


592. Ellis: You didn't do inter-state kind of stuff.

593. Cheri: Intra-state, but no inter-state. You did all of that. You drove. Now one of the things they didn't have in most of the trucking industry was a black man wasn't a checker.

594. Ellis: I'm sorry.


596. Ellis: You didn't have a black man do that.

597. Cheri: They didn't do that.

598. Ellis: Why?

Emmett Cheri
Cheri: They didn't want them to have the job. And then after the union came in and after that then when the union decided hey, if he's got seniority and he can qualify for the job then he get the job. So what happened the companies had three pay scales. They had a driver, a helper, and the checker was skilled. Well, the checker was the highest in the scale, then the driver, and then the helper. So what the company did instead of creating a problem in the union with the union in negotiation they said we going to have one price.

Ellis: One pay scale?

Cheri: Just one pay scale. Now you had to do all of it.

Ellis: All of those jobs.

Cheri: Any job that the company decided that you. If they wanted you to drive today, you would be a driver. If he wanted you to be a helper or if he wanted you to be a checker, you had to do that. You had no option. But before most of the guys would go in, both black and white, they would never go in as a driver or a checker. They would go in. The difference between the checker and helper was about fifteen cents an hour. So there was a difference, a fifteen cents difference, you know. The checker made about fifteen cents more than the helper did. And the driver made about a nickel more than that, than the helper. So what happened is that everybody was your helper, both black and white.

Ellis: Oh really.

Cheri: Oh yes indeed. Well, the helper didn't have nothing to do.
606. **Ellis:** He was the worst paid but the easiest job.

607. **Cheri:** The best job. Well, taken like this, if you go out there and you was a driver wouldn't you take the helper on the road with you. Okay. He'll unload. He'll help you unload the truck, but if anything happens on that road, you have an accident or anything your job is in jeopardy.

608. **Ellis:** Right. Not the helper's.

609. **Cheri:** Oh, no. No. The helper don't have nothing to do with it. The helper didn't have nothing to do with it. At that particular time he can make $105 a week. So why would I have that kind of problem. So when they decided on that they made every one of them. And most of the guys could drive a straight frame, but they couldn't drive the 18 wheeler. You see. That straight frame is just a regular truck. It's a big truck. It's a 6 x 6, but it's a straight frame. It's not a two piece unit. So what happened when you made that one pay scale you had to learn how to drive everything and they give you 30 days.

610. **Ellis:** To learn everything.

611. **Cheri:** Oh yeah. They had 30 days. And at that particular time I think they were pay $3.95 an hour.

612. **Ellis:** What?

613. **Cheri:** $3.95 an hour.

614. **Ellis:** This was in the '60s?
615. **Cheri:** Oh, this was in the 50s.

616. **Ellis:** In the 50s. Okay. So did the racial composition of the job change.

617. **Cheri:** The racial problem came after they started paying, what was the salary? $5.00, raised up to about $5.00 an hour. Before the ratio was more blacks than white in the freight industry. See the reason for that is that in that industry what the man wanted he wanted a weak mind and a strong back, cause they didn't pay much. So what you would do and most of this stuff was handled by hand. This was strictly manpower.

618. **Ellis:** The freight handling.

619. **Cheri:** Yes. Everything. Everything that was done was most strictly by hand. Manpower.

So after they started paying more money and they were getting modern equipment. Well, when they started to paying, well, you didn't have many whites that was coming into that industry before then, but I think it was $5 and $7 an hour then the whites started coming into the industry.

620. **Ellis:** Because they wanted more money.

621. **Cheri:** More money. Okay, at that time it was becoming much easier and then the foremans were older and they were dropping out and they were bring in new people in there. See the company I worked for there wasn't no white guys wanted to work for that company. Oh no, they didn't want to work for that foreman. He was something else. You knew that was your job and you knew what was going on. He wasn't suppose to talk to you like that, but what could you say. Charlie Fox was something else.

Emmett Cheri
622. **Ellis:** Charlie Fox.

623. **Cheri:** Charlie Fox. He was the foreman. He was the boss. He was anything. Charlie Fox was something else. He was a nice man.

624. **Ellis:** He was white?

625. **Cheri:** He was white. Oh yeah. He was white. He was white. And he didn't make no difference whether you was white or black. He talked to you the same way. It didn't make any difference. That's what I'm saying. That's why whites didn't even like to work for him, but after they started paying off and the ratio became and it started off that there were more whites as the company started to grow and they wouldn't hire any more blacks. They started to hire just white.

626. **Ellis:** When the pay went up.

627. **Cheri:** Oh yeah. When the pay got to $13 an hour...

628. **TAPE TWO -- SIDE A**

629. **Ellis:** So you were saying that the government stepped in the '70s.

