L. J. Scott Interview
October 27, 2003
18923 Patton (Mr. Scott's home)
Detroit, Michigan
Transcribed by Daniel Clark

DC: I usually start with really basic questions, like where were you born?

LJS: Alabama

DC: Alabama. If you don't mind me asking, when was that?

LJS: 1931

DC: OK, all right. Can you tell me about—were your parents—how do I want to ask this—well, tell me about where you grew up. Where in Alabama? What was it like?

LJS: I grew up in a little place called Linwood, Alabama. This was out in the country. [Phone interruption]

DC: There we go. You were going to tell me a little bit about Linwood, Alabama. What part of the state is it in?

LJS: Uh, that's—I'm not sure if you're familiar with where Montgomery is?

DC: Yes, uh huh.

LJS: This is fifty miles south of Montgomery, and then out in the country about fifteen miles.

DC: OK, so out in the country. Had your parents grown up around Linwood?

LJS: Yeah. They was from right around in that area.

DC: So tell me what it was like down there.

LJS: When I was growing up?

DC: Yeah.

LJS: It was kind of rough [edgy laughter].

DC: That's all right. Tell me about it.

LJS: It was kind of rough. We were poor. There was a bunch of us. I'm the fourteenth kid, and I'm the baby. By the time I came along, some of them had gotten married and

moved out, you know. But we didn't have no money or anything, but we survived. That was one thing I have to day about my Dad. He taught us how to survive there where we were. We had plenty of food to eat. It might not be the food that you wanted, but you had something to eat. I ain't never went to bed hungry. Never. We survived. As I said, he did a good job in teaching us how, how to survive, right there where we were.

DC: Were you farming?

LJS: Yeah. We were farming?

DC: What did you grow?

LJS: Oh, the money crop was peanuts and cotton. But we grew everything—corn and millet, sorghum and cane—anything you can name we just about did it. Peas, even peas, we ate peas when they were green and when they got dry, we picked them and put them in sacks and hung them up in the roof of the loft, like in a crib, to keep rats from getting to them. So there was a string of haywire coming from that sack, up to the rafters. Ain't no rat going to crawl, going to climb that piece of wire. So had them hung right there until you got ready to use them.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: And my Mama had a can that she kept in the kitchen, and she kept some peas in there all the time. Then when they all was used up, she said, "Go up there and get me some more peas." Well, you'd go up there and you'd take down a sack and you'd get your stick and you'd beat the hell out of the sack [laughing]—and that makes the peas break up. So you'd take something and hold it up in the air and you'd get the [??], or else keep on until you get them clean. And then you'd bring them back in the house.

DC: So would you work out in the garden or out in the fields as well.

LJS: In the fields? Oh yeah.

DC: Yeah? How old were you when you started working out in the fields?

LJS: [laughs] Real small [continues laughing], real small. I started, ooh, it just seemed like I always were there. I was real small. I might not—I wasn't able to do what the rest of them was doing, but I did what I could do. I remember the first chore I had was feeding a little calf. That was the very first chore that I had. And every day, at a certain time I knew I must feed that calf. There was no backing out of it or nothing, no "I don't want to." That's what you do.

DC: Yeah. Was it a milk cow? Is that why you were feeding the calf?

LJS: Yeah, it was a milk cow.

DC: So you had your own milk.

LJS: Oh yeah. Yeah, we had cows. We had hogs. We killed maybe about six hogs at one time. Of course there was a bunch of us there, you know. There still was a bunch of us there. There probably was eight or ten of us there at that time. It was also a niece that grew up with us. It was quite a few of us there, that I can remember. But like I said, as time went on, some drifted off and went off and left home and went to different cities and what have you. We kind of migrated pretty much the same way. We left Alabama and went to Florida, and left Florida and came to Michigan.

DC: Who was that, a brother, did you say?

LJS: Just about everybody.

DC: Just about everybody.

LJS: Just about everybody followed that same route.

DC: Well, we'll sneak up on that route. I want to learn a little bit more about Alabama. This is pretty interesting. Had your Father or Mother grown up on that piece of property, or was that new to them?

LJS: They didn't grow up there. They grew up maybe about twenty miles away, or something like that. Grew up around a little place called China Grove, Alabama.

DC: How did they end up in Linwood?

LJS: Well, just moving around, you know. We was like—most of the time we was sharecroppers, and there was sometimes when we rented the land from the person who owned it. If you saw a better deal, if you saw maybe it was—maybe a place became available, maybe it had some pretty good land on there, pretty good dirt, pretty good soil, and you'd know that you could raise a good crop on there. Well, hey, if you could get it, you got it. Even if it did mean moving.

DC: So was it pretty good soil on the land in Linwood?

LJS: Uh, yeah, yeah, right around in there. I lived in—one, two, three—I lived in about four different places right around Linwood.

DC: OK, so you moved around.

LJS: Yeah, we lived wherever—my Dad moved us, I moved.

DC: About how many acres were you trying to . . .

LJS: The number was forty. The [?] was a forty-acre place. We one time—my Dad, he got sick—I guess I was about fifteen years old when he got sick, somewhere in there. He got cancer. He lived I guess about three years with the cancer. And eventually it killed him. Because I was eighteen when he died.

DC: Hmm. I'm sorry.

LJS: But we moved from a place that had some real good land. And I always wondered why did we move from there and move to a place that didn't—whose land was not as good. I think I figured it out too.

DC: Why is that?

LJS: The guy who owned the land, a guy named Horace Williams—he was a white guy—and me and him got into it. I'm—what was I, sixteen at that point—but I don't like where I am and I'm an angry young man, and we rented this land, and this land had a peach tree on it. And he wanted the peaches off of that tree. So I told him, I said, "No sir, Mr. Horace," I said, "we rented the land, and whatever's on that land belongs to us. The tree is on the land, the fruit of that tree belongs to us, not to you." And he didn't like that. He told me Dad, he said, "You'd better talk to him. He's getting biggity."

DC: Biggity?

LJS: Biggity. That's one of the words that they used when you're sassy or something like that, you know. Well, I didn't think anything of it. But I just knew I was going to get those peaches. And he had a knack of going to town every Saturday, just like clockwork. So I'm watching the peaches as they get ripe and everything, so we got to that point where I think they're ripe enough. So I goes down to Linwood there where the train stops at and everything, and I watch him when he leave, going to town. [starts laughing] I go back home and I get this tub. I go down and I *strip* that tree. I stripped that tree. I took them peaches home and me and my Mother peeled them and she canned them [laughing]. I knew he wasn't going to get them. Well, first thing I know we're moving.

DC: In the middle of the season?

LJS: No, we like moved at the end of the year.

DC: OK.

LJS: After everything has been settled up. And I also bought me a ledger for that year. My brother, the one I was next to, he was supposed to do the—he was working at the sawmill. He was supposed to buy the food and everything, and I was supposed to do the farming. And [pause] it was kind of hard there. I remember one time I asked him for a quarter. He said, "Boy, I ain't got no quarter." I said, "Well damn, give me a dime or something. Give me something!" He didn't give me a dime. But we had a house that we all went to. It was like a good-time house, you know. Like they sold whiskey there, and

two or three girls there, and all that stuff. People hung out there. And my brother bought a pint of whiskey and left it sitting on the table. He went across the field to somebody's house to shoot dice. And that pissed me off. Ooh that got me. He couldn't give me a quarter and he done bought this pint of whiskey and left it there and he'd gone somewhere to gamble. That ain't sitting right with me. I'm working like he is. You understand?

DC: Uh huh.

LJS: Yeah. Well, to get back to this moving thing, as to why—how I figured out why we left from this place. Like I said I had bought me a ledger. And everything that we got on credit or what have you was put in that ledger. It was put in there. It was dated, how much money we got, and what it was used for, the whole bit. Dated and everything, just laid right out there like a [?].

DC: Was that coming from the landowner or from a store in town?

LJS: Well, we borrowed money from Mr. Horace to get certain things, like fertilizer, seeds, some kinds of—maybe cotton seeds, stuff like that, you know. There was times when we might have needed some for clothes or something, you know, whatever that was needed. He would let you have it, knowing that at the end of the year he's going to get it back. He's going to get paid back.

DC: But you would actually write down all those things.

LJS: I did! I did that. I'd seen my Dad try to calculate in his head and all that kind of stuff, and I know he was getting taken for a ride. I know that. But I'm little. I can't confront him like that, because we wouldn't allow it to do that, to our parents. We was—but I'd seen him trying to calculate in his head, you know. I know that you just can't do that. But once you took some paper and write it down, that's going to stay there no matter where your mind go. Them figures going to still stay there. I knew that. So I bought me this ledger so I knew what we owed him, so when it come time to settle up and everything, and there I were again, doing the settling up and all. So he was saying that we owed some amount. And so I told him, I said, "No Sir, Mr. Horace," I said. "We don't owe that much." I said, "Here's what we owe right here." And when I did that, I opened that ledger to him and handed it to him. He ain't never seen nothing like that before. That was a surprise to him. People didn't do that. People did like my Dad, try to calculate in their head and all that stuff. Not me. But like as I say, I was kind of angry coming up. I'd seen what was going on. I didn't like it.

DC: Uh hum. Uh hum.

LJS: So [pause] I [pause] – I don't know if he said anything else to my Dad about that or not, but anyway, first thing I know, we're moving. And I always figured out, "Why are we moving from this good land?" It was good land. We moved, but that's the only thing I can figure.

DC: Sure. Yeah.

LJS: Because he's trying to save me, you know. Because he sees that maybe, sooner or later, we're going to lock horns, and you know—I didn't have no win, but I'd damn sure be in their fighting it. [laughs]

DC: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LJS: I figured he did that to save me.

DC: You think your Dad was afraid for your safety?

LJS: Uh hum.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: Yeah.

DC: And that was when you were, like, fifteen or sixteen years old?

LJS: I was sixteen.

DC: Sixteen years old. Yeah. I've got a fifteen-year-old. I know what they're like.

LJS: [laughs] I was sixteen.

DC: So at that point, it seemed like a lot of your brothers and sisters would have been gone, out of . . .

LJS: They were. Just the two of us left. The brother that I was next to, L.C. He's L.C. and I'm L.J.

DC: Oh, OK. Let's see. I'm trying to get back to a little bit earlier if I can—I know you were really young—but, uh, it sounds like the farm was pretty busy. You had a lot of stuff going on, between the livestock and all the different crops.

LJS: Yeah.

DC: How did you handle all that? Did all the kids get in there and pitch in, or . . .

LJS: Well, we handled that very nicely. Any kid that was there had chores to do. And you did them and there were no excuses for not doing it. You could be off having fun or what have you, but if it was time to feed the hogs or cut some wood to take in the house to have a fire, what have you, you come and do that and then you go back again.

DC: Would you get your chores, like, assigned every day, or something?

LJS: No, no everyday—you just grew into it.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

LJS: Like, I came down to having to milk the cows and all that stuff. I was small when I first started to do that, real small. But I knew how to do it, and I did it. That chore got handed over to me when one of my sisters got sick—a matter of fact, she wound up dying.

DC: I'm sorry.

LJS: And her chores came down to me. It was like given to me.

DC: How old was she when she died?

LJS: Oh, she was grown. She had—she had a baby that was about a year and a half old or something, and then she got pregnant again. Her husband was in Florida picking fruit. And she stayed back with us at that time. And somehow the baby died in her, and she didn't know it, wound up locking her jaws and everything, got poison in her system.

DC: An infection, yeah.

LJS: So she died. Then that particular girl we kept. She continued to stay with us. Matter of fact, I raised her.

DC: Really.

LJS: And I'm only nine years older than she.

DC: Wow.

LJS: Yeah.

DC: You were just a little boy at the time.

LJS: Like when she went to school, they'd send her to school, buy her clothes and everything. Well I was working at that time. Wasn't making no money but I'm working. Give her a little spending money, just as she's my kid. That's the niece I'm talking about moving in with right now.

DC: Oh really? Is that right?

LJS: Same one.

DC: You need a little buying time, or biding time, whatever. [Mr. Scott was moving into a retirement village, but needed a place to stay for an interim period.]

LJS: She already told me, "Sure."

DC: Isn't that interesting. It all comes around.

LJS: Yeah, oh yeah.

DC: Yeah. You mentioned that your Mother helped you can those peaches. What all else was your Mother doing at this time?

LJS: My Mother never went to the field during my time, but she kept the house and she cooked. Canned everything she could get a hand on, and could can *anything*. We had like hundreds of quart jars of all kind of stuff back in our little room there. Earlier we talked about growing peas and what have you. Eating the peas when they were green, whatever. She also canned them. She canned them. My Mother could can anything. I remember that she had a big old pressure cooker there. I think that thing would hold something like twelve quarts. Like six in the bottom, and then you put that thing down there and six more.

DC: The rack.

LJS: And put the top on there and lock it down and all that stuff. We had this old wooden stove, you know. But we, we'd like kill hogs during the wintertime and we'd have like barrels of meat in the smokehouse. We started out with a layer of shucks, layer of salt, meat there, shucks and salt and just keep on until that barrel is full. And you didn't have to worry about no flies getting in there where that meat was because they couldn't stand that salt. Flies don't like salt. And so we would have smoked hams. We'd make sausage. We did it all. We did it all. But as I said, we knew how to survive. You could put me back down there right now and give me a mule and a plow—that's what I had. I didn't have no tractor—and I could survive.

DC: Was it your mule or did you have to rent the mule?

LJS: No. It was our mule. Yeah, we had our own mule. But we had meat all year round. And by the time that meat is gone, we'd kill us some more hogs, doing it all over again. We made syrup. We'd take the cane, mill it to where the cane mill, and grind it, get the juice out of it—the mule taking that thing round and around, you feeding it in there, and the juice is coming out there, and you take the juice and put it in the big old vat, build a fire upon it, and start cooking, until you get syrup. We did that. We did it all. [laughs] We were poor, but as I said, I always had enough to eat. There was a rule at our house, you didn't go and cook after my Mom done cook. You either ate what she done cooked, or there was always some syrup and bread that you could eat. [laughs] At least something, yeah. But she didn't let you go cook no more. Uh uh. It's up to you, if you didn't want what she cooked. Because she usually got more than one thing there.

DC: Now, how many brothers did you have and how many sisters?

LJS: Uh, six sisters, eight brothers.

DC: So did the girls work out in the field, your sisters as well? Or were they working around the house with your Mom?

LJS: Yeah, they worked there way in the field.

DC: Oh, OK. I didn't know, for instance, if some people got to do dishes . . .

LJS: No. My Mother . . .

DC: . . . she took care of it . . .

LJS: . . . took care of the house.

DC: Wow!

LJS: You never found a bed unmade. It was always made. You could go in there and eat off of the floor, because she used that old potash soap. Oh, we made our soap too. Oh yeah, we made it. It would be so clean, you could go in there and eat off of it.

DC: Unbelievable.

LJS: So it would be like bleached, scrubbing it with that lye soap and stuff.

DC: Unbelievable. She was a busy woman.

LJS: She just had everything down pat, you know. She got up, she made the bed up. That was the first thing she did, or what have you. And then from that, cooking and what have you. Our meal was always on time.

DC: How about laundry? Was that her job too?