630. **Cheri:** Yeah, and started and they had to have a certain amount of blacks. Had to hire so many blacks and you had to hire them into certain positions as well. You see, we didn't have any dispatchers. We didn't have any foremans that was black. So then after the government stepped in there then there was so many foremans.
631. **Ellis:** Well, there was whole shift in the trucking industry that, a lot of it because it sounds like because of the racial sort of like a racial politics ( ).

632. **Cheri:** Yeah. In this part of the country, this part of the country. You're speaking of the south now. You're speaking of the southern portion of the country from the northern portion of the country. Cause I can't answer for them. I don't know if they had line drivers up in that area running up from area up along the eastern seaboard and around the west coast. I don't know. But I'm just talking about the southern district here. We didn't have any blacks. But other than that though they treated you fair. They didn't abuse you. They didn't misuse you or anything like that.

633. **Ellis:** In the trucking ...

634. **Cheri:** Industry. No. They didn't. You did your job and that was all that was all they was interested. Cause the old man, Mr. Herrin, he was interested in his money. He didn't care what color you was. If it made money for him, that's all he was interested in. I saw something else in there. During my period of time, I had a bigger problem. My biggest problem, you talk about race and segregation and hatred. My biggest problem was my teachers.

635. **Ellis:** With your teachers?

636. **Cheri:** I had two high school teachers, three, as a matter of fact. I won't call names, but I had three high school teachers that almost denied me an education.

637. **Ellis:** Now were they white?
638. Cheri: No.

639. Ellis: They were black.

640. Cheri: They were black.

641. Ellis: What do you mean they almost denied you an education?

642. Cheri: Well, what they did, one of them, I never will forget my geometry teacher told me, he told me with my pigmentation and the texture of my hair that I wouldn't amount to nothing but a service station attendant or a shoe shine boy. He and I, we got into a misunderstanding because he wanted me to dig a junk pit for the young ( ) and the school board's paying that maintenance man or somebody else to dig that pit. If they wanted me to dig that pit and willing to pay me the same pay I'll dig that pit. I have nothing against that. That's an honest living.

643. Ellis: You'll work for money.

644. Cheri: That's right. So he sent me to the office and the principal he told me I was a trouble maker and I tried to explain it to him. I'm not a trouble maker. I said you check my grades. I said if I was a trouble maker you give my grades back and then you tell me if I'm a trouble maker. So they got my grades. He come back and I had an 86 average. I looked at the man and he told me, he said well, we must have a problem some other way.

645. Ellis: The principal said that.

646. Cheri: Yeah. So he put me out. He suspended me.
647.**Ellis:** He suspended you because you had refused.

648.**Cheri:** Because I refused to dig that pit ( ) teacher. Well, I got back in to school, but it was a hard, hard thing, believe me. Then I would go to him and he would tell me about, you'll never amount to nothing like your brother and all those kinds of things.

649.**Ellis:** Who was saying those to you?

650.**Cheri:** The teacher.

651.**Ellis:** Because of the color of your skin?

652.**Cheri:** Oh, yeah. Better believe it. I tell you. See when I was in high school you didn't have very many kids from the uptown area and it seems that the kids from the uptown area were more of adult skinned than the kids from the downtown. See like I told you it was a mixture where I was born and reared more or less. You were.

653.**Ellis:** Which was downtown?

654.**Cheri:** Which was downtown.

655.**Ellis:** Which included Creole.

656.**Cheri:** Creoles. This is strictly what it's all about. So when they were in my class I was the darkest fellow in the classroom. All of them had, most of the majority of them had straight hair and fair complexion.

657.**Ellis:** In high school?
658. **Cheri:** In high school. I never had no problem in grammar school. I had no problem whatsoever in elementary school. I'd just give the teachers a lot of problem, but I never had really no problem with anyone. My first day, my very first day when I registered at Albert Wicker High School my algebra teacher, I was a little bitty fellow like this and she told me you can't come into my class. I said what did I do to this woman that she don't want me in this classroom. I stayed out of her class for two weeks. But, I was getting all of the information and everything. What the classroom work and everything was, you know, and I studied it. And so then she sent for me and then she told me she said if you make a ( ) grade on this test I'll give you credit for the two weeks that you was out. So she sat me in her desk like you're sitting there. I was sitting behind her. The students was in front of that facing her. So I took my little test that she gave me. It was very simple. So I made a hundred on that test. She graded my paper. She put me out completely. Told me I didn't need the class anymore.

659. **Ellis:** Really. Why did she kick you out in the beginning?

660. **Cheri:** I haven't the faintest idea. Never knew why she did it. I don't know. And then I was picked up one evening coming from the school. I'll never forget that. Coming from Albert Wicker. I didn't know who these guys was. These white fellows.

661. **Ellis:** You were in senior high school and you were picked up.

662. **Cheri:** I was picked up. The guy grabbed me behind my back. I was a little bitty fellow you know. I was very young and real small in high school. Wanted to know what I'm doing around that school like that because they were suppose to be having trouble, but I didn't even
know anything about what kind of trouble they had. These white girls was coming from the school which is I think it's Culton now, today, and they were coming toward Canal Street and these kids from Canal was going down and I didn't know that they were having problems, that they were having run ins and conflicts. And they picked me up. What the world is going on?

663.Ellis: That's what you said.

664.Cheri: I didn't know what was going on. So then he wanted to know what and I told him, I'm coming from school. Said what school and I told him Albert Wicker High right at Canal and Tauntee. And he put me in that car and told me that there won't no way in the world I'd be in high school.

665.Ellis: Why?

666.Cheri: Cause I was so small and little. So then they brought me all the way back to the school. Brought me up there. Good thing the principal was still in the school, up in school. So when they brought me up the steps and everything else they brought me to the office and he asked him if I was a student. But then he looked at me and he said yes. What was my name. I told him my name. He said, oh yeah. Yeah, he is a student. By that time they had notified my mother that they'd picked me up.

667.Ellis: These white guys. They weren't white policemen.

668.Cheri: Yeah, they were. They were detectives.
669. **Ellis:** Okay. Detectives.

670. **Cheri:** They were detectives. By that time I was able to get back to my mother to let her know that everything was all right, you know. They just picked me up because I was a little bitty thing. I was real small. I was a little bitty thing. As a matter of fact, we had what they called a manual training period and instead of putting me in manual training which was carpentry and masonry they had me in sewing and cooking.

671. **Ellis:** Really? Because you were so small.

672. **Cheri:** Oh yeah. When I went to the service, I was 120 pounds. Soaking wet.

673. **Ellis:** So you were a small guy.

674. **Cheri:** Yeah, but I was a healthier fellow though. I had no problems. I got along fine. But that was the only problem I had, but I didn't let them stop me.

675. **Ellis:** When you said them you're talking about the particular teachers in your high school.

676. **Cheri:** Oh yeah. They showed a lot of prejudice now. There was a lot of prejudice among the races. The races itself. The black people were prejudiced against them self.

677. **Ellis:** How so? Could you describe that to me more?

678. **Cheri:** Well, they still have that. They still have that in families. I mean in families, when sisters and brothers denies one another.

679. **Ellis:** Because one is?
680. **Cheri:** One is light and one is dark. If the light one and he socializes with his particular group and he don't want that group to know that you're a part of that family.

681. **Ellis:** Which is the darker family.

682. **Cheri:** Like brothers and sisters and brothers. You figure in my family like I was telling you. My sisters and brothers, I mean, they had families like that. There were sisters and brothers like that and they wouldn't socialize with one another. If he was here, he would be with that group that would just socialize just with the light skins. And the other one, you know, well, he would never introduce that party as being associated as a brother or cousin.

683. **Ellis:** Has it ever happened in your family, because you mentioned that in your family.


685. **Ellis:** Among your brothers and sisters?

686. **Cheri:** Among the family. Yeah. Brothers and sisters. Yeah. Not my sister or brother.

687. **Ellis:** Because some of your brothers you said I think were lighter.

688. **Cheri:** Light. Light skinned. Yep. Yeah, people may not believe that, but that's a fact. And then the children come out and they'll talk about it, you know what I mean, because they don't realize what's going on and they can't understand that, you know. Why, what was the reason, what was the advantage, what was the disadvantage. There isn't any answer. There isn't any answer.
689. **Ellis:** To why people do that.

690. **Cheri:** Why? That's right. It still goes on. Oh yes indeed. I can take you right there in that 7th Ward right now and they got families in there that has black families and angry relatives who won't let you inside.

691. **Ellis:** Say that again.

692. **Cheri:** They'll be related to one another. They will not let that party get inside of the house, because of the texture of the skin. The pigmentation of his skin. That's why.

693. **Ellis:** Let me ask you. Does it go both ways as far as light skinned folks rejecting the darker skinned brothers and sisters and family members as darker skinned folks rejecting their lighter. I mean, do you see what I'm asking? Does the prejudice go both ways?

694. **Cheri:** Yeah, you mean do the dark skinned person go against the light skinned person?

695. **Ellis:** Yeah.

696. **Cheri:** Yeah. Sure they did. Sure. That's what I'm saying. It's crazy. If you're a light skinned person and I'm a dark skinned, I'm angry because you're light skinned with the fancy hair, or straight hair, you understand. The light skinned it's against him, because it's against him because of the pigmentation of his skin. Yeah. I'm not just saying that they focus on one phase of it. No. It's on both sides. Both sides of it. They have a prejudice among themselves. It's really crazy, but that's the way it works. You have it right out here, right in
this same area. Right. Take my neighbor. Her people didn't have no use for her second husband. In the beginning.