LJS: Yeah. We had—I always called it a battling block. Like a piece you'd cut off a big old tree, and it maybe stands up about so high. And they'd boil the clothes. They'd boil the clothes in it, and take them out. They was all in that old lye soap and stuff. And they'd take them out of there, and put it on that block and just beat the stew out. Beat the stew out of it. And I always—when I get a new pair of overalls, that's the first thing you have—going to bend my [??]. And I always disliked that, but it's going to get done, because it's going to be hitting with that stick. [laughs]

DC: Makes me feel weak and spoiled.

LJS: [laughs]

DC: What about school? Did they have a school nearby?

LJS: Oh, I think we had to go about, about two miles. We walked about two miles to school, something like that.

DC: And were you able to fit that in around all your other jobs and chores?

LJS: Uh, yeah, to an extent. You had to drop out of school as the season went on, as the fall went on, you know, getting ready to plant your crops and all that kind of stuff. By the end they'd need everybody and by the time stuff in school started to get a little hard and get interesting, whatever, you had to come out of there and work the fields. Where I went to school at they only taught through the 9th grade. And I got promoted to the 9th and dropped out and went to work at a sawmill. I wanted some khaki pants, and my parents couldn't buy me any. They didn't have no money to buy them. So the thing was, I bought them myself. I worked at that sawmill and I bought the khaki pants. I got them. I'm not saying it was the right thing to do, but I thought it was anyway.

DC: Were there other places where you could make some money besides the sawmill? Or was that pretty much . . .

LJS: That was pretty much all that was going around then. The sawmill. Yeah pretty much, except for farms and what have you. That was pretty much what you did. We was out in the country, you know, and that was about all that was going out there in the country that you could make some money at.

DC: Do you remember going to the little town—that would be Linwood? Is that right?

LJS: No, it would be Troy.

DC: Troy, OK.

LJS: T-R-O-Y. Troy. Like I said it was about fifty miles below Montgomery. That was the town that we went to. Linwood wasn't nothing but a whistle stop—had two or three grocery stores, little country grocery stores around there and all, and two gas pumps. Had a gristmill.

DC: Where was the sawmill?

LJS: They moved the sawmill around. They might situate it—say they got, might contract with somebody to buy their timber, buy their timber—they'd move the sawmill there until it was cut.

DC: Sure.

LJS: And they'd buy some more somewhere else and move it there.

DC: That makes sense.

LJS: It would always go around.

DC: Did you interact much with your neighbors around? Did your families get together at all?

LJS: Quite a bit, quite a bit. The houses wasn't close together, but they—you knew everybody, and everybody knew you. And yeah, we boys, we always going to find each other, playing and all that kind of stuff.

DC: So you actually had some time to play?

LJS: Yeah. We played. Believe it or not, we'd come home from the field for dinner, and most of the time the dinner wasn't ready when we got there, and we'd go out in the yard and play ball until they called us in to eat. And if there's any time left in between eating and going back to the field, we went out there and played ball again.

DC: Baseball?

LJS: Any kind of ball. We played all kind of ball—grab ball, just throwing the ball to each other and just any kind of ball, we played. That was our favorite game.

DC: What about church? Were there churches around?

LJS: Yeah [softly]. There was a church that we all wound up belonging to at one time or another, called New Mount Pleasant Baptist Church.

DC: Was that a big part of your family?

LJS: Nooo, it wasn't a big part. I mean we weren't—we weren't strict religious people. Religion were taught by my Mom. My Daddy never mentioned nothing about it. But I went to church with my Mom when I was real little—I remember—can't remember when I was so little that she wouldn't let me get away from her. [laughs] She was watching me like—we had what we call a camp meeting. Like at our church it started on the fourth Sunday in August. That was a big day. People come in wagons and trucks and cars, and I mean that place would be packed. Then they had their little stands, selling stuff and all that stuff. And all the women, they'd bring trucks of food, a truck of food, and then they would put some benches together in a certain area, what have you, and then that food was like placed on that bench and everything. You'd go out there—I don't know. If you didn't like what you seen there on one bench, just go to another. Hey, they going to give it to you if you want it. All you got to do is ask for it, you know. That's what it's all about. And that would be the big day. That would kick off the revival, and we'd have the revival until that Friday night. And they'd have like—if somebody joined the church, they'd baptize them like on a Friday. And that Friday night, that was the last until the

next year, we'd have another big camp meeting. That was just once a year. But we had like church like once a month.

DC: Would you look forward to those revivals?

LJS: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. They were fun. You know like the stands and what have you, that was—all that was a foreign type of thing, you know. You didn't have no lot of money to be buying a whole bunch of stuff, but somebody going to—you going to beg a penny or two out of somebody, and you're going to be able to buy something. And you'd get that ice cream—it'd be so hot down there like in August—and that homemade ice cream, you know. And they'd put it in that cone, and it'd go right down to the bottom and start running out, you sucking on that bottom and try to keep from losing it. [laughing]

DC: Yeah, oh man.

LJS: The older men, they would, like, barbecue a hog, and you'd have barbecue. You had to be careful with that barbecue cause by being in the summertime like that, the sap is in that hog. It could make you sick on your stomach. I mean, give you diarrhea, like.

DC: So would they have to be careful how they cook it? Or just be careful which hog they choose?

LJS: No, no. You just had to know that it wasn't the time of year that people kill hogs. OK, it wasn't that, because the sap is in that meat. And we were taught all about that. Everybody knew about it. And of course they would have—they used a lot of hot stuff, hot sauce, homemade hot sauce. That stuff'd be so hot it almost turn your mouth inside out. It'd be so hot, you'd take a bite and you'd start—it'd be so hot you'd just turn it around and keep turning it around in your mouth. The first thing you know—whoom!—you done swallowed it. [laughs] That was good! They made hash. The hash was red hot again. But those were the good times. I always managed to find somebody—I'd get me a few pennies from somebody, either save it, save up some, or something. I'd always manage to have me a few coins so I can buy me something up there. I'd know it was coming, and I'd just get ready for it.

DC: That sounds good. What about tougher times? I mean, those were the times you looked forward to. What were the other things that were not so pleasant in that time?

LJS: Ooh. [sighs] [pause] I never liked working in the fields. And that was the thing that you had to do.

DC: What was it about it that you didn't like?

LJS: I didn't like the insects. I'm scared of spiders and stuff like—you know—and definitely afraid of a snake!

DC: Oh yeah. Would you find many snakes out in the fields?

LJS: They was out—they was out there. There wasn't many in the fields, but they was around. I woke up one morning to find a snake in bed with me.

DC: That would make an impression!

LJS: Uh huh. I'm deathly afraid of a snake right now.

DC: How about the heat?

LJS: We had a fireplace. And you remember I was telling you about your chores—you had chores, cutting wood and bringing in the wood, to keep fires going and what have you.

DC: So that's how you'd heat your house.

LJS: Yeah.

DC: Any electricity?

LJS: No.

DC: OK, yeah.

LJS: No, not while I was there. I left from there when I was eighteen, and they hadn't got that then. There was some people close around that had some, but it just hadn't got to where we were.

DC: Yeah, you were out in the country.

LJS: Oh yeah. But we had kerosene lamps. A fireplace to keep you warm. You'd burn up in the front and freeze in the back.

DC: Where did Mr. Williams live? He was your landlord.

LJS: He lived down at Linwood—had a house right down there at Linwood. That's why we could keep tabs on him so good.

DC: [laughs]

LJS: All the kids knew his whereabouts or what have you. He had a pond—he didn't want nobody to fish in it. It really wasn't too much of a place that you could fish in it, because it had moss and stuff in there and everything. But he didn't want nobody to fish in it. So we were watching it. We was watching that pond. We used to do a lot of "muddying." What we called muddying. Get in a place where the holes—called muddying—muddy that water to make them fish sick and they'd come to the top, you know. So we were watching this pond. So things are drying up and everything. We were watching it. So

we figured it's time now. So OK, there was about maybe eight or ten of us. We met at our house, and we were making all kinds of little doodads—bow and arrows, driving nails through a piece of board, stick end of the board, you'd take it and hit the fish and he stuck right up on there. Anyway, we sent a sentry down to Linwood to watch for Mr. Horace to see if he was coming to town. So when the sentry came back, said, "All right boys, he's gone!" [laughs] And away we went. Had buckets and tubs and everything—yes, we were going there to muddy that pond. And again, we had a lot of fun with that, and got a lot of fish out of there too.

DC: What kind of fish did you get?

LJS: Um, it was a combination of types. Catfish, perch, breams, also we got what they call a blackfish out of there. It was just a combination. It had good fish in there.

DC: Now were you scared about what he would do if he found out?

LJS: Uh yeah, because you know, we knew we weren't supposed to be doing it, but we just had made up our minds we were going to do it [laughs]. You know how boys are—you getting to be daring, you know. So we muddied that pond and we got them fish out of there. He never did know it. He didn't—it's over there in the woods. He don't go over there. He just—cause the land was his and the pond is [??], don't fish in it.

DC: Yeah, yeah. So he let you know he didn't want you in it.

LJS: Right, right. We knew it. But we did it anyway. He didn't know it. Like I said, we done pegged him. We done sent that sentry down there to watch him. When he leave, we know he's going to Troy. We know that. So that's when that sentry come back and said, "He's gone boys."

DC: He had no idea that guy was a sentry?

LJS: No. He don't know. He don't know what that boy's doing down there. He's just standing. He's sitting down there like he's waiting for a train or something. Just sitting around there. But when he sees him go [clap], he come back to that house and, "He's gone!" And away we went over there up to that pond. But we knew that he's gone for the day.

DC: Yeah, yeah. You don't go there just to . . .

LJS: Naw. He'd be gone for the day. Come back later on in the afternoon.

DC: That's certainly clever.

LJS: [laughs]

DC: Let me see now. You said that—I guess it would have been your brother-in-law, the husband of the sister who died in childbirth—you said that he had gone off to Florida to pick fruit. Was that common for folks around here, from around that part of Alabama, to go to Florida?

LJS: Yeah, remember I told you, uh, just about all of us left Alabama and went to Florida?

DC: Yeah. Tell me more about that. Who went first? Do you have any recollection?

LJS: Oh, I had about—about three brothers that did that.

DC: Were the people in Florida recruiting workers? Or how did they find out about Florida?

LJS: Uh, I guess we probably had some relatives or friends or something. We had ways of finding out what's going on in other places [laughs].

DC: Sure. Yeah. But I just wondered how.

LJS: I can't really tell you how, because—I mean, how it started—but I know it was like in place when I came along. Like everybody would go to Orlando—I wouldn't say everybody, but people would go to Orlando to pick fruit.

DC: Would it be oranges, or strawberries, or what?

LJS: Oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, those three.

DC: And what did you hear back from them? How was it?

LJS: How did you get paid?

DC: Yeah, I mean how did they like it? Did it pan out? Was it a good deal, going to Florida?

LJS: It was a better deal than being in Alabama.

DC: Yeah?

LJS: You had to work hard to try to make some money, but you did what you had to do. I've always been small. When I was 21, I was only weighing 127.

DC: Really.

LJS: Yeah. When I went in the service, that's what I was weighing, 127. Went in when I was 21. But—so when my Dad died, me and L.C. left and went to Orlando. We had another brother living in Orlando at that time, and he was picking fruit. My brother Jim. Jim got us on with the guy that he was working for. L.C., he was quite tall, and he didn't mind taking L.C., but he didn't really want to take me because I was so small. But Jim was

such a good picker, and he told them that, "These are my brothers that just came down here," so he took us on.

DC: OK, because your brother was good.

LJS: Uh huh. Yeah. So they put me in the middle of them—Jim on one side and L.C. on the other one, and if I started to lag behind, they'd jump over on my row and pick some, trying to keep me up, because everybody's going up, you know, picking like. We did that for awhile, and then it got where I could keep up myself.

DC: OK.

LJS: That's a challenge to me, you know. They're bigger than me, but I'm going to show them, you know, who I am [laughs]. But I kind of liked it.

DC: What was the age difference?

LJS: Um, Jim was six years older than me. L.C. was four years older than me.

DC: That's a lot, at that age.

LJS: Yeah, well I was the last one, you know. My Mother was probably going through the menopause when I came along.

DC: What was your Mother doing when you went to Florida with your brothers?

LJS: We moved her down to Troy with one of my sisters.

DC: OK. Did you give up farming at that point?

LJS: Oh yeah, oh yeah. That was the only thing that was keeping me there, was my Dad. So when he died, that was it.

DC: Was he able to actually able to work his last couple of years, or was he . . . ?

LJS: No.

DC: Yeah, with cancer, I wouldn't think . . .

LJS: No, he wasn't able to work. Nah, I was doing the work—like during the time that I was telling you I was a sixteen-year-old, and even before, you know, he wasn't able to work. That cancer—he hung around with that cancer about three years or more, until it just [?] him down. It was that prostate cancer.

DC: Oh geez, yeah.

LJS: As a matter of fact, he came to Michigan one time. I had a brother that was here. He came up to here to try to get treatments, but he got homesick right away.

DC: That was in, what, the late '40s or so?

LJS: Uh, yeah.

DC: So you already had a brother in Detroit.

LJS: Oh yeah, uh huh. Charlie.

DC: You said he got homesick right away?

LJS: Uh hum. He was supposed to have been in Detroit, and I'm down there milking the cow, and I look back up to the house, and somebody's standing in the kitchen door, and it was him—my Daddy. He done come back home.

DC: He didn't like Detroit.

LJS: No, he ain't never been in no city, you know, or nothing like that. And he was used to the country, where you walk out the door and walk through your yard and walk in the fields and all that kind of stuff. You couldn't do that here. It was like foreign to him.

DC: Yeah. Yeah.

LJS: He wasn't used to that, and he, and he wasn't used to being away from home. Home was in Linwood. Linwood, Alabama, that was home. And he came back. As I say, he—look, prostate cancer, most of the time you can live with that a few years anyway. So he—I guess it must have lived with it about three years or maybe a little bit more. But it eventually took him down.

DC: When you all got sick—cancer is one thing. That's way up there—but I mean if you got sick when you were living in Alabama, what would you do? Would you have a doctor to go to? Or was there someone else who . . .

LJS: Oh, I used to have asthma when I was a little small, and I remember that I had it so bad until they had to take me to the doctor, because they felt they was going to lose me, I was breathing so fast, panting going on. So we didn't have a car, but somebody else close around had one. So they would got in there to take me to the doctor down in Troy. So the doctor gave me something to make me feel better, and right there is when I started wanting to be a doctor. And it hadn't been—oh, I was about, probably been about ten or fifteen years that I eventually give up on being a doctor, knowing that I wouldn't ever be one.

DC: How old were you when you had this asthma problem and saw the doctor?

LJS: Oh, about three or four or something like that.

DC: Oh, you were really that young.

LJS: Oh yeah. The only thing I remember is that when I went in that doctor's office, the doctor had a big old high-back chair, and he was sitting back over there, and he gave me something to make me feel better. And that—oh, that's what I wanted to do. I could just imagine myself sitting there and somebody coming in there and I got the know-how to make them well and all that stuff. That was my dream.

DC: That's powerful.

LJS: Yeah. So—but it didn't—it just wasn't in the cards. Because, well, my Dad died when I was eighteen, I was [?] to move myself over into his spot, as far as looking out after my Mother. There was my Mother, and there was my niece, Louise, the one I tell you about I raised, what have you. Even after we left from there and went to Florida, every other week I'd send my Mother some money. It wasn't much, but it was all I could afford.

DC: Did Louise stay with your Mother at that point?

LJS: Uh huh.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: Then Louise's Father, he came to Michigan, and then he took Louise for awhile. And then I was in Florida for like two years, and then I came to Michigan. And then it wasn't long after I was here before I asked my Mother would she like to come to Michigan to live. Then when I got that letter and she said yes, you should have seen me getting the money together, man!

DC: Yeah.

LJS: Yeah, I never—I didn't think that she would, because, you know, that was her life back there. But she did—you know at that time she was old.

DC: But she wanted to come to Michigan.

LJS: Uh huh. So I asked her, you know, how come she to want to come. And it was the old sheriff down there, called Ben Reeves—he kind of run roughshod over people. And my sister was living right there by the depot. And my Mother always said that you'd be in that house, and all of a sudden the door open, here's Ben Reeves walking in the house, looking for somebody. And she didn't like that. She didn't like that at all. That was an invasion of her privacy. She didn't like that. She knew that, you know . . .

End of Tape 1, Side A

Begin Tape 1, Side B

LJS: . . . to come to Michigan. She, she took it. And then we set up housekeeping after she got here. And we got Louise back again, my niece.

DC: Wow.

LJS: We were a family again.

DC: I guess so. There's a lot that you just said to follow up on, but I think before we get back to Detroit, I want to see if you can remember anything more about your time in Florida. You said you were there for two years?

LJS: Uh huh.

DC: Were you picking fruit the whole time? Or what were you doing?

LJS: Uh, no. I picked fruit until the fruit season was over. Then I got me a job downtown at the San Juan hotel, busing dishes. I think I picked a little vegetables . . .

DC: Was that in Orlando?

LJS: Orlando, yeah. And then I had a niece that was in St. Petersburg, Florida. And she came over and she enticed me to go back to St. Petersburg with her, and I could get a job over there. And—which I did. I must have got—I must have had about three or four different jobs over there.

DC: What did you do?

LJS: One time I was working at a nursing home, like on the grounds, mowing the grass and keeping it clean and everything. I didn't like that. I eventually found a job at a bakery, where they made cookies and stuff like that.

DC: What did you do there?

LJS: Uh, I helped the guy in all phases of the—mixing up the dough, actually putting the cookies on the pan, and putting them in the oven, where the oven, that thing went around. And when it goes all the way around and come back again, it's brown and it's ready to be taken out. So I worked there for awhile. I kind of liked working there.

DC: You say you didn't like the grounds work at the nursing home, though?

LJS: No.

DC: What was it about that you didn't like?

LJS: I didn't like the people that was supervising me. Uh, I was being watched too closely [laughs]. A lot of times if you stopped and looked up, or wiped your forehead, or whatever—she'd be in the top window somewhere, looking down, telling you to "get hopping!"

DC: Really.

LJS: Otherwise, go to work.

DC: Watched you that carefully?

LJS: You just didn't know. I'd be thinking I'm out there all alone, and she's looking at me.

DC: Were you supervised that closely when you were picking fruit over by Orlando?

LJS: No, no. You was pretty much on your own. Because you got paid by the amount of fruit that you picked. Like the time I was there, we were getting like 15 cent a crate, a box. And the more boxes you picked, the more money you got.

DC: Were you able to make decent money doing it?

LJS: Uh, a few times I was able to pick a hundred crates.

DC: In a day?

LJS: Uh huh. In a day. And that was $15. That was good at that point, back there. You're talking the early '50s back there, you know. So [interruption] that was what I did there, and after I was over in St. Petersburg—after I worked at this bakery—then I got a job working construction. This guy, he like was in the job of renovating houses and what have you. And I liked working there, but I couldn't make no money there. There was a guy—there was a white guy named Mr. Dick. Mr. Dick had been kind of sick, and he used to pick me up and take me to work. I used to carry his toolbox for him—you know he was kind of weak-like—I used to carry his toolbox for him. I got to like him a lot. He was like a Father figure, you know. He taught me—he was beginning to teach me everything he knew. He started to teach me how to read a blueprint, and how to build cabinets and all that stuff. But then I left, and naturally there wasn't no follow-up or nothing. I done forgot all about that stuff.

DC: Sure. You said you left though?

LJS: Yeah, I left and came back to Orlando and picked fruit, because I could make more money picking fruit than I was making there.

DC: So you were learning stuff but you weren't making any money?

LJS: Right.

DC: In construction?

LJS: Right.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: Right. See my thing is, I'm heading to Detroit. When this season is over, Detroit here I come.

DC: You've got that in your mind all along.

LJS: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Oh yeah! [laughs]

DC: Was that because you had a brother there already?

LJS: I had relatives here [Detroit]. I had two brothers here at that time. Yeah, I had two here at that time.

DC: Were you writing letters back and forth, or talking to him somehow?

LJS: No, no, but I knew they were here.

DC: So you had Detroit on your mind, not New York, or not Philadelphia, but Detroit?

LJS: Detroit. Detroit.

DC: Did you know what you wanted to do in Detroit?

LJS: No, I just wanted to get a job. You know, I wasn't fitted for any certain type of job or anything. I wasn't skilled. But I wasn't scared of work. And I knew that if I worked hard, I could make it, you know.

DC: So you went back and picked fruit for one more season and then . . .

LJS: Yeah, when I left St. Petersburg, came back to Orlando, picked fruit, and when that season was over, then I headed to Detroit.

DC: And you were what, twenty years old maybe, or what?

LJS: Uh huh. Twenty. And I hit the city with $3.25 in my pocket.

DC: How did you get there?

LJS: Bus.

DC: $3.25

LJS: $3.25 in my pocket.

DC: What did you do?

LJS: I went over to stay with one of my sisters. I had a favorite sister named Flora. Flora was here, but another one of my sisters was already staying with Flora. And so my brother Charlie, he picked me up from the bus station and everything and so we went by Flora's house. So he was telling me then, you know we were all talking, said, "But Rose is already staying with Flora," he said, "Why don't you come over and stay with me." He said, "I got an extra room, and you can come on over and stay with me" instead of piling up more over here. He made sense. So I told him, "OK." So he was going to charge me, like, what was it, $15 a week for room and board. He loaned me $5 in between the time when I just got here looking for a job and all that stuff. And on my first paycheck, he asked me for that $5 back. But in the meantime, he's got my Mother on as his dependent, and he ain't sending my Mother a cent.

DC: Really?

LJS: No. And he wanted—he talked to me—he wanted me to let him keep Mama on the balance of the year because he had some bills and all that kind of stuff and rented [inaudible] and all that kind of stuff. So I told him, "OK."

DC: This wasn't the same brother who was working at the sawmill way back when was it?

LJS: No, that was the older brother.

DC: OK, yeah.

LJS: And he . . .

DC: What was he doing at the time?

LJS: He was working for Thompson Products.

DC: What was the place?

LJS: Thompson Products.

DC: Thompson. OK, yeah.

LJS: Over on—I think it was over on [Cornett?], I think it was.

DC: What did they do there?

LJS: They made parts [phone interruption].

DC: Um, I think you were just talking about your brother Charlie, who was working at Thompson.

LJS: Yeah.

DC: And you said that they made parts there.

LJS: Yeah, they made parts for cars.

DC: What were your sisters doing in Detroit at that point?

LJS: Um, I believe they was like doing domestic work, I believe they were. Somewhere along the way Flora went to beauty college, but I don't know exactly when.

DC: Uh huh. Um, were your sisters married at that point?

LJS: Flora was.

DC: Flora was, OK. And I guess Rose was staying with her. And what was Flora's husband doing? Do you remember, at that point?

LJS: He was working at Chrysler.

DC: And you obviously got a job, because you had to pay back the $5 out of your first paycheck [laughs]. So how long did it take you to get a job, the first one?

LJS: Uh, about a week. But my first job was at Chevrolet. My brother was living on Holbrook and Chevrolet was on Holbrook, so I walked up there and I got a job up there and worked for a day and a half, and got laid off.

DC: Really. Well tell me about that?

LJS: I got—I got smoking in a restricted zone. The little wagon would come by with the rolls and coffee and milk and everything, so I went up, left my little job and went up there and bought me a roll and a little bottle of milk. Well, you had to pay like a nickel deposit on the bottle, and so after I came back to the job and ate it, I poked a cigarette in my mouth and taken it back—take my bottle back, you know. In between where I was and where the bottle had to be taken, there was a restricted area, and I walked through it with that cigarette in my mouth. So the guy—the guy was standing over there on the side with a suit on and everything, and he asked for me to come ever there. He said, "Did anybody tell you about not smoking in the restricted areas?" [makes a kind of swooshing noise, like what his mind was doing] I said, "It seemed like when I got hired yesterday that

somebody—I remember somebody mention it." And I didn't know—I really didn't know I was, I was in no zone like that, you know. Tall machines and all that noise and stuff around—I'm busy looking at that stuff, you know—busy looking at trying to keep myself safe so some wouldn't hit me. I just didn't know. I mean I made a mistake and I had to pay for it. Anyway, he told me to come along with him. And he took me to the office, and they told me now they're going to lay me off for two weeks.

DC: For two weeks? Wow. And you'd been there a day and a half.

LJS: Uh hum.

DC: What department was this?

LJS: I don't know.

DC: You don't even know what department it was? You don't remember where your first job was?

LJS: No. No I don't. That's a long time ago [laughs]. A long time ago.

DC: They hired you at Chevrolet and you were there . . .

LJS: A day and a half. So anyway, I went home and my brother, he worked days, so I was telling him about it. It was funny to him, you know, but it wasn't funny to me.

DC: Sure.

LJS: Lost what I considered as a good job. So he told me, said, "Well, why don't you get up and go with me in the morning when I go to work. You go over to Plymouths. I hear they're hiring over there. And so when he put me out, we could see Plymouth from there. We could see the smokestacks. So when I started to walk toward the smokestacks, somehow or other I ended up going around it, because the stacks got out of my sight and everything. I ended up going around on the other side and all of a sudden I found myself in front of Chrysler.

DC: Oh, OK.

LJS: And I remember that I already had an application in at Chrysler. So I said to myself, "It ain't going to hurt if I put another one in." You know I'm here now. So I did. I went in there and put another application in. And do you know they hired me right there on the spot?

DC: On the spot. Did they know you already had an application in, or was it just . . .

LJS: I don't think I told them.

DC: So they just . . .

LJS: That one went through. Um, anyway, they asked me what shift would I like to work and all. So I chose afternoon, because I had a brother—my brother L.C., he was here then—and him and his friend, both of them was working at Plymouth. And so I knew I would have a way to get over there without catching the bus if I worked afternoons. So I did. I chose afternoon. I went to work that same afternoon.

DC: Is that right?

LJS: Yeah. I missed a half of day that week, from the time I got laid off at Chevrolet.

DC: Right, right. The next day you're at work. So what was your job there at Chrysler?

LJS: I was running a little old machine—the back axle, where the gears are in there. You know, it's long and it's round. I put the thing in the machine, and the drills up there turning around, you know, and the drills come down and tap those holes and come back up. Put another one in and do the same thing.

DC: Same thing. Oh wow. Well how did you like that?

LJS: I liked it. I liked it. It wasn't too hard of a job. I almost got hurt though.

DC: How so?

LJS: Uh, you had to put oil on those, on those drills—the ones that tapped the holes out. And I've got this glove on my hand and I'm, I'm putting oil on the ones in the back. Got my hand too close the drill that was turning. It started—it started pulling that glove right off of my hand. And I reared back and I gave it everything I had. I tore my hand out of that glove.

DC: So it could have . . .

LJS: It could have messed me up, you know.

DC: Wow. How long—had you been working very long when that happened?

LJS: Not too long. I didn't work there that long anyway. I worked there, I think it was ninety—eighty-four days.

DC: Eighty-four days—so not quite your whole probation period?

LJS: Right, they wasn't going to let me get that in.

DC: Really?

LJS: No.

DC: OK. Did you know that ahead of time?

LJS: Ah yeah. I mean I thought it. I was hoping that they did. But, you know, I know—I hear what's going on. And you have some companies, like make a name for themselves, by doing a certain thing, doing it in certain ways. Chrysler was good at that, for not letting a person get their seniority in—lay them off.

DC: Were they doing that for white workers as well as black worker? Or just black workers? Or do you know?

LJS: I don't know. I really don't know.

DC: How about in your department, when you were working on that axle, tapping the holes out—was it mostly black workers there.

LJS: Oh a combination.

DC: A combination?

LJS: It was just a combination. I didn't look at it from no angle. It was—I just worked.

DC: Yeah, anyways, it was common for them to lay people off before they got their seniority.

LJS: Uh huh.

DC: Yeah. So . . .

LJS: They had made a name for themselves for doing that.

DC: Yeah. I guess, what, they didn't have to give a reason or anything, just . . .

LJS: Well, if you didn't let nobody get no seniority, that mean that benefits, and all that kind of stuff, they didn't have to pay.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

LJS: So you just keep turning over people. As long as there's people looking for jobs—they could get somebody to fill a vacancy.

DC: Yeah, right. What did you do when you got laid off?

LJS: Um [thinks a bit], after I got laid off from there, I ran an ad in the paper. By that time, my brother Jim—the one I was telling you about in Florida—he had come to Michigan.

And he wound up staying there with me and Charlie and them. OK? I ran an ad in the paper.

DC: Which paper was that? Do you remember?

LJS: *Detroit News* or *Free Press*, one or the other. Anyway, that Sunday a job came through.

DC: They contacted you?

LJS: Uh huh. I was the one that run the ad.

DC: Yeah, right, yeah.

LJS: So, they wanted somebody to work at a steel mill. I don't—I think it was on Hoover. So my brother Jim, he had a family. He had probably four or five kids at that point. So I told him, I said, "Jim, why don't you take this job, because you got a family," I said, "and I'll keep on looking." And he did. And Jim worked that job until he died.

DC: Is that right? Wow.

LJS: Yeah, he worked that job until he died.

DC: How long did he work that job?

LJS: Oh, it was a number of years. I can't say how many. But see, he died, he died young. He died when he was 39. But as I said, I came when I was 20. I might have been 21 at that point. He would have been about 27. Probably close to 15 years. It would have been close to 15 years, he worked that job. And, oh, and then another job came through off of that same ad. They wanted somebody—my nose, this damn, this allergy!

DC: That's all right.

LJS: [laughs] They wanted somebody to work in a little surplus shop. This guy, he dealt in Army Surplus stuff—buy parachutes and store them in garages all over the city and everything. And he sold the straps off of them. Maybe somebody might call him and say, "I want a thousand straps." "I want two thousand straps. One inch wide, eight inches long," what have you. OK, well, my job was to make that order.

DC: To make it work, huh?

LJS: Make the order up.

DC: Yeah, make it up, OK, yeah.

LJS: So, I worked there, oh, about a, I guess about a year.

DC: How did you like it?

LJS: I didn't. No, he was using people and cheating them a little bit.

DC: How so?

LJS: He was using people and cheating them a little bit, messing with their time. If they worked six hours, he might say you worked five, that kind of stuff. He worked a lot of people that didn't, that were pretty much like homeless people, like, people that you might go downtown and get from somewhere, that was around some of the places that had day work going and all that kind of stuff. The people was not too stable that he hired. When I started to work there, I used to keep my own time. He didn't know—I don't think he knew I was keeping it, but I was. Again, you know I had this little pencil in my pocket, you know, a little pad. I carried it with me all the time. When I got there and started to work, I wrote it down. And when I quit, I wrote it down. And whatever the date was, I wrote it down.

DC: Sure, a ledger again.