697. **Ellis:** Why? Was he light colored?

698. **Cheri:** No, he was dark. Her first husband was very fair.

699. **Ellis:** But they didn't want to have anything to do with the second one, cause he was dark.

700. **Cheri:** Well, that was that family. That was just that family. If you look at her sisters, they didn't have any problem being white.

701. **Ellis:** They didn't have any problem?

702. **Cheri:** Being white. They could go anywhere they wanted to go.

703. **Ellis:** So they could pass?

704. **Cheri:** They could go any kind of way they wanted to go.

705. **Ellis:** I was going to ask you about that. Did you know people who passed for white?

706. **Cheri:** Uh huh.

707. **Ellis:** When you were growing up?

708. **Cheri:** Uh huh. And we didn't object to it.

709. **Ellis:** You didn't?
710. **Cheri:** No, because that's the only way that they could make it. That was the only way that they could get a decent job. No. You're not going to get angry with it, because the ones that we knew that had done it they didn't deny you.

711. **Ellis:** They didn't deny you?

712. **Cheri:** No. They wouldn't spit on me, because of the fact that they knew I knew what they were doing. But they would still socialize in a certain sense with me away from where they were at.

713. **Ellis:** So they kind of had a double life.

714. **Cheri:** Oh yes. Quite a few of them had to live that double life to survive. Many of them, many of them, many, many of them had to do it believe me to survive, you know, because it was hard. It was very hard.

715. **Ellis:** To make it? To get a job? As a black person.

716. **Cheri:** Oh yeah. As a black person. Oh yes, indeed. As a person. Yes, indeed. And as a light skinned to work into the, mostly doing domestic work. They didn't want to hire them, because most of the white ladies were figuring that that's a light skinned young lady. She wouldn't ( ) with her husband or something of this nature. So therefore they wouldn't hire them as domestics.

717. **Ellis:** I just have to interject this. I heard a story about that recently where it was a light skinned woman working in a household that got the most abuse in a sense from the people
working in there from, I think it was from the white home owner, because she was really threatened by her. But it can go the other way too.

718.**Cheri:** But one of the things about it in most cases like that it did happen then. They had quite a few white mens that had black women for their mistress, you see. They took care of them, you know. But they were free. They could walk around the street openly. Nobody said nothing about them.

719.**Ellis:** The white men could with the black women.

720.**Cheri:** Oh yes, indeed. Well, openly, whether they were jet black or white as snow. They walked the street with them and nobody said nothing. But you better not be caught walking the street with a white woman, a black man. But the white man could walk the street with a black woman. There was nothing ever said and you better not mention nothing to him about her. You better not even see that she's black. She could be black. She could be jet black, but don't tell him that that's a black woman. That's the way it was. They had that ban. They could do what they want. Like I said, that was a matter of survival, you know. You did what you had to do. And if it was an opposition and you was able to do. I think that's how my mother was able to get the job down at the funeral home, because she was light skinned. This was a white funeral home. This is one of the things, I think this is how she was able. She got it. You got it along with her.

721.**Ellis:** Right. Do you think that these people in the funeral home know that she was not white?
Cheri: Oh yes.

Ellis: But they just put her in there at the time.

Cheri: That didn't make any difference.

Ellis: But she was light.

Cheri: Right. Right.

Ellis: Because they were comfortable.

Cheri: It was comfortable, but everybody would be comfortable. Whether they knew or not, they were comfortable. You know. It didn't matter. But when ( ) texture you understand where naturally they can see the differences.

Ellis: Right and it was obvious.

Cheri: Yeah, you know. And sometimes there would be little questions about it. They didn't have black drivers, but there were limousine drivers, like chauffeurs. The hearse driver was white, but all the rest of them was, you know. They had black drivers. Some of them. Some of them didn't. The ones that were paying the money like all the white funeral homes were paying the money to the limousine drivers and everything else, but black companies couldn't afford to pay that kind of money. So most of the experienced black chauffeurs would go to work for the white funeral homes.

Ellis: They got more money.
Emmett Cheri: There would be more money in then they worked more often too.

Ellis: So there was more work?

Cheri: There was more work, and they knew what they had to do. There was a lot involved to work, cause whether they had a funeral or not they still had to wash the limousine every day, had to keep it up and everything else, polish it. So it was a little work involved into it, but most of the time they always was busy working making funerals.

Ellis: So the people you knew that passed or knew of who passed, who got a job the employers didn't always know. Right? I mean, it was sometimes a secret.

Cheri: Oh, it was sometime before they found out. Eventually they found out.

Ellis: The employers would find out?

Cheri: Oh eventually, yeah. They would find out, but they would never challenge it though.

Ellis: The employers wouldn't.

Cheri: No. No. No.