LJS: There we go. There we go. He had a thing—we argued about my paycheck almost every week, and he turned the clock when I walked in. He seen me coming in the door, he'd turn the clock. Well, so I couldn't see the face of it. But I had other ways of knowing what time it was. There was a big clock—they had a name up there. They called it Big Ben, on Woodward and—shit, what was it—no it wasn't Peterborough. I forget. Anyway, I could see what time it was there and I had timed myself from there. One day I wore my watch and I knew how long it would take me to walk from Woodward and get inside the store. So I'd make a note of that, while he's turning his clock and all that stuff, I already know what time it is [laughs]. I already know what time it is. So anyway, we used to argue about my paycheck and all. So one time he told me, said I need not come back. So I said, "Fine with me!" You know? We were arguing pretty heated. So anyway, then I was without a job for, ooh, a few months I think.

DC: Were you looking for jobs?

LJS: Oh yeah. I'd get up every morning like I was going to work. Then usually I would hit three places every day. And then I'd pick me out three more.

DC: What kind of jobs were you looking for?

LJS: Anything. Anything I could do. As I said, I wasn't skilled. But I was willing to work. So anything that I could do, you know that I was willing to do to try to make a penny.

DC: So it sounds like it was awfully hard to find a job at that point in time.

LJS: It was a little bit hard. It was a little bit hard. At that point, yeah.

DC: Were your brothers working at that point? I guess your one brother at the steel mill was working?

LJS: Uh huh, they were working. They were working. But I had got laid off. I'm not sure about L.C. about what was happening at Plymouth, but I know my brothers Charlie and Jim, they both were working. And I had another brother here named Flint, he was working.

DC: Flint, you say?

LJS: Uh huh. And anyway, I used to—when I'd go out in the morning and hit those places, I'd always come back and buy me a paper and come back and scan the want ads and all that stuff. And this one day I got home and opened up the paper to the want ads, and all of a sudden there's a whole page: General Motors Division, Pontiac Motor, General Motors Division, wants skilled and non-skilled. And went on to list the help that they wanted and everything. Wow! Then I asked myself, "Where the heck is Pontiac at?" I ain't heard nobody mention that name, you know. So I called a bus station and asked him, "How do I get to Pontiac? Where is it?" And they told me, and told me how to get out there, told me to catch the suburban bus on Woodward, and it would take me all the way out there. So in a few minutes, I'm standing down there on Woodward. I'm—there's a job in Pontiac, and I'm going to find—going to get me one [laughs]. And I wound up out at Pontiac, and I took the wrong bus and rode it all the way to the end, and the bus driver asked, he said, "Where you trying to get to?" So I told him, I said, "I'm trying to get out to Pontiac Motors." He said, "Oh," he said, "When you get back downtown," he said, "the bus to go out to Pontiac Motor be sitting right there by the movie theater. And that will take you right on out there." So I rode the bus back, got downtown there, bus was standing out there. I went over and got on that bus, and it took me right on out to Pontiac Motors. I got out there—a *long* line was there. I mean all the way out of the office, all the way and then crooking down the sidewalk. I just fell right on in, fell right on in that line. And it was moving like crazy too. They were hiring everybody and his brother that day too. And again, I could have went to work that day, right then and there. But I had on my little Sunday clothes [laughs], and I didn't want to get them all oiled and all that stuff.

DC: Was this like in, what, 1952 maybe . . .

LJS: '52

DC: Oh, OK—just trying to get my bearings here. So you didn't have your work clothes on.

LJS: No. So they wound up—after we took the physical and everything—passed that, then they took us down into the department where we were going to be working at, with our time cards and all that kind of stuff. Telling us where—showing us where we were going to be punching in and all. So this one guy, he was just coming on to supervision—never forget his name, Bradshaw.

DC: Bradshaw.

LJS: Bradshaw was his name, yeah. So he—I was talking to him a little bit, so he asked me, said, "Where you from?" I said, "Detroit." He said, "You have a car?" I said, "No." He said—this one guy, he was running this old Juicy Lucy, picking up oil off the floor, sucking up oil off the floor. A guy named Will. He said, "Oh Will there, he's from Detroit, so why don't you go over and ask him." Said, "You might be able to ride with him." And I went over and introduced myself to him, and told him, you know, what was going on, asked him did he have any more space. He said, "Sure, I have some more space," because he had a station wagon. Said, "I have some more space." Told me where to be at, at what time and all that kind of stuff. That's where I was. And next day he picked me up.

DC: It worked.

LJS: Had me a ride.

DC: How far away did you have to go to get that ride?

LJS: Three blocks.

DC: Not bad at all.

LJS: I was living there in Highland Park at that time, and I was living between Brush and John R. And so about a block and a half, two blocks, something like that.

DC: Did you have some savings, or something to live on when you were laid off, when you were looking for work?

LJS: Uh, my Mother—who else were there at that time?—I believe—I believe Rosa was even there. It was some more in the family there at that point. So we—I got through that.

DC: OK, everybody would kind of pitch in.

LJS: Yeah right. I got through that.

DC: So then you got your ride up to Pontiac Motors, and what was the job? What job did they have for you?

LJS: I was a drill press operator.

DC: All right.

LJS: The rods—you know they got a whole drilled all the way down between them where oil goes down through there. And that's—we'd get this machine I think would hold something like six rods or something like that, and put them in there. And it clamps

down and the drill comes down and drills the hole right down in the middle of it, all the way down through there. And it would come back up. You'd take them out. Put some more in there.

DC: Load it back up, huh?

LJS: [laughs] Yeah. Load it back up again. And I worked there, I bet you, just a few days, and I get this letter from Uncle Sam.

DC: You have bad luck once you get a job.

LJS: Well, I had already taken the physical the previous November, and this was like in April.

DC: For the service?

LJS: Uh huh. I had passed it. I knew I was going.

DC: So you had been drafted before, or what?

LJS: I was—no, it was a situation where when, my draft board was like in Alabama. And I'm here, OK. When I went, I like had my draft board moved up here.

DC: Right.

LJS: OK. So when I went, and when I passed it, they had already made a shipment of men from Detroit into the service, and that don't come up no everyday—it come up some months later. They'd draft some more, or whatever, you know. So I was like between those times. I knew I had passed it and everything. I was just waiting until the next drafting come up. And it came up right after I got this job at Pontiac Motors.

DC: Just a couple days in?

LJS: Uh huh. And I worked, altogether I worked I think it was three weeks before I went in the service. They gave me about, something like about three days or some off before I actually went in. I think I like went in on a Wednesday, someday, probably just gave me like Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, whatever.

DC: Just to get ready.

LJS: Uh huh.

DC: Yeah. So where did you end up in the service?

LJS: Where?

DC: Yeah, where did you go?

LJS: Um, took my basic in Camp Breckinridge, Kentucky.

DC: Uh huh.

LJS: And from there they sent me to Camp Gordon, Georgia.

DC: This is the Army?

LJS: Uh huh. Camp Gordon is right out from Augusta, Georgia. So I went there until my time was up.

DC: You stayed in the States then?

LJS: Uh huh. I stayed in the States all the time. Yeah, they made me a cook.

DC: Oh really.

LJS: [laughs] Yeah.

DC: What did you think of that?

LJS: I liked it. I didn't in the beginning, but—because I thought that was a woman's job. You know, that little macho thing that was in me. But after I got into it and everything, I liked it.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: Yeah, I fell right into it. I already knew how to cook, even before I got in there, from watching my Mother cook. But I liked it. I really did.

DC: It's a different kind of cooking for all those people, though, isn't it?

LJS: Um, yeah, it's different because you're cooking so much. But it's—it's the same. You know, it's just the way you go about doing it. But it's still the same.

DC: Do you have any idea why they chose you to be a cook?

LJS: Uh, could have been because I was trying—I was trying everything I knew to try to get out of the Army. I tried to pretend that I didn't have very good sense and all that stuff. So maybe it could have been on some of those tests where I didn't—didn't test high on or something. I don't know.

DC: So you didn't want to be in the service?

LJS: *No*, I didn't want to be in no service.

DC: Why not?

LJS: That's, that's not for me. That's not me. I don't like nobody hollering at me, and making me do stuff I don't want to do. I just ain't got that kind of attitude that you need for that.

DC: So how did you get through basic training?

LJS: Well, it wasn't nothing to do but to grin and bear it.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: You're there, you know. You got to take it just like anybody else. Take it. You can get mad all you want to, but you just don't let it show too much. You know, you still got to do what you got to do.

DC: So you stayed pissed off inside, but on the outside . . .

LJS: Yeah, that's the only way you could do it, and to keep yourself out of trouble. Because you could get in trouble, you know, if you revealed too much in there. No, I did—I told myself that I was going to make the best of it while I was in there. I was supposed to be in there for two years. I'm going to make the best of it. I wasn't going to rock no boat, or nothing like that. Make the best of it. Make it as easy on me as I possibly could, and get out. But I ran into some [pause] rough people while I was in there.

DC: Well, tell me about that.

LJS: Well, um, there were a Lieutenant from Michigan, from Plymouth, Michigan, that somewhere along the way became the company commander. And we used to talk about Detroit and what have you, you know all the time and what have you. I thought, you know, that we had a little thing going, but when he came over there—and he used to like to come in the kitchen and warm his ass by the stove, and I didn't like that. So I told him—and the food service didn't want us to have nobody back there anywhere unless they had a health certificate—so that was my backup. So when I told him that, he would go out, but he didn't like it. And I would know that he's boiling. But the times that—he'd come back there, you know, I'd tell him, you know, I said, "Sir," I said, "Food service don't want us to have nobody back here unless they got a health certificate." Well he'd go out, but like I say, he didn't like that. He was just waiting on his time so he could get my butt. Whatever other company he had been in, he was used to, like, getting seconds, whenever he wanted, before the other men got their firsts, and all that stuff. And I wouldn't let him have that. I was like the head cook on my shift. And I'd tell him, you know, we couldn't do it until all the troops ate. I said, "But you're more than welcome when all that happened. When that happened, hey, more than welcome." He didn't like that. And then he started his little vendetta. One time we had to paint the mess hall, and we had this walk-in cooler, and it probably had a space about like that [about 2 feet high] between the top of the cooler and the ceiling. You know who had

to—who had to paint back there. Well, paint dropping all down in my face and everything, but I got through it. I knew what he was doing, but I wasn't going to let—I wasn't going to let him get to me, because I was going to be just so tough until he couldn't, I thought. And so one day, he made an inspection, and didn't nobody get a gig but me. And my gig came about—I think I had, I had one shirt I think that didn't have stripes on it. I was a corporal at that time. And I got gigged for that.

DC: Gig was discipline, or . . .

LJS: That's like a write-up.

DC: A write-up. OK, yeah.

LJS: Goes on your record.

DC: All right.

LJS: And that was the straw that broke the camel's back. I like snapped, you know. Of course I knew there was a lot of guys walking around with no stripes on and no. And I went and made my own inspection. And then I went to the—I went to the orderly room [laughs] and confronted him. I said, "Sir, why am I the only one to get a gig for not having a stripe on their shirt, when here's" so and so and so in barracks so and so and so—three shirts, no stripes, and just went on down that line. Everybody got quiet [soft tone]. There was some sergeants just sitting in the first part, and back there where I was with him, he was quiet. [laughs] Nobody was saying nothing. I went through all that, all my little litany of accusations and stuff, and then I turned around and started out. And then he hollered, "Come back here soldier!" [laughs] And then he chewed me out.

DC: Oh really.

LJS: Yeah.

DC: What did he say?

LJS: Well, I don't know what he said, but he chewed me out. You know, because I was out of line in making that inspection. But like I said, I just had took all I could take, you know. So he told me that he was going to recommend that I be reduced in rank. So I told him, I said, "Sir, I don't even care about the rank." I said, "The only thing I want to do is be treated like everybody else. That's all I want." Well shoot, he wasn't listening to that kind of thing, man. You know like, he worked with me, and he did take a stripe. He took a stripe.

DC: He did.

LJS: Yeah, he took a stripe. One time before that, he had me out there on the side of the road cutting grass with the recruits, doing the work that the recruits were doing. I'm the

only—hey, I got two stripes on me. But he's messing with me, you know. This was before I broke. [laughs] You know, he just kept on, and kept on, until he broke me. So anyway, the day I was leaving out of there, I bought me a .25 automatic, a little Beretta. I know—we'd have been talking about how he'd come into Detroit and places he'd go and all that kind of stuff. I bought the .25—I'm going to kill him. That's what I'm going to do. That's why I bought it. I carried that thing for a little over a month. Every day, it was in my pocket.

DC: Was this when you got back to Detroit?

LJS: Uh huh. If I seen a soldier, I stopped, you know, I looked it over. You know, to see if it was him. I'm going to kill him. I mean, I don't think about getting in no trouble. My mind don't go to that point. My mind is still messed up. He done messed it up to the point of where the only thing I want is revenge. I felt like if I saw him, the first thing I'm going to do is hit him with my fist. I wanted to just feel my fist hit his jaw—tear his nose up or something. I got to hit him first, and then I'm going to shoot him. That's the way I was going to . . .

DC: That's a powerful feeling.

LJS: This—I was messed up. I was completely messed up. And somewhere along the way, either somebody talked to me or I came to my senses, or what have you, and I stopped carrying the thing. Started leaving it at home. But I still wanted to mess with him. That didn't go away [laughs]. That didn't go away. But I had sense enough to know that sooner or later I could get in trouble, because when I was carrying that thing, I didn't back down off of nobody. There has been more than one time I've gotten in an argument in a bar where a guy, a big-ass guy—I mean *big*—and I stood right on up to him and he'd—I'm just standing up with my arms folded. And he knows darn well that I ain't standing there for nothing. He'd know I got something. He's got to know it.

DC: Yeah, or else . . .

LJS: Hey, I got the thing in my hand. I got it in my hand. But I'd know—hey, I could stop him, I can shoot him before he can mess with me. I know that. But you see, that's craziness. I could have been in all kinds of trouble.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: My whole life could have been messed up.

DC: Is that the first time you carried a gun around with you?

LJS: Yeah.

DC: Yeah, OK.

LJS: I remember one time—I had it in my car that day too. It was real snowy. I met—the cab was coming up the street and cars on both sides, snow and everything. He passed a place that he could have pulled out and let me by.

DC: Was this somebody you don't know?

LJS: Right. It was a cab driver. Cab driver. So I pulled—we're coming in and we're meeting each other. So I stopped, and he stopped. And then he stayed there for a little while. He's thinking "I'm going to back up and try to find a place to get out," when he just passed a place. Well I didn't—and he pulled up there and he bumped his car into mine. And then he backed up. I was saying, "This has got to be the world's biggest fool here." So I pulled out and I bumped him, and then I backed up. And I seen him—he looked like he was trying to get out of the car or something. When I saw that, I started to go up under the seat [laughs]. And he saw me. He saw my head go down like that. He knew I was getting something. He backed up into that empty space and let me by. I would have stood there until all hell froze over. I wasn't going anywhere.

DC: You were taking no shit at that point, huh?

LJS: No, no. None at all. My mind is still messed up. I could have gotten . . .

DC: Do you think that this was from your experience from that guy in the Army and stuff?

LJS: That's what messed it up. He did, yeah. He messed it up.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

LJS: I couldn't get him in there, because I knew I'd get messed up in there. But I thought once I was out, nothing could touch me. But I was wrong, you know. You still got laws and things governing you. But that's just how I wasn't thinking.

DC: But you were that close on several occasions.

LJS: Hey, my mind was ready to snap. Done already got it to a point [laughs] where it was drawn too tight. Man, it was ready to snap.

DC: Yeah. And when did you come back to Detroit? How long did you serve? For two years, is that right?

LJS: Two years.

DC: So what would it be, '54 when you came back to Detroit?

LJS: Huh?

DC: In 1954, that you came back to Detroit?

LJS: Right, right.

DC: OK, and were you able to find—did you get your job back?

LJS: Oh yeah. Same identical machine.

DC: The drill press operator.

LJS: Yeah. See, in the contract it tells you that an employee—it don't say "seniority employee." It said "employee." You know, talking about him being able to get his job back and all that kind of stuff, you know.

DC: You get to keep your seniority while you're in the service.

LJS: Right, seniority goes on as you're away.

DC: But I've talked with a number of people who said that 1954 was a pretty bad year for employment, that there weren't a lot of jobs.

LJS: I don't really know—I came back and they gave me a month in which to get back on the job, and I was—I think I was there maybe about three days or something before the month was up.

DC: OK, so you waited a little bit of time.

LJS: Uh huh. Yeah. I took a little bit of time. I had to, man, because [laughs] I tell you, I was messed up.

DC: You might have exploded.

LJS: There ain't no telling. I was messed up, and I took a little time. Yeah. And I went back on the same machine.

DC: How did you feel that first day? Were you happy to be back? Or how did you feel?

LJS: Yeah. I was happy to be back, because you know, I'm getting back into my normal routine type of thing, you know. And I'm looking at the money that I was making, which wasn't much, but it was like steady work. That was—being in the factory were pretty steady at that point. I mean you got laid off sometimes, but it still was one of the more steadier jobs that you could get.

DC: At that point it hadn't been for you, though. I mean, at that point you had been, you know, laid off after eighty-four days at Chrysler . . .

End of Tape I, Side B

Begin Tape II, Side A

LJS: . . . I have somebody else's background that I can look on, and see that it was steady for them. They had more seniority than what I had. They were working with more. And they weren't getting laid off like I were.

DC: OK. Did you get laid off at all that first year back after being in the service?

LJS: Um [pause], I can't remember. I can't remember if I got laid off or not. I don't think so. Let's see,'54, I don't think so. I think, at that point, there was a lot of men that was already in service, and, like '53 is when they started to get the women in there, in the plant. Because there wasn't enough men around.

DC: All right. Because of the war and all?

LJS: And I think, I think, '54 I worked all right. I know '55 was a *boom* year. '55 was a real boom year. And I think part of that was, like, happening in '54. I think it was like, coming up, I think. Because I know I bought me a '55 Star Chief Pontiac.

DC: Oh yeah?

LJS: Ooh yeah, was that a pretty car.

DC: Was that your first car?

LJS: No, my second car.

DC: Second one? OK.

LJS: My first new one though.

DC: Oh yeah.

LJS: First new one. Yeah.

DC: Well you must have been feeling pretty good about your prospects if you bought a new car.

LJS: Oh, I was feeling good. Things were looking my way because, like I said, in '55 you could work all you wanted to.

DC: Did you work overtime?

LJS: Oh yes. I worked a lot of overtime. Oh yes. I wasn't scared of work none. I wasn't scared of work, because I had been working hard all my life. That's what I knew.

DC: Sure. Were you still living with family at that point? Your Mom, and . . .

LJS: Uh huh.

DC: Yeah. Was Louise still there?

LJS: Yeah, she was right there. Yeah. [very quietly]

DC: So you moved back into that situation.

LJS: Uh hum [quietly].

DC: And would you drive yourself up to work once you got back?

LJS: Yeah. Drive myself, plus picking up some guys and taking them too. So that give me a few extra dollars.

DC: Sure. They're chipping in for gas and stuff.

LJS: Uh huh.

DC: Yeah. Were you still running the drill press operator job then, that whole time, that first year back?

LJS: I don't know how long I stayed on that drill press job. I don't think I stayed in there that long, because there were, like, a reduction. And I got shipped from the rod department to the cylinder head department.

DC: Cylinder head?

LJS: Uh huh.

DC: And what did you have to do there?

LJS: Uh, what did I do there? I was, uh, like unloading the line there. Uh, in the beginning, like taking the heads off of the line, putting them on a flat, you know.

DC: To move them on?

LJS: Uh huh. Then they got—put an automatic-type thing up to where it come through the ceiling, about to come down, then you put two heads and then press a button, and it take off and go back up in the ceiling again [laughs], and it go way down in the plant and it comes down and it's unloaded down there where it's supposed to be.

DC: Sounds like Disney World.

LJS: And I did that, and then I ran the water press. I mean water *tester*, rather, where a head that got kicked out or something, saying that it had a leak in it or something. So I'd take it and water test it, to see if it had a leak in it. And if it did—well some of the leaks you could fix, you know, by welding it or what have you. Then some of them you couldn't. And I had to make a choice between which . . .

DC: Would you actually do the fixing, or would you just make the decision?

LJS: No, no, no, make the decision.

DC: Yeah. All right. Decided one way or another.

LJS: Uh huh.

DC: How did the cylinder head job compare to the drill press job?

LJS: It was harder work there, because the cylinder head, naturally, is bigger than a piston rod. I did some hard work there.

DC: Physically hard?

LJS: Oh yeah, physically hard. I did some work there that was so hard until I had to rub my back before I could get out of bed in the morning time.

DC: Was that in part because you wanted to work the overtime too, or do you think you would have been that way anyway?

LJS: No, it was just *hard work*. Um, I was doing a job [pause]—you had to be down, push, push the things up on top of this washer, then you had to climb back on top of the washer, pick the heads up, and put them down below your foot level, on a little track. And that was hard work. There was another guy that his job broke down one day and they brought him around there to give me a hand. He looked at the job and he said, "Shit! This ain't no job for me." And he went to first aid and got a pass and went home.

DC: You're kidding me.

LJS: No.

DC: He wouldn't even try it.

LJS: That's right. He looked at it; he said, "This ain't no job for me."

DC: Was he older?

LJS: Yeah, he was older than me. He wasn't *old*.

DC: He wasn't old.

LJS: But he was older than me. And that made me think, well, I must be a fool or something, you know. I'm doing the job every day. There was a situation from, like, in '55—they was putting in automation, a bunch of automation. But it only went so far, because they hadn't got it all hooked up. I was like feeding the line with the cylinder heads. The line was coming up this way. And they got this opening. So I got to pick up the cylinder head and put it over in that line, like so, and set it up right. Otherwise, if I set it crooked, it's going to hang up. But all that is [interviewer interrupts, but thankfully, L.J. keeps going] pulling like crazy, my belly and my back. But that was hard. That was hard work

DC: Did your job get automated away?

LJS: Yeah. Eventually, yeah.

DC: It did.

LJS: Yeah. They hooked it up right.

DC: So in other words, you were like the bridge between those two automated sections?

LJS: Yeah.

DC: How did you feel when that job got automated away?

LJS: I felt *good*! [laughs] Felt good!

DC: Where did you go after that?

LJS: Ah, there was other jobs there in the department.

DC: Was that when you went to the water tester job?

LJS: Uh, that was around the same time. You know, I don't know the sequences, but I was continuously working at that department.

DC: Was that cylinder head job the toughest one you had?

LJS: [pause] I think so.

DC: You had to think about it, though, so there must have been some . . . .

LJS: Oooooh. [laughing] Ooooh yes! Ooooh yes! There was some hard jobs.

DC: Oh man. OK, so you had a bunch of them in there—it's hard to tell the sequence—you had the water tester and some others. Do any of the other jobs you and stick out in your mind?

LJS: In that department?

DC: Yeah.

LJS: Umm, I think I talked about most of them. There were—I used to handle stock all up and down the line. At that time I was thinking that if I worked hard, somebody would notice and reward me—like give me a different job or make me a foreman or something, which at that time didn't hardly have no black foremens out there.

DC: Yeah. Did you ever find that people did notice your effort?

LJS: No.

DC: No.

LJS: No, they noticed the white guys' effort, but they didn't notice mine.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: I'd be working along with a white guy, and that Monday, maybe they'd bring him in there and make him a job setter.

DC: OK.

LJS: You know, so he's in charge of running the stuff through the machines or what have you, running the line. And I'm still out there handling the stock. And it got to the point where I realized that I wasn't going anywhere like that. So then I started doing what I had to do to get by.

DC: Stopped giving the extra . . .

LJS: No extra. No extra at all.

DC: Yeah, because what would be the point?

LJS: So, it was General Motors—they were kind of known for being prejudiced. It got to that point where I was down in that same department—I was loading a broach, where a big old broach would come by, that'd got two teeth in it, come by and shave the head off and make them smooth, whatever. Um, they were having a reduction and there was a guy from Puerto Rico, named Sammy, and they called down in the department to find out if Sammy could read and write English. And it was another guy, a black guy, named

Lawrence Coleman, he got transferred from the crankshaft department. And me and him were the only two blacks in this transfer, and I think it was twelve white guys. Sammy, I'm counting him as one of the white guys.

DC: OK, the Puerto Rican, yeah.

LJS: All of them went on inspection.

DC: Oh yeah.

LJS: Every one of them. Plus, they didn't have enough. They had to borrow some guys off of the production line and to use them as inspectors. Me and Lawrence, we went on the assembly line.

DC: Is that right?

LJS: Yes.

DC: In that time of reduction? Moving you around?

LJS: Uh huh. That was the time when all of us came into the motor line. All of us came into the motor line, where they actually made the motor up.

DC: Inspection is a better job, obviously.

LJS: Oh yeah. Inspection, you're looking to see—you ain't putting nothing on. You know, hey! So, now that hit me real hard there.

DC: Do you remember when that was? How old you were, or when that was?

LJS: Um, I don't remember the exact year. I think it was—it was in the '60s. Early '60s.

DC: OK.

LJS: Anyway, I had a habit of reading minutes and everything from labor relations and the union meetings and all that stuff. I got a little bit intrigued with that, you know, reading about different people's cases and stuff that they was arguing. Anyway, when me and Lawrence wound up on the motor line, then, you know, it's right out in the open. All the white guys going on inspection, plus you're borrowing some from production, and using them as inspectors. And me and Lawrence go on the assembly line. So, I talked to Lawrence—I told Lawrence, let's write a grievance on this. Let's write a racial discrimination grievance, I said, because it's clear—it's clear what they have done. So we did. We got together.

DC: [interrupted by the mail carrier] The mail? Do you want to get it? [pause] You filed this grievance sometime in the early '60s?

LJS: Yeah.

DC: What happened?

LJS: We wrote the grievance. We both wrote it. A racial discrimination grievance. And we—we charged them with racial discrimination, and we demanded that we also be put on inspection. So when the foreman answered the grievance, he answered, "No discrimination. Request denied." That's like a form type of reply. So the committeeman, they came back, and he told me about what went on and all. So I told him, I said, "I haven't even begun to fight yet." I said, "Before I'm through with this thing here, every newspaper I can get to listen to me, every civil rights organization that I can get to listen to me, will know about this. I ain't giving it up." It's hard. [deep breath and sigh—brings up powerful emotions]

DC: Are you OK?

LJS: I try to bury stuff like that, but [laughs] sometimes it comes out . . .

DC: Sure.

LJS: . . . and hits you. Anyway, the grievance were won at the Paragraph 30 meeting. They had the union to withdraw the grievance and they put us on inspection. Otherwise, we were—the grievance was WWOP—that means withdrawn without prejudice. But they gave us our demand.

DC: So they didn't acknowledge that they had done what they did.

LJS: Right. But they gave us our demand [laughs]. So that's what we [went to the union ??] So we got on inspection. OK, with that money we're supposed to go on inspection. Then, we hear rumors that none of the foremens wants us.

DC: Oh.

LJS: So I go to Lawrence, and I said, "Lawrence, see that box right there?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "We come in here Monday, we'll go and we'll sit on that box right there. We'll punch in. We'll punch in, we'll go and sit on that box." We will see if anybody wants us. I said, "Nobody comes and gets us, nobody wants us, we'll sit on that box all day long. And on Tuesday, we'll do it all over again. We'll keep doing it. We'll see. We'll see if anybody wants us." So we didn't hardly get a chance to sit on the box before there come a foreman, a foreman named [loud voice] Riley Fellows.

DC: Riley Fellows?

LJS: He come trying to make some kind of excuse: "It's about time we got some new blood in here or something." And I looked at Lawrence, and he looked at me and all—OK

[somewhat sarcastically]. Anyway, he took me to this little machine that was running right next to the line, like testing the—I forget what piece it was I was testing—to see if it had holes in it, or if it would hold pressure, and what have you. And I wasn't there too very long—I don't know how long, maybe about a week or two or something—Riley came in one day, he said, "L.J., I'm sorry to lose you, man. You're a good worker," and all that stuff. "What do you mean?" He said, "Got a transfer for you." And he handed the transfer to me. I scanned it real fast. And man the anger started coming on. Then I started to read it real closely, and then the—I handed it back to him. He said, "What's the matter?" I said, "I don't want this." I said, "I ain't put in for no transfer." He said, "Well this is what I got when I came through the office today." I said, "Well I can't help that, Riley." I said, "I ain't put in for no transfer!" He said, "Well, I don't know." He said, "Let me go and see if I can find out what's going on." So he goes away, come back later on—this old General Foreman, he had [a broken arm?]. He came up there, and he don't want to listen—the General Foreman, he don't want to listen to nothing. He told Riley, "Get his badge!" I said, "Riley, what the hell is going on, man?" He said, "Well, L.J., it seemed like some woman from Plant 8 is bumping you." I said, "From Plant 8 is bumping me? How can that be?" "I don't know." I said, "Look. Get me the committeeman up here." So, the committeeman was named Pete Wilbanks. He came up. And it just happened I'm somewhat of a pack rat. The last transfer that I had put in for had been functioned.

DC: What does that mean, "functioned"?

LJS: That means that they—it went through and it took me where I wanted to go, which was always back to the cylinder head department. That's where I wanted to be. But it had been functioned. I had already went back. And so I had a copy of it there. And I showed it to the committeeman and everything. So he went away, and it was later on, the day shift was about over, and he came back. He said—no, no, it was the next day he came back. He said, "Did they give you your badge back?" I said, "Nah, they didn't give me no badge back." I said, "Pete, what happened man? What did they say?" He said—well anyway, he said, "I got it all settled." I said, "What did they say?" He said, aw you know, so and so and so and so, you know. And then he walked off. Just sloughed it off.

DC: He didn't tell you.

LJS: No. But I found out sometime later that he was behind it. That they done took a look at my record and seen every time I got shipped out of that cylinder head department, I always put in to go back there. So they figured that I'd be so glad to go back to that cylinder head department that I would sign the thing and go back there, and they got me off of inspection. No, no. I told them, I said, just because they didn't want me here, I ain't *never* going to leave. I'm going to stay here always. I ain't never going nowhere! I'm staying in inspection always. And that's exactly what I did. When I retired, I retired off of inspection.

DC: You're kidding me.

LJS: Yes I did. I wasn't going nowhere.

DC: In that same department?

LJS: In that same department. Then I got to be committeeman. And whew, talk about giving somebody some hell. I gave them some hell! I ain't going to lie about that. I did. I gave them some hell.