Ellis: So in a sense, if you were light enough, most people would back off.

Cheri: They had an idea, but they would never challenge it.
743. **Ellis:** I see. It was kind of like and exclusive agreement among everybody, among members in the so called black community who would not call attention to Joan Smith who is passing as a white person and the employer who is employing those men. Nobody would say anything.

744. **Cheri:** Nobody would say nothing, because really and truthfully it was hard. It was hard sometimes, because you never know. You see what's happening in this city here, okay. Say, you're a white girl now, a young lady. There's no sense calling you a girl, you're a young lady. When you were born, okay, most of these kids were born by mid-wives during my time. So what happened they would present this child in the register. They'd look at you. He'd put white on it. He wouldn't know. He'd just take it for granted you were a white person because he saw you there and put white. So he'd have to put white, race white. You say something. You couldn't argue with him, because I'd get my birth certificate. Look what's here on my birth certificate. ( ) So these are the things you had, that happened several times - recently, you know. That families would challenge, and hey, mom, they made a mistake. And the registrar whatever he said 90% of the time when you were black you didn't argue with him. Whether he misspelled a name or not, you went along with it because you better not challenge him.

745. **Ellis:** The registrar was always white.

746. **Cheri:** They were white. You going to embarrass that fellow by telling him he didn't know what he was doing. He didn't know how to spell. Oh, no, indeed. No, indeed. They would have more policemens around.
747. Ellis: Really?

748. Cheri: Oh course they would. They'd do what they wanted to you. What could you do?

You didn't have no rights. You didn't have any right to vote or nothing else. Uptown they were paying poll tax and the only one who paid poll tax was most of them was home owners. And how many blacks that was home owners? You didn't have no say so. You had no voice. You just was a free slave that's all.

749. Ellis: When you were growing up?

750. Cheri: During this time. Yeah. When I was born. Now my sister and I have generally have a lot of arguments. She says, oh that is not your name. I said, well, I don't know why you say that.

751. Ellis: What's not your name?

752. Cheri: My name. See I spell mine E-m-m-e-t-t, but she always said my mother always said my name was Emmit, E-m-m-i-t. See that. I don't know that. I say now that's what you say, but you're younger than me and I can't understand that stuff. And all my brothers and sisters are saying my daddy. I was eleven years old. So if my name is not E-m-m-e-t-t I know as smart as my father was he wouldn't allow my name to be E-m-m-e-t-t when it was E-m-m-i-t. He wouldn't. If that's the way it was suppose to have been it's what is now and I'm going through life with that name so and it's on my birth certificate.

753. Ellis: Now what was your sister trying to tell you when she said that's not your name. Was she saying the registrar was wrong?
754. **Cheri:** Well, somebody was wrong. Somewheres along the line somebody goofed or either me. Until I prove to that I have it on my birth certificate. As a matter of fact, I have three different birth certificates.

755. **Ellis:** You do.

756. **Cheri:** All from the ( ) and all from the same guy and all three spellings are different.

757. **Ellis:** How did that happen?

758. **Cheri:** They got everything, the same date, everything is all the same. See, that's what I'm trying to tell you. They do what they want to do. They do what they want to do. See when I had it I went up there to get my passport when I left to go overseas again. So I had to have all my birth certificates. I went up there and that ( ) said what you doing and she said what did you go by. So I told her. As long as I know I went by E-m-m-e-t-t. So she looked it up and she said that's your name. That's your social security number. That is your name. Uncle Sam is saying this is you. And as a matter of fact, she told me, she said well you should know better that there's no correct spelling or pronunciation of a proper name. I said I can understand and I'd just like to have it straight. She said don't worry about that. Said what counts is the C-h-e-r-i.

759. **Ellis:** Your last name.

760. **Cheri:** That's it. The family name. You don't worry 'bout nothing else. I said okay. but that's a little experience, a lot of things that you go through. A lot of things that you think of and you wonder. And a many of times I sit down here and I wonder how my mother made it.
Really. With six kids. With six small children and the oldest was 14. It was something. And she sent everyone of us, educated everyone of us, and I mean, if my mother said I want you in that house there before 6:00. We were there. I can remember an incident. I was out of the service and I was fixing to set the table and I guess it was similar to this. And I happened to be sitting there and don't ask me what did I said, but I said something. Boy, good God a mighty. I had a back hand that hit me right. I couldn't understand. All my sisters and all of them, they weren't going to set the table, but nobody could tell me what I said that caused my mother to give me that back hand. I was 21 years old.

761. Ellis: And you were just out of the Army you said.

762. Cheri: Right. I was 21 years old when she slapped me and I don't even remember what I said. I'm an intelligent guy, I can't remember. Maybe I'm not suppose to remember.