DC: Yeah. When did you become a committeeman?

LJS: '66. Not long after I went on inspection.

DC: I'll sneak up on that in a second. Um, did you sense that—had you encountered this kind of stuff earlier? You started work—you came back from the service in '54. It sounds like there were a number of years before this big blowup happened, when they passed you over for inspection. Had you encountered similar circumstances?

LJS: Oh, there was circumstances all along, you know. This is part of my life, from my earliest existence, you know, right on up.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: Sometimes, you know, it was so blatant, at that point what—I knew who most of these guys were that was being transferred down there. I knew them, by name.

DC: Should it have been done on a seniority basis, if it had been done correctly?

LJS: Right. Yeah.

DC: OK.

LJS: But you see what happened was, well they got caught with their pants down. They didn't have as many inspectors as they needed. And they borrowed production people to work them on it. Everybody's white, except me and Lawrence. We're not used. Why didn't we go on inspection? We're in that bunch that's coming down there.

DC: Was that like the breaking point for you? Or—I mean, where you decided—you know, like before, you decided that "this is it. I'm not going to take any more." But obviously there had been some aggravations along the way.

LJS: Well, like I said there, I used to work with white guys, and then Monday morning they'd—we're handling stock. And then Monday morning, here they come in as a job setter.

DC: Yeah, right, right, yeah.

LJS: I'm still handling stock.

DC: Now, I mean, did they get assigned there by the foreman? Is that's what's happening?

LJS: Foreman, and from the office down to the foreman.

DC: Shouldn't you have to bid on those jobs? Or is that the way it was done?

LJS: No. No.

DC: That was the way it was done.

LJS: That was the way it was done.

DC: Oh wow, OK. And so, and then this other case your committeeman's behind the plan.

LJS: Because like—if you went on a job as a job setter, you'd have to have a little something going for yourself, or you'd have to know what you're doing. You'd have to be like a conscientious worker.

DC: All those things you were.

LJS: Yeah, you got to be—you got to have something to offer, you know. Like I say, I used to work hard hoping that somebody would notice me so that I can move up. It wasn't happening that way.

DC: But for awhile, you must have thought it could happen that way.

LJS: I did! Yeah. I thought it could happen. Uh huh. But it didn't [laughs]. And I seen—naturally I'm taking a closer look when it don't happen, and I'd see how it's going, and I don't like how it's going.

DC: Now, did you find it was mostly these kind of cases where the white guys are getting promoted, and moved on, or were blacks—I've talked to some African Americans who said that, like, all the blacks got put in the foundry or something like that. But it sounds like you were working alongside of whites but then they end up with the better jobs and you get bypassed.

LJS: That was what happened.

DC: That's what it was at Pontiac Motors?

LJS: That's what it was at Pontiac Motors, yeah.

DC: It's not like all blacks are in the foundry or all just shoved in one kind of job?

LJS: That's pretty much true, though. I mean, when you talk about the foundry. When you go in that foundry there, you don't find too very many white guys over there.

DC: OK, yeah.

LJS: Most of them were black.

DC: Yeah, all right, so that part's true, and the other part's true as well, that there would be blacks in other departments, but they wouldn't be getting . . .

LJS: They'd [meaning whites] get the better job. Job setter, that's a higher-paying job, you know. And you needed every penny that you could put your hands on. Because I've got a family, you know.

DC: Well when did you get married? You had a family? Or did you mean your extended family?

LJS: Well, I started off with extended family—my Mother and my niece. And I got married, the first time, '56 I think it was. That didn't last no time—a year, a month, and four days, that was—I took her home. Told her, "Here's your daughter. I can't do nothing with her."

DC: Oh really.

LJS: Uh huh.

DC: Did you know her? Had you known her for awhile?

LJS: Yeah, I knew her for awhile. But the next time I got married, that one lasted for twenty-eight and a half years.

DC: Yeah. When did you get married the second time?

LJS: Well, my divorce became final on Tuesday, and I got married that Saturday [laughs].

DC: So, like '57 or something. So you dropped off one wife and married another.

LJS: No actually, it was '58.

DC: '58?

LJS: '58 when I got married.

DC: And where was your second wife from?

LJS: Alabama.

DC: Oh yeah?

LJS: Yeah.

DC: Did you know her in Alabama?

LJS: Uh uh.

DC: No, OK.

LJS: No.

DC: What was she doing at the time you married her.

LJS: She wasn't doing anything. She had a young kid, uh, that was about three years old. Two and a half to three year old. My nephew introduced me to her.

DC: OK.

LJS: She was on ADC at that point. So I started seeing her and everything. So we ended up getting married.

DC: Were you still living in Detroit at that time?

LJS: Uh huh [very softly].

DC: Yeah? Did you stay living in Detroit? Did you ever think about moving to Pontiac, closer to work?

LJS: I didn't like Pontiac. Uh, I always liked the big city. Pontiac was a small city. And, I—people tried to get me to move up there. Some people that I might, you know, that lived up there and all that kind of stuff. Eventually, I went off and, when I went to barber college—and I did look for a barbershop up there a few times. But the thoughts of making movement up there just never happened.

DC: When did you go to Bible College?

LJS: Barber College.

DC: Oh, barber! Barber college. I'm sorry. I heard Bible College.

LJS: Barber. In '58.

DC: Oh, you went to barber college in '58. Was that your choice, or were you laid off, or what?

LJS: I was laid off. First it was my choice. I had to get—I had two choices that I could make from this GI Bill. The first choice, I went back and got me a GED. But I still had time left. I could make one more choice and get back in school again. So I used that as a—time to get back, to get into barber college.

DC: Where was the barber college?

LJS: Where was it located?

DC: Yeah, where was it?

LJS: On Adams. Adams and Hastings.

DC: Wasn't far away then.

LJS: It was Michigan Barber School.

DC: OK. At that point, did you think you really were going to leave—leave Pontiac Motors for good?

LJS: Oh yeah! I had looked at it between the time that I first hired in out there and everything. We were having different layoffs and what have you. And it kind of did something to me when I'd be laid off like that, you know. And I'm trying to make it and everything, and I'm thinking, if I learn how to be a barber, I can get a job in any city that I go to, cut hair.

DC: Yeah. Hair always grows.

LJS: That's why I went into barbering—and got through with that.

DC: And so you said you looked for the possibility of opening a shop? Or taking over a shop?

LJS: Up there, yeah. I had—I ran my own shop here.

DC: You did!

LJS: In Detroit, oh yeah.

DC: For how long?

LJS: Nine years.

DC: Nine years. Whoa. Now I'm getting a little confused about when that would be.

LJS: Uh, right after I came out of barber college. Came out of there, I think, last part of '58, first part of '59, somewhere in that area.

DC: And then you worked straight on nine years?

LJS: Yeah. I was supposed to be, like putting in full-time as an apprentice. But I didn't do it. I worked part-time. I couldn't give up my job at Pontiac Motors.

DC: So you worked Pontiac Motors and the barber shop?

LJS: Uh huh.

DC: Gotcha. That's what was confusing. All right. So you were a busy guy.

LJS: But I was supposed to be working, like, full-time at the barber shop. But I couldn't afford to do that.

DC: Sure. How long were you laid off, in that '58 layoff?

LJS: '58? '58 I was laid off from March until November.

DC: OK, yeah.

LJS: Went back in November.

DC: So you were going to barber college at that point in time. How were you surviving? How were you feeding yourself?

LJS: Uh, there was a little bit of unemployment. A little bit of SUB. I think we got SUB, started in '55, I believe.

DC: That's right, yeah.

LJS: Uh, it was very hard. I carried a little old tab in my pocket, a little old pencil again, and every penny that I took in, I could account for. Even if I spent a nickel for a candy bar, it was: "Candy bar, 5 cents," and sub-totaled. I knew. I had to, like, have my car refinanced to keep from losing it. And in order to get into barber college—I had to have $75, in order to get into barber college. Now I got to figure out where I'm going to get that $75 from. I tried to go to the Michigan Veteran Fund, and I told them, "I really don't want you to give it to me." I said, "Loan it to me," you know, "I'll give it back to you." And I told them what I was trying to do. I said, "I just want to get into barber school.

DC: So no money out of the GI Bill for that?

LJS: Huh?

DC: No money on the GI Bill?

LJS: Oh yeah. They paid me.

DC: You got the $75 that way?

LJS: Huh?

DC: Did you get the $75 from the GI Bill?

LJS: No, I didn't get it that way.

DC: Oh, OK.

LJS: Um, what happened was, I went down to the bank where I was paying my car note, and talked to the man down there, and asked him if he would take that note that was due and put it over on the back and just let me pay the interest on it. And he did. And that's where the $75 come from. Plus, the girl I was going with—the one I told you I wound up getting married to—she got her hands on a few dollars [laughs]. You know. But I didn't have to use hers.

DC: Was she working at all?

LJS: No. No, she scraped it up from somewhere. Like I said, she was on ADC. But she—I had messed with her heart a little bit, so she was all in love with me and everything. Well I guess she could see—she probably could see farther in the future than I could. Because I was laid off when I first met her. Didn't have, didn't have a dime. Matter of fact, she used to put a dollar in an envelope sometime, and send it to me so I could have gas to put in my car to come over on the west side to see her.

DC: To see her.

LJS: Yeah, she did it.

DC: Were you still living in Highland Park at that point?

LJS: No, at that time I was living over on the east side, on McClellan.

DC: OK. All right.

LJS: Yeah.

DC: So it sounds like even with the boom times in '55 and the chance to work some overtime, it was still hard to make it, didn't make much headway.

LJS: It didn't last. It didn't last. Like, '56 is when it [makes swooshing sound] went down again. And '57 wasn't worth nothing. And '58, that's when I got laid off like in March,

and then I didn't know when I was going back or if I was going back. And that's—that's as poor as I've ever been in my life.

DC: Really.

LJS: In '58, a crab would crawl all over me and bite the hell out of you. I was too poor to buy it. I didn't have nothing. I just didn't have nothing. I tried to get a job, car wash and everything. I couldn't find a job nowhere. Nowhere could I find a job. I got through it though.

DC: Did you ever think about going back to Alabama?

LJS: No. No. It's too many bad memories. I got too many bad memories from there, from Alabama.

DC: What sorts of memories?

LJS: Huh?

DC: What sorts of memories from Alabama?

LJS: What's with them?

DC: What, what, what were you thinking about?

LJS: Well I mean, like growing up down there—like the situation with Mr. Horace and other people and what have you. You know, trying to get by and working hard on the farm and all that kind of stuff. I ain't got good memories of back then.

DC: Just too hard.?

LJS: Yeah. It's too hard. I grew up seeing how things were, you know, this discrimination crap. And I ain't got no—there was a little old café, right by the depot. We used to catch trains and go down to Troy, and we'd catch a train and come back up to Linwood and all. And I was hanging around there waiting on a train and all. And I was outside—I'm going to go over there and get me a hamburger. I goes in there. Guy ignores me for a little bit, and then he looked at me, "Get over in that corner nigger!" I walked out of the place. I ain't been in there no more. That kind of stuff!

DC: Yeah. When did that first start to hit you?

LJS: All along. It's hit me from a little fellow, right on up. It's hit me. I used to see me Dad trying to calculate in his head and all that stuff. I know at that point. I know what's going on. I never see him go to town with nobody to see what they got for their peanuts and all that kind of stuff. And I don't see nobody coming back showing him no papers and all that kind of stuff. If—they could show him any kind of papers they wanted to,

that would say that they didn't tell the guy to give me some under what you've given me for the peanuts, or what have you. Shit! And every year I hear this thing—they have a thing where when a black guy get old down there, they start calling him "Uncle." "Uncle Charles, you like to come out of debt." I look at them: "What the hell are you talking about?" Hard as I've been working, I'd *like* to come out of debt! You know, I'm watching that kind of stuff all along. And there ain't nothing I can do about it, but boil. I can't talk to me Dad about it, because he didn't allow that kind of stuff.

DC: He didn't? He wouldn't let you talk about it?

LJS: No.

DC: Just swallow it?

LJS: No, see we were brought up under strict disciplinarians. We weren't allowed to challenge anything like kids are today.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

LJS: You took what was, and if it wasn't what you wanted it to be, you just had to still live with it, choke on it, or what have you. You couldn't challenge nothing.

DC: Was that the way he'd been raised?

LJS: I would imagine.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: I would imagine. Everybody around in that area where I grew up at was—pretty much grew up the same way. So I would imagine that they were raised that way.

DC: Well, consequences could be severe. I mean, was there violence, in the area where you grew up?

LJS: You mean from the parents?

DC: Not just that, but I mean—you took some chances. You went to the pond. You spoke your mind on occasion, and, you know, I don't know if it would be the Klan or other white folks or something, but, I mean, were they cracking down?

LJS: You talking about the white people?

DC: Yeah.

LJS: I didn't get in no trouble, if that's what you're asking.

DC: Well yeah, I know, but you took some chances.

LJS: Oh yeah, well, I took them because I knew I was right.

DC: You were right. Absolutely. You were right. But your Dad—one of the reasons, I think, from what I hear you saying—one of the reasons he didn't want you to ask those questions was to keep you safe.

LJS: Well, he didn't. He knew how things were too. And he had to raise me in a way where that I would be safe, where I could grow up and not get hurt. And even thought it was not, um, the right thing that was going on, he still had to raise me where I wouldn't get in no trouble. There was a situation where there was a man that had a store down there. And he had this young wife, and—I don't know—it just seemed like she took a liking to me. We had rented some land from her auntie, that we was farming. We farmed that land for a number of years. And I used to be singing in the fields where I'd be plowing at the top of my voice, you know. And somewhere along the way she'd heard me sing. Because she'd always be trying to get me to sing for her and I wouldn't ever do it. But anyway, she was real friendly. And one day, me and my Dad was over there putting in some fence posts back on the pasture, and she and her family came by in her car, and she said, "He there! You going to town this Saturday?" I could feel them eyes on me. I could feel them—he didn't turn his head and look, but I could feel them eyes on me. And he's trying to catch my reaction. So, he said, "What did she mean by that?" I said, "I don't know sir." He said, "Is she always friendly like that?" I said, "Yes sir, she's friendly." I said, "She'd talk to me when I'd go to the store," or what have you. He said, "Well, you going to have to stay away from her, because she can mean trouble for you." He said, "Don't go to that store no more." He said, "If you're some place, and she comes, you leave." Said, "You go to a place, and she's there, you leave. Stay away from her. She can mean trouble." I knew what he was saying to me. I knew exactly what he was saying. And I acted accordingly. But this is—you know, when you're in that kind of environment, you have to do what you have to do in order to keep yourself safe. There are—oh there are sometimes when people get stubborn and say, you know, "I ain't going to take it," you know. And there—down there were some guys who didn't take it, and carried guns and all that kind of stuff. They was deemed "crazy." [laughs softly] Called them—so and so is crazy. There were some so and sos that didn't take nothing from nobody, didn't matter if you were white, blue, or red, or what kind of, what color you are—uh uh. You didn't mess with them. But as I said, they called them "crazy."

DC: Crazy because . . .

LJS: . . . they couldn't mess with them.

DC: So in other words, someone responding to you could put you in danger.

LJS: Oh yeah. Because you didn't have no win. The judge was white, the prosecutor's white, sheriffs is white—where's your win at? The jury's white. Where's your win?

DC: There's no way out.

LJS: That's what I'm talking about. That's why I didn't have no good feelings for down there, even though it has changed.