763. Ellis: Right. Knocked it right out of your head.

764. Cheri: But they used to have an attitude too. They don't want you to not understand anything that was said. I know a lady friend, a lady ( ) speaks French and I always used to wonder why my mother never taught us how to speak French. My great-aunt spoke French.

765. Ellis: Now how did she know to speak French?

766. Cheri: Oh heavens knows I guess. Well, my great-aunt did it in the country.

767. Ellis: Wait a minute. You said your mother was light skinned. Was one of her parents, did you tell me this, was one of her parents French or white?
Emmett Cheri: My grandmother.

Ellis: On your mother's side.

Cheri: Yeah. Now I don't know about my mother's grandparents. I don't know any of my mother's grandparents.

Ellis: Okay. So you don't know how she learned to speak French.

Cheri: I don't even know my grandmother or grandfather, but I don't know my mother's grandfather.

Ellis: Can you see what I'm asking?

Cheri: Yes. I understand that, but they were light skinned. But they were light skinned. My mother and all her people were light skinned, but on my mother's father's side now they were dark skinned.

Ellis: On your mother's father's side. Right. But you don't know about your mother's?

Cheri: I don't know about my mother's side, the grandparents on either side. I don't know that. I don't know what color they were. I don't know if they were French or what they were. I don't know. I really don't know. We knew that the name Cheri was French and what we were trying to find out was if my grandfather was from the island or was he born one of the French, the settlers that was slave owners and he took the name of Cheri. We don't know that, because it's a very few. Only the Cheris, sisters and brothers and uncles that's listed in the phone book. That's the only Cheris they had in the city at all.
Ellis: So it's not a large family.

Cheri: Oh, no, no, no, no.

Ellis: Well, I think that we should move on to ...

Cheri: Signing all these papers.

Ellis: Can you believe we've been talking

Cheri: Since about two hours

Ellis: For about two hours. Now do you have a better sense of kind of what I was curious about. Okay. So your last name is Cheri, C-h-e-r-i. E-m-m-e-t-t. What is your middle name?

Cheri: Emmanuel.

Ellis: Can you spell that?

Cheri: E-m-m-a-n-u-e-l. You got it?

Ellis: Yes. E-m-m-a-n-u-e-l.

Cheri: E-m-m.

Ellis: Oh, two m's. Okay.

791.**Ellis:** What's your address?

792.**Cheri:** 4628 M-i-t-h-r-a. The old French word.

793.**Ellis:** And what's your zip code?

794.**Cheri:** 70126.

795.**Ellis:** And you were born in New Orleans. And your birthday was?

796.**Cheri:** 12/24/24.

797.**Ellis:** Oh, that's a good one. And your principal occupation? Truck.

798.**Cheri:** Yeah. 18 wheeler.

799.**Ellis:** I'm going to say truck driver.

800.**Cheri:** Yeah, truck driver, more or less.

801.**Ellis:** And before that, I mean, it was truck driver.

802.**Cheri:** Most of it was truck driver. Or driver. Whatever.

803.**Ellis:** How would you like your name to appear in written materials? Like would you like it to be Emmett Emmanuel Cheri or Emmett E. Cheri.

804.**Cheri:** Yeah. Emmett E. Cheri. Senior.

805.**Ellis:** Senior.
806. **Cheri**: Senior. I didn't want to confuse it with junior.

807. **Ellis**: Okay. So you have a son with the same name.

808. **Cheri**: My son. Yeah. My oldest son is. That's why I didn't realize that. Do you still need to have this

809. **Ellis**: You know what, what I need to do is record this part which I don't know. I always do it because sometimes when I ask people questions something else comes up and it's always good to have it on. Are you divorced or widowed?

810. **Cheri**: Yes. Divorced.

811. **Ellis**: What was your spouse's name?

812. **Cheri**: Delores.

813. **Ellis**: What was her middle name?

814. **Cheri**: I don't know. Scott.

815. **Ellis**: Delores Scott. Do you remember when she was born?

816. **Cheri**: I think she was born on, what was that, March 10, '31. Yeah, that's the 03/10/31.

817. **Ellis**: And where was she born?

818. **Cheri**: New Orleans.
819. **Ellis:** She was a housewife.

820. **Cheri:** Right.

821. **Ellis:** Okay. Your mother's name, full name.

822. **Cheri:** Rosie.

823. **Ellis:** Rosie?

824. **Cheri:** Yeah. That's Rosa.

825. **Ellis:** Rose.

826. **Cheri:** R-o-s-e.

827. **Ellis:** Did she have a middle name?

828. **Cheri:** Mary, more or less. Mary. Mary.

829. **Ellis:** Rosa Mary.

830. **Cheri:** M-a-r-y. Now what you want her full name?

831. **Ellis:** I want her full name. Rosa.

832. **Cheri:** Mary.

833. **Ellis:** M-a-r-y.
834. Cheri: Right.

835. Ellis: And her last, Cheri.

836. Cheri: Right. That was her married name.

837. Ellis: I am spelling it right. It's C-h-e-r-i.


839. Ellis: And what was her maiden name?


841. Ellis: Could you spell that?

842. Cheri: P-o-i-s-o-n. P-o-i-s-o-n.

843. Ellis: Like poison.


845. Ellis: Just a minute ago.

846. Cheri: Well, you know what that is? Really and truthfully this is for my insulin.

847. Ellis: From insulin?

848. Cheri: Yeah. I'm a diabetic.
849. Ellis: Oh you are. Oh. Do you get that reaction? Does it itch a lot?

850. Cheri: Sometimes. Most of the time when it's hot, when it gets hot like that for any time in
the evening. I use this like that.

851. Ellis: What was her date of birth do you remember?

852. Cheri: My mother was born February 25, 1895.

853. Ellis: And do you know when she died?

854. Cheri: March 16. Now let me get this straight. March 16, 1952. I got to get them, because
my daughter was born on the day before. I know the day before she died.

855. Ellis: Now where was your mother born?

856. Cheri: My mother was born in Paincouville.

857. Ellis: Could you spell that?

858. Cheri: P-a-i-n-c-o-u-v-i-l-l-e.

859. Ellis: Louisiana. And she made tobacco, made cigars. What was her occupation?

860. Cheri: Well, she was a housewife.

861. Ellis: Okay. So I'm going to say housewife. Then she was a cook.

862. Cheri: Then she was a cook. Yeah. You can put the housewife and cook.
Emmett Cheri

99

Ellis: Okay. And your father's name.

Cheri: Fernend. F-e-r-n-e-n-d.

Ellis: F-e-r-n-a-n-d. And then?

Cheri: J. Joseph.

Ellis: Fernend Joseph Cheri. Do you remember his date of birth?

Cheri: August 1, 1895.

Ellis: And his death.

Cheri: August 31, 1936.

Ellis: And he was born in?

Cheri: New Orleans.

Ellis: And his occupation was?

Cheri: Printer.

Ellis: Printer, right.

Cheri: Printer, a printer. These southern drawls. You know what I mean. You can understand that. The eastern seaboard is a little different with pronunciations anyway.

Ellis: And then the sisters and brothers. Now you were second oldest?
878. **Cheri:** No, third.

879. **Ellis:** Third oldest. Can you tell me the names of your?

880. **Cheri:** Fernend is the oldest.

881. **Ellis:** Your brother.

882. **Cheri:** Fernend. He's a junior.

883. **Ellis:** And when was he born?

884. **Cheri:** He was born February 25, 1922. Same day as my mother.

885. **Ellis:** And is he still alive.

886. **Cheri:** Yeah.

887. **Ellis:** Everybody was born in New Orleans. And what about the next one.

888. **Cheri:** That's Lionel.

889. **Ellis:** His birth date?

890. **Cheri:** Lionel was May 30, 1923.

891. **Ellis:** And then after you.

892. **Cheri:** After me? My sister Selika.
How do you spell that?

S-e-l-i-k-a.

Her birthday.

November 22, '26.

And then after her.

Marion.

Her birthday?

June 21, '30.

And then your brother?

That's deceased. Okay. He was born on September 5, '32.

When did he die?

March 29, '87.

What was his name?

Earl. Earl Cheri.

Okay. And then the names of your children.
908. Cheri: Oh, you want my children? Okay, I got Emmett which is the junior.

909. Ellis: And when was he born?


911. Ellis: Where was he born?


913. Ellis: So they were all born in New Orleans.

914. Cheri: All of them born in New Orleans. Then I had David.

915. Ellis: David?

916. Cheri: That's right.

917. Ellis: When was he born.

918. Cheri: 1/12/55.

919. Ellis: And after him?


921. Ellis: Merrilyn.

923. Ellis: ’63?

924. Cheri: We had a little slip there. We had five years difference between Merrilynn.

925. Ellis: And you have six grandchildren.

926. Cheri: Six grandchildren.

927. Ellis: Now you have lived in New Orleans. Have you ever lived anywhere besides New Orleans.

928. Cheri: No.

929. Ellis: Besides being overseas in the service. How long were you in the service?

930. Cheri: Three years. I was born in ’24.

931. Ellis: When did you enter the service?


934. Cheri: Craig, Joseph A. Craig.

935. Ellis: Craig Elementary in New Orleans. From, remember what years you were there?

936. Cheri: Oh no.

937. Ellis: Maybe we can work our way back to it.
938. **Cheri:** I know up until the 7th grade. I don't remember when that was.

939. **Ellis:** Did you join the service right when you got out of high school?

940. **Cheri:** Yeah. I was 18 years old, no 17 years old. I got out of high school the same year.

941. **Ellis:** Okay, if you got out of high school in 1942.