DC: Did you follow, like, the bus boycott, you know, in '55 and stuff?

LJS: I followed it from here, yeah.

DC: Yeah?

LJS: Oh yeah.

DC: Yeah. What did you think?

LJS: I thought that they was doing right. And even though I wasn't there, my heart was with them, you know.

DC: Did you know anyone in Montgomery?

LJS: Did I what?

DC: Did you know anybody in Montgomery?

LJS: [slowly and thoughtfully] Nnnnot that was in the boycott. I had some relatives that was there, but I don't think they was in the boycott. But I had some cousins, and I had one of my Dad's sisters, was living there too.

DC: What about the situation in Detroit, I mean. Compare Detroit when you got here to Alabama when you left—on race relations.

LJS: Um, I thought that when I came here, you know, that I was leaving all that stuff behind. But I found out, all that stuff here just been swept up under the rug. It's still—that same stuff is right here too. And I made my self promise, I ain't going nowhere. I'm staying right here and fighting it. I ain't going nowhere, trying to run away from the type of stuff that's out there in that world. Right here is where I take my stand. Right here is where I die.

DC: How did you take your stand? What did you do?

LJS: Well, I just—when something come up, I face it. I confront it.

DC: Like the grievance that you were talking about.

LJS: Uh, that's one of them. Another time, when I had been pulled out of the plant to work in Coleman Young's campaign. They knew who we were. I was like a supervisor. I had a

certain amount of precincts under my jurisdiction. I had these placards pasted on my car and everything. They knew who we were—a matter of fact, they drilled us on that that morning before we went to the polls—telling us, don't be speeding that day or what have you, that they're going to be looking at us and all that kind of stuff. They'd drill us on what to look for. So I was coming on that night. It was after the election was over. And they knew that Nichols had lost. I was coming home. I turned into [name of street] on Milwaukee, and went up to Stanley's—I was going to get me some Chinese food—and Stanley's were closed. So I came back down Milwaukee, and when I got to John R, there were some cops sitting at the light. And I passed by, and I went down, got to Woodward and I take a right turn, and keep on Woodward, coming into Highland Park. They came, they got behind me, and followed me thirteen blocks before they pulled me over. I'm watching them in the mirror. I see them, when I'm passing, and I see them when they turn in on Milwaukee and everything. I'm watching them all the way, and I'm making darn sure that I don't go over 30 miles per hour. And all of a sudden they're trailing me. So anyway, they pulled me over and asked me—what did they ask me?—had I been drinking, I think.

DC: Yeah, sure.

LJS: And I asked them, "What am I being pulled over for?" They said, "You didn't turn your right turn signal on when you got to Woodward." I said, "If that be true, you followed me for thirteen blocks to tell me that, before you pulled me over? Why didn't you pull me over back there when the infraction happened, if that be the case?"" They couldn't have answered that. You know they was—they had a reporter that was riding with them. And they went back there, and they was talking it over and laughing it over, whatever. And they came back and gave me the ticket. And I told the guy, "I'll see you in court." So right after that, two black cops rolled up in a car and asked me, "Hey man, what'd they stop you for?" So I told them. He said, man, they told me they ticketed some kind of complaint [??] or what have you. Anyway, I did that, and then I went to court. And I was my own lawyer, and I won!

DC: Yeah, good for you.

LJS: Yeah I won. But, you know, like I said, I thought that I was coming to a utopia, but it's nothing like that. That's fantasy.

DC: When you first got here, what did you find—I mean, how long did it take you to realize you weren't in utopia?

LJS: Well, after I . . .

End of Tape II, Side A

Begin Tape II, Side B

LJS: . . . whereas I got bypassed for jobs, better jobs, or what have you. And that happened more than one time. It happened more than one time. And you're looking at so many jobs, from the hard jobs that I was doing then in compared to some jobs that other people was doing then and all that kind of stuff. I—it was driven home at that point.

DC: How about where people could live, and where they couldn't live?

LJS: Well, I had—I hadn't gotten off into that at that point, because I didn't have any money to try to get out into no suburbs or anything.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: There were a time—of course this is all part of the same scenario—I went down for counseling, or for testing. When I was in the Army and everything, I was dreaming about having me a TV repair shop when I got out. First I was going to have me a whiskey store [laughs], until somebody told me about the license and all that stuff, and how they had them all hooked where you couldn't get them and all that kind of stuff. But then, I gave up on that. And that's OK. I'm going to have me a TV repair shop. Now of course I always liked to tinker around with stuff, you know. And then when I call and talk to somebody, they would tell me that I would have to have, um, trig and chemistry and all that kind of stuff. And I hadn't had it because I hadn't finished high school, you know. And I went down for the testing. Then they found out what I was best suited for. I made my best test on tool and die. Um, that guy was real smart. He was real smart. He would not tell me what to do. But he was a good listener. He was smart. He was smart. He let me make up my own mind.

DC: The guy at the testing, you mean?

LJS: Uh huh, yeah. He let me make up my own mind, and I had to take a look at that, and I told him, I said, "If I go to school for something," I said, "I don't have no money," I said, "but if I do go to school for something—if I sacrifice and go to school for something—I must be able to work at it after I finish." I said, "Tool and die, I couldn't work—I can't work at that after a trip like that, because they ain't got no black tool and die out there."

DC: All white then, right?

LJS: It's all white. So that's when I made up my mind to go back to school and get my GED. Then he said, "I think you're making the right decision [laughs]." In other words, he ain't going to . . .

DC: So no one's going to say it out loud?

LJS: Uh uh. He wasn't going to tell me what to do. He let me make up my own mind, but he concurred with me after I told him that I think the best thing for me to do is go back to school and at least get a GED. He agreed with me, but he wasn't going to tell me to do it.

DC: He wasn't going to have you knock your head against the wall at tool and die?

LJS: Uh, well I had sense enough to know better than that, because I was seeing—like I said, I'm looking at what's going on out there. I don't find that utopia that I thought I was going to find and everything, and I got to figure out how to cope, cope with that. I got a family I got to think about. I just got to do the best thing for me. So I went through that.

DC: You gave me some mixed examples of how the union dealt with racism—like the one, you got your job, but they didn't acknowledge the justice of your grievance. The other one, you had a committeeman was working against you—you know, the one who was trying to get you transferred back instead of giving you the inspector job.

LJS: Right.

DC: Can you think of other examples of how the union responded either well or poorly to your situation? Did you ever use the union any other times?

LJS: I used the union a lot [laughs].

DC: Yeah? Can you give me some examples, because I mean, it helps to know more specifically what you did?

LJS: Well the union themselves, they pretty much stood for the right thing. There were some representatives that wasn't quite kosher. Uh, just before I left [?] out there, I ran into one. I had got appointed to an appointed job, you know, from the national staff.

DC: OK.

LJS: So I was a benefit rep.

DC: When was this now? Shortly before you retired, you said? Or . . .

LJS: Oh, it was about twenty years before I retired.

DC: Oh, twenty years before. I'm sorry. I misunderstood. I'm sorry. OK, so benefit rep?

LJS: Yeah.

DC: How did you like that?

LJS: I loved it.

DC: Yeah?

LJS: I loved it. I loved being committeeman. I loved being benefit rep, because that was helping people. And you remember I told you that I wanted to be a doctor, right? All that kicks back in there, as to me being the type of person that I am. I like to help people. And it's part of who I am.

DC: So you could solve people's benefits problems?

LJS: Oh yeah. I got a lot of money for people.

DC: Did that factor into being a barber? It sounds like you were helping people that way?

LJS: No.

DC: No. OK.

LJS: No, that was just a way to make some money.

DC: Did you like that?

LJS: Barbering? Yeah. I like to cut hair.

DC: What part of it did you like?

LJS: Uh, the—the words I want to use, I can't think of them right now. Otherwise, I could look at your head, and tell what your head going to look like when I finish it, before I start, So I know where I'm looking toward, right from the get go. It's a lot of creativity in cutting hair, you know, shaping it and making it look a certain way or what have you, you know. And this was what I liked about it. I used to cut hair when I was a small kid.

DC: You did? OK.

LJS: Uh huh. My buddies. And if they wanted a razor line, I held a razor blade in my hand and give them the line.

DC: A lot of trust at that age!

LJS: Huh?

DC: That was a lot of trust at that age.

LJS: Yeah, well, you know I was a buddy. You know, they know I wasn't going to hurt them.

DC: I know.

LJS: But that's the way I gave them the line. Because at that point they, you know, we didn't have clippers that cut close like they cut close now. You take clippers and give a person

a line now. But then, you know—right now, like the shape of my mustache and what have you, I hold a razor blade in my hand.

DC: OK, yeah.

LJS: Yeah, and do it. Kind of steady.

DC: You kept up with the barbershop for nine years, you said?

LJS: Yeah. I ran my own shop for nine years.

DC: Nine years. OK. And why did you stop?

LJS: Uh, it got to be too much. We ran into a situation where we were working seven days a week, and we continued to work seven days a week, and it just got to be too much to keep going over there and then running home, and eating on the run, and running to work and all that kind of stuff. It just got to be too much.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: So then I got in bed one night, and boom [finger snapped], like that, like somebody turned the light on. And right then I knew what it was—my nerves. I said, "Oh oh." Oooh. Then I cut down a day. Then I cut down another day. Then I was only going over there like on weekends. But we still, everyday I wake up, you know, I got to, watching the clock. I got to go to work, you know. I must have did that, like, two and a half years. Just working, working, working. I just walked away from it.

DC: Yeah, I can see why it would be too much.

LJS: I was in partnership with another guy that I met while I was at barber college. So I told him, I said, "Man, you can have it. It's just too much for me right now." So he ran—he ran it for awhile afterward. And he eventually gave it up too. We both worked in the factory.

DC: Did it ever reach a point in the factory where you could finally get ahead? I mean, not necessarily—well, I guess on all levels? I mean, you know, you mentioned that '56 and '57 were just bad years. You couldn't make any money. '58 you're laid off.

LJS: Oh yeah, like I said, about this time, you know, we're working seven days a week and all that kind of stuff. Hey, I'm getting ahead then. Plus, the barbershop is going. I'm getting ahead then. My wife, she was doing a little work.

DC: What was she doing?

LJS: She was working, uh, like, a, for domestic-like. She started out at Pontiac Motors in '72.

DC: Did she?

LJS: Uh huh. Working right out there. And she's working at Poletown right now.

DC: Oh is she?

LJS: Yeah, she could retire, but she likes that money. But no, we got, got ahead then. We got off into this HUD home, buying HUD homes and things like that.

DC: Hmm, what was that about?

LJS: Well, buying them and bringing them up to code, and renting them up. I had—we had like five houses all paid for when I retired.

DC: Really? When did you retire?

LJS: First of '85.

DC: So you had five houses?

LJS: All paid for. The house that I had—the first house I had bought that and was paid for. And all the rest of them that we had accumulated along the way, everything was paid for. No, I found a way to get ahead. I eventually got ahead.

DC: Yeah, no kidding. Yeah. It was a little rocky road when you started.

LJS: But I had to work hard at it, you know. Like there was a lot of times when holidays would come, and people out barbecuing and enjoying the family, whatever—me and my wife would be over there painting like crazy, trying to get a house whipped into order so we can get it rented out, you know?

DC: Yeah, yeah.

LJS: So we did, you know, she loved money, she loved money. And she don't mind working. She'll work.

DC: Were you ever able to take a vacation of any sort?

LJS: Yeah. Yeah, we took a vacation every year.

DC: Where did you go?

LJS: Different places. Went to New Brunswick, New Jersey. Went to Alabama. Like I said, she's from Alabama. She was from there.

DC: To visit relatives?

LJS: Uh huh. I took my kids one year, took them back there and I let them see the old house I grew up in, down in Linwood.

DC: What did they think?

LJS: Uh, they didn't seem to think that much of it. My kids had been shielded a lot, I think, from reality. They've had everything that they needed, most of what they wanted. They've lived a better life than the average life around them. They had a Mother and a Father there, looking over their shoulder, trying to steer them right. And I used to tell my wife, I said, "If you want a tree to grow strong, got to plant the roots deep." Now that was what I—the parable that I was using. Of course I'm talking about the kids. Uh, we got to take them different places. We got to expose them to different things. You know, so we can make them ready to face the world, what's out there in that world. They wouldn't just come up and grow straight up in the air; they got them roots all spread out there because they've seen different things, did different things.

DC: What kinds of things?

LJS: Everything.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: All different things. Right things, wrong things, but we was there to explain.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

LJS: They wasn't kept shielded from everything, you know, like they was exposed. But when they was exposed, we was right there to tell them what's right and what's wrong.

DC: Was that part of what you liked about the city as well? You said you were kind of a city person, and Pontiac was too small?

LJS: No, I grew up in the country, and I never liked the country. And a big city is just right for me. If I do all right, nobody cares. If I don't do all right, nobody cares. And I'm just making my way. And that's the way I always thought about it.

DC: Switch gears for a second. You said you were a committeeman. What years were you a committeeman?

LJS: I started out in '66 as alternate committeeman. After I had, uh, ran into this thing on inspection, whereas they wanted my badge, wanted to ship me back out and what have you—after that, it was a job came up in the block line, and I went for that. I asked my foreman about that, and so he let me transfer back up there when there was an opening. I was trying to get back to the head line, cylinder head line. That was my department for a

number of years. I was trying to get back there, as an inspector, but I couldn't. I got the block line, which was right close to the aisle.

DC: But you were an inspector?

LJS: Uh huh.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: So those guys there, the relief man, utility man, and some more guys that had been in inspection over the years—this guy that was a utility man, he asked me, he said, "Scotty, you ever think about running for committeeman?" I said, "No, not really." He said, "Well, there's a job for alternate committeeman that's coming up." He said, "We were talking about you," and said, "we think you would make a good one." I never thought about it. He said, "Don't give me your answer now. Think it over, and I'll get back with you in a couple of days. We'll talk about it again." Said, "OK." So I did, and I did [laughs]. I accepted it, and if you accepted, we'll get you elected. And it happened.

DC: How did you like that?

LJS: I loved it. I loved that. I had read the book, the national contract and the local agreement. I had read them over about three or four times before these elections were. I knew the things almost like my hand. Plus, as I told you earlier, I used to like to read the minutes from labor relations and shop committeemen meeting and all that kind of stuff. So I had a good feel as to what was going on. So anyway, the guy who ran for committeeman, he won, so he was telling me, "Man," said, "I'll switch with you if you want." I said, "No. I don't know if I'll like it or not."

DC: Yeah.

LJS: "Let me start off as alternate." He said, "Look, I think you're more sharp on this than I am." I said, "Naw, let me start off as an alternate." So I did it, but somewhere along the way, his doctor, well his nerves weren't allowing him to function right, so his doctor told him he should give it up. And he did. He gave it up like in the summertime, probably about half a year after he got it, something like that. So I moved up into the committeeman's spot.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: And come time to run again, I ran for committeeman, and I won that, and I won that, and then I won that.

DC: You kept on going?

LJS: Yeah, I kept onto it.

DC: What kinds of cases did you come across?

LJS: All the kinds. Any kind you can think about.

DC: Yeah?

LJS: Yeah.

DC: Had there been many black committeemen before you were a committeeman?

LJS: There had been some. Yeah, there had been some. There was even some black shop committeemans that was out there.

DC: Do any cases stick out in your mind?

LJS: Um, [hesitates] yeah. [laughs] There were a few of them [laughs more loudly].

DC: Are you going to share any of them? You're laughing.

LJS: [laughs] Oh boy. On one—her last name was Scott also—she was on sanitation. And she went to the bathroom—now they're clocking her—and she overstayed her time. So she came back down and they [?] her, they penalized her. So she called me, and we, we was going over the case and everything, and she was telling me what happened and all. And I went—I went and talked to the foreman and all that stuff. I didn't know, I didn't want to jump all over him, but I was a strong guy, you know. I knew the book. I knew the book—I told you, you know, I went over it time and time again.

DC: You did your homework.

LJS: Oh yeah. And I always had that book in my hip pocket, were I could refer to it if I had to. Anyway, I tried to get them to [phone interruption]. Anyway, I knew that Willie Mae had a tendency to overstay sometime and all. I knew that. So while I was talking to her about the case and everything, I said, "Wait a minute." Said, "Don't they have Kotex machines upstairs in your bathroom. She said, "Yeah." I said, "You know what happened?" She said, "What?" I said, "You was on your way back down, and you was coming back down on time, and your period came on, and you had to go back up in there to get yourself cleaned up. That's what you had to do." And looked at her, and she looked off, and looked back at me. I said, "Now remember what you had to do." [laughs] I said, "We'll stick to that." They cannot tell us that your period did not come on. They can't dive in there and get that personal. I said, "So you just go on and have yourself a little vacation." I knew I had her. I knew I had her.

DC: It's not one you can use too often, but it's a good one.

LJS: It was one that, all of a sudden, there it was. A way out.

DC: What about other kinds of cases? Can you remember any?

LJS: Oh, I had cases where, uh, I had been arguing cases where they were wrong. And I had a—I'm a high strung type of person. You know, I let things get to me. And I have been—shed tears, you know, about a guy, and I wouldn't have known him if he'd have walked in the room. [??] But I just believed in his case, that he had. Either didn't get off or wouldn't get off, got him back in there. Got him back to work. Got him paid for being off, because I believed in it.

DC: So you really got involved heart and soul.

LJS: Too much so. I had my own guy, said, "Scotty, you're letting the case get too close to you." I won. But that was me. That was my ability. I'd fight like a cat.

DC: Did you feel like you were helping people again?

LJS: I know I was. Know I was. But there were cases that I didn't win. There were cases that I did win too. But if I had one I believed in, I stuck right to it. And you know, like, with people working in a place like that, you're going to find—everybody ain't going to do right. And a lot of people, you got to put out them prayer mats [laughs], do a lot of begging for them. I did whatever I had to do, and then you, then you're knowing the people that you got to deal with, to figure out how to best confront them. I had one superintendent, he loved to fish. So maybe my man might be wrong or something, and I might be talking to him about that, you know, and he'd go off on that, on a tantrum—but he did so and so and so and so and so and so and so, and he did this and he did the other and all. I know he's right, before I'm looking at the record. Then—his name were Charlie Henderson—"Hey Chuck, when's the last time you been up to Anchor Bay, man? Been doing any fishing lately?" [laughs] All of a sudden, he's mine. Start talking about fishing. I lead him off in there, and first thing I know it, I hit him again, "I know you don't have to send this guy to hearing," you know, "come on man!" I'd start begging again. First thing you know, I done got what I wanted.

DC: So he was softened up?

LJS: Yeah, I could do it with fishing. I learned that from him. Take his mind off what he was doing, or what's going out there, and put him out on that lake. And it softened him up. I learned that. It was something else being a committeeman.

DC: You got to have a lot of different skills to do that.

LJS: Oh yeah. You really do. You really do. Because you don't know what—when you get a call, you don't know what you're going to—you really don't. I was out—I got a call one time—we had an area, we called it the dock. The train come up there, and get car boxes full of motors and take them all out through the country to other assembly plants and what have you. I went out there one time, and the motor had broke down out there, and this rack that they set the motors on—I think each rack held about eight motors, where

they're complete, you know. They'd take this thing up and set in the car box. They had my guys walking on those oily rollers, pushing that rack down with those eight motors in there. The guy could have fell down, chain could have hit the rack, or anything. Just could have got hurt. And right there when I seen that, I started screaming, "Get out! Get down right now!" And the superintendent, he was down there and all that stuff, and when I got them down there, I jumped right on the superintendent, and he was touched. He said, "Scotty," said, "Wait a minute until we get back to the office." Cause I was getting all over him. [laughs] I was getting all over him. So he wanted me to wait until we got back down there because he didn't want me to show him out. But anyway, they didn't get back up there. They went and got some ropes, so they'd stand on the ground and a bunch of them would pull on the rope, pulling that thing down them rollers and all that stuff. So I was at a meeting up at Black Lake one time, and I brought that up. And this instructor up there told me that I was wrong in telling that guy to get off of there.

DC: Why?

LJS: Uh, he was going on the assumption that I was not a supervisor, and if I stopped a guy from doing what the supervisor had asked him to do, then I could be putting myself in jeopardy. But I disagreed with him, because that's the only time that you can refuse a direct order.

DC: Safety?

LJS: Exactly. You can refuse it, a direct order. Hey, I said, "Hey, if they're going to mess with me because I told that guy to get out of that danger, let them do it. Let them do it."

DC: Got to take a stand there.

LJS: Oh yeah. Done already took it [laughs]. Done already took it.

DC: Were there a lot of safety concerns when you were a committeeman?

LJS: Yeah, they pop up all the time, safety, speeding up the line. Like I said, anything that you can think of happened. You know, you got a wide range of things that happened.

DC: When you were a committeeman, was that a full-time job to be a committeeman, or were you still inspecting and then just . . .

LJS: You were supposed to be a committeeman, like, a certain amount of hours a day. You were actually supposed to work, but we didn't, we didn't do that. They didn't try to enforce that, because we'd give them more problems than what it was worth. Of course we knew all about—I remember one time, we was supposed to, like, work the first hour, and there was some guys that was off at that point, and the foreman asked me if I would go down there and work the line for the first hour. So I did. Then the next day, he come back with that same request again. I said, "Now wait a minute." I said, "Now you came with this yesterday. You came and asked me yesterday to go down there and work for

the first hour," I said, "and I did. Now you come right back again today, you want me to go back down there and work again." He said, "Well Scotty, you know you're supposed to work the first hour." I said, "Yeah, I'm aware of all that." He said, "Well, will you go down there." I said, "Yeah, I'll go down there," I said, "but I got to go to the bathroom right now." I said, "My stomach's torn up." [laughs] He can't tell me my stomach's not torn up. I go up there and sit on the stool for an hour. He didn't know—he knows. He knows. But he can't prove it. Can't come up there and tell me to stand up and look in the stool. He can't do that. I got him. I got him right where I want him, you know. So he—next day he didn't bother me. He knew what I was doing, because I'd do it again the next day if he come at me.

DC: Would he try that with other committeemen too, or just . . .

LJS: Oh yeah, sometimes. Sometime they wouldn't. Most—like I said, we had just about got them to that point where they wouldn't' bother us, because they knew we'd cause them more problem than what it was worth. And they'd usually just let us alone. I usually would go and get myself out of the way most of the time, go somewhere where I wouldn't be seen along the aisle, of what have you, the first—but, uh, we, they didn't bother us after awhile.

DC: How busy would you be in a day?

LJS: Sometimes I couldn't get all the calls. Sometime I couldn't get all the calls, and sometime I could. Most of the time I tried to keep mine up. You know I'd run like crazy in order to get them, because I know if a guy's asking for a committeeman, he wants one. And I—sometimes you look at what the calls are about. If you can find out what the call's all about, then sometimes you would take the more urgent ones then going with the ones that's not so urgent. But a lot of times you wouldn't know what the call is all about. But if you could find out what it was about, you know, in order to kind of sort out which one is more urgent, you'd do that too.

DC: You know what it's like to be on the other end when you want someone.

LJS: Oh yeah! Oh yeah. When I want my committeeman, I'm mad at that point [laughs]. I'm mad at that point, and the sooner I can talk to somebody, vent that anger you know, the better it is.

DC: Yeah, yeah.

LJS: So I knew how it was being on that other end.

DC: Did you like that inspector work?

LJS: Yeah, I did.

DC: I know you kind of stuck with it out of principle, because they tried to move you . . .

LJS: Yeah, I did, but I liked it, because like I said, it's better to look at something than to have to attach something to something. Much better.

DC: How did you find the inspecting? Did you find many parts that were not meeting the inspection? Or did most of them meet inspection?

LJS: Um [pauses], well, most of them would meet it. Like, OK, like in the block line, I had—the job I had was like looking that block all over with all the little holes and everything there, and sometime a tack would break and a hole would not have threads in it. You know, and you've got to mark it up. But you've got—that picture would be so complete in your mind that you do like that, and I have done that a lot of times, and all of a sudden [makes a backwards motion]

DC: Something stands out?

LJS: I start backing up, because it done hit me, you know, that it's not complete. And I back up and there it is. There's a hole that's untapped.

DC: Would that usually be a machine breakdown somewhere along the way?

LJS: Yeah, long lines, long lines of automation, where it's coming, one part does this and another part do this and another part do this and on up that line. Well, when it get up to you, you got to look at it and see whether all those areas had done their parts, or what they're supposed to do, you know. Whether there's a hole drilled where a hole is supposed to be drilled at, and all that stuff. Of course, a lot of time a hole was supposed to be drilled and the drill had broken, and it's just, just there, I mean, there's no hole there.

DC: No hole, yeah.

LJS: But when you look there, that picture going to tell you, hey, something wrong here. And you start backing up there, and there it is.

DC: It sounds like there were a lot less workers, over time, on that line. They automated a lot, it sounds like.

LJS: Well, when they automated, yeah, they took away jobs or what have you, because a lot of jobs that men were doing, the machines started doing it.

DC: What did you think about that?

LJS: Well, I thought it was [short pause] good to automate. Uh, naturally, if they had been doing by hand or what have you, there would have been more men there, but I wasn't exactly looking at it from that angle. It seemed like everybody had jobs that wanted jobs.

DC: OK, you didn't see people who were just . . .

LJS: No. No. Not at that time. No.

DC: OK, yeah. They found something else for them to do somewhere else in the plant.

LJS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Well can you think of questions that I should have been asking you that I haven't been asking you?

LJS: No, I mean you've been quite thorough, I guess. [pause] Uh, I don't know if you asked any questions about—did I explain how a person becomes a benefit rep, or what have you?

DC: Oh no, I didn't ask about that. Can you tell me? You said it was appointed, I think, didn't you?

LJS: Yeah, that comes—it comes from the International union, and comes out to the Local.

DC: How do you suppose they identified you as someone to appoint?

LJS: By me being a committeeman. And see, Solidarity House know what every committeeman is doing out in these different plants, all around.

DC: So you had developed a reputation for . . .

LJS: Yeah, yeah.

DC: Well you got recognized for your hard work.

LJS: Yeah, that too. I was a little bit hotheaded—that came up one time. There was something they were going to have—going to appoint somebody to, and said I was a little bit hotheaded [laughs]. But I think I got the job, but I was, you know, because of my background and all that stuff, some things that I had been through, injustices that I had endured—all that stuff would get back that burn, and turn, and wiggle around, and cause some one day, bust out, you know. And you won't take it no more [laughs].

DC: And they call that hotheaded, I guess, gee.

LJS: Yeah, because it bust out on, you know, come out, like, in crazy ways sometime. You know, maybe you shouldn't get that angry over something-all of a sudden, *bam*, you know. Here come all that stuff out that you've been holding back.

DC: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

LJS: You, you know, something we was talking about today, you know, all of a sudden that brought everything back up, I started to sob, started to cry, man.

DC: I saw. I saw you, yeah. I mean, it's powerful stuff.

LJS: That kind of stuff can mess your mind up, your body up, because it's a form, it's a form of hatred. It really is. You get to hate a person and you don't come out with it, you keep it pushed back in there, it will eat away at your butt.

DC: Did you see that with others?

LJS: Huh?

DC: Did you see that with others as well?

LJS: No [slowly], I guess I was just trying to convince myself in the right way to go in handling stuff. There's different people have different capacities for stuff. With my makeup, I have that sharp thing about me that distinguishes from right and wrong. I'll think it over, and right to a point, right to a T—I—that's right and this is wrong. You know, hey. And it will hold with me until I can try to get it right. If it's something that's going to come back again, and I got to deal with it again, I always start to try to think about, how can I get this right? How can I make it right? And everybody don't want to see it like that. Like this one time, this was just before I retired—we had got a letter form Solidarity House telling us that if we went on, on a little seminar, or something of that nature, otherwise, we had to attend a meeting at someplace that we would do so without any loss of wages. Well, we had to go out there, out over on the east side over there, somewhere, to a meeting one time. When I'm on the afternoon shift, and when we had a meeting, and when we'd get through, it's something like about 2:30 in the afternoon, so I asked my supervisor, I said, "Do you want me to go in?" I would have only had maybe a couple hours to stay out there or something before it would have been time for me to come back. So he said, "Nah." He said, "You shouldn't have to go in after that. Just call it a day." And that's what I did. But when I put in for my lost time, I put in for it for afternoon shift, with like 5 percent different.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: And when I get my check, right away I see that, hey, he didn't pay me for no afternoon shift premium. He paid me just straight for day shift premium. So I goes up and I talk to him about that, said, "Tom," I said, "This is wrong. I was supposed to get that afternoon shift premium." He said, "Why, you didn't work afternoon, did you?" I said, "Nah, I didn't work afternoon." He said, "Well you worked days, didn't you?" I said, "But that's not what I'm talking about." I say, "When we attend these seminars," I said, "we're supposed to do that without loss of pay." "Nah, nah, nah. If you do it in the afternoon, I'll give you the afternoon shift premium." I said, "That's not the way it goes!" I was after him for quite a long time, and one day I was up there talking to him, and he's sitting down behind the desk. I'm standing up. I'm standing up, and I can't get

him to see the thing my way, and I hit the table—*bam*! A glass broke. I says, "You going to give me my goddamn money, you hear? You going to give me my goddamn money!" [laughs] He said, "Look, look what you did. You broke my glass." I said, "You're goddamn lying. I ain't broke shit." I said, "If I broke your glass, where's the blood on my hand?" [laughs]

DC: Ah, you think fast on your feet.

LJS: [laughing] He said, "I think you better go out of here before I get security to take you out." I say, "Hey, you ain't got to get no security to take me no goddamn where." I say, "I walked in this" so and so and so, "and I'm going to walk out." [laughs] But then I had to go and get that letter. I remembered that letter. The thing—I wrote a grievance on that. And this thing went through a negotiation—I had that, where you can go through that negotiation, you get just about anything you want if it's small. They don't settle me case.

DC: They didn't?

LJS: No. They don't settle my case. Still there. And they don't want to talk to me about it. My international rep don't want to talk to me about it. Now I know there's some crap going on. So I go and I'm [?] until I find that letter. I found it. I Xeroxed copies of it off. I sent one letter to the local union, and I sent another letter to my boss, who's over the benefit reps, and then I sent another letter to Solidarity House, to the President. All the same letter, you know, explaining that, hey, I got a copy of that letter right there, you know, telling me that I would attend those meetings without loss of pay. And I'm letting them know that, hey, they didn't give me my shift premium, so I'm losing pay. It wasn't but about $6 or something, but that $6, it's personal!

DC: That's right.

LJS: Even my guys are laughing