942. **Cheri:** I'm trying to figure it out. Let's see. My father died in 1936. I went into high school in 1937. I'm trying to figure that one out. You see my point. Okay. My father died in '36. I was in the 7th grade. So I was 11 years old. I was going to 12 that same year.

943. **Ellis:** And that was junior high school.

944. **Cheri:** I was going into junior high school.

945. **Ellis:** What was the name of that high school.

946. **Cheri:** Wicker. Albert Wicker High. Let's see. I was 12.

947. **Ellis:** So in 1937 was when you entered Wicker.

948. **Cheri:** Yeah. And it was two years there and then two years over in '35. So that's four years.

949. **Ellis:** That makes sense pretty much.

950. **Cheri:** Yeah. It was the right age. I can't remember all of that.
951. Ellis: About 1939 to 1942. And you went to Albert Wicker in 7th grade.

952. Cheri: 8th grade. 8th grade. You see it's different now. They didn't have.

953. Ellis: From about 1929, throughout 1929 through 1937.

954. Cheri: Yeah, something like that. Right. 1929 or something like that.

955. Ellis: So you got your high school diploma.

956. Cheri: Don't ask me where. Don't ask me where it's at. I been trying to find all of these papers. I got one of my daughters graduations and I can't find the rest of them. I don't know what happened to them. God knows. And my son, I don't know if he's got it, but he's asked me for it several times. I've checked all over and I've told him to ask his mother is she's got it. I don't even have none of the diplomas. My sons and my daughters. None of them. I don't know what could have happened. Well, they broke in this house twice. And there's a lot of things that's missing.

957. Ellis: Okay. List your current and most previous jobs. Your last job was with?


959. Ellis: McLean Trucking.


961. Ellis: And that was in New Orleans?

963. Ellis: You retired in 1986. When did you start with them?

964. Cheri: I started in 1956 with the Herrin Transportation Company.

965. Ellis: And before McLean.


967. Ellis: What was your job?

968. Cheri: A driver. Everything was driver.

969. Ellis: And that was in New Orleans?


971. Ellis: And how long were you?


973. Ellis: Okay. And then before that.


975. Ellis: Can you spell that?

976. Cheri: L-i-u-t-z E-h-e-n.
977. **Ellis:** Is that a separate word?

978. **Cheri:** Yeah. Liutz Ehen. That's two names. Liutz is one and Ehen is the other one.

979. **Ellis:** And Ehen is spelled?

980. **Cheri:** E-h-e-n.

981. **Ellis:** Funeral. And the job for them was?

982. **Cheri:** Well, more or less just porter. That's all. That's primarily what that is. I don't know what they would call it.

983. **Ellis:** And that was from '45 to '47?

984. **Cheri:** Right.

985. **Ellis:** And before that you were a soldier? You were an Army soldier?

986. **Cheri:** I was in the Army. Yes.

987. **Ellis:** You called yourself a soldier? What were you called?

988. **Cheri:** Yeah. You were called a soldier. A soldier. A soldier in the Army.

989. **Ellis:** Okay.

990. **Cheri:** You go in there as a private. A private in the Army.

991. **Ellis:** Have you ever received any awards or honors or held any offices?
Emmett Cheri: For what?

Ellis: Just like any awards or honors from anywhere or kind of, okay. And your current listed denomination is Catholic.

Cheri: Right.

Ellis: And St. Catherine of the Veils is your church.

Cheri: Right.

Ellis: And then before joining St. Catherine's what other churches did you belong to?

Cheri: St. Peter Claver.

Ellis: Would you spell Claver?

Cheri: C-l-a-v-e-r.

Ellis: And then before then?

Cheri: Corpus Christi was next. I went to St. Peter Claver and to Corpus Christi.

Ellis: And those were both in New Orleans?

Cheri: New Orleans. Yeah, I was married in Corpus Christi. I was christened at Corpus Christi. I did everything at Corpus Christi.

Ellis: Do you belong to any organizations, any civic, community or?
1006. **Cheri:** Not anymore.

1007. **Ellis:** What did you belong to?

1008. **Cheri:** Autocrat Social.

1009. **Ellis:** What was it?

1010. **Cheri:** The Autocrat Social.

1011. **Ellis:** The Autocrat.

1012. **Cheri:** Uh huh.

1013. **Ellis:** Social. The Autocrat Social.

1014. **Cheri:** The pleasure club.

1015. **Ellis:** The social and pleasure club. Anything else.

1016. **Cheri:** No, that's it.

1017. **Ellis:** Any other activities or affiliates, hobbies, interests. Anything?

1018. **Cheri:** No, not really. No.

**Ellis:** Okay. Any favorite saying or thing or quotes? That's pretty much it. The one thing now is to, cut this off.

1019. **END OF INTERVIEW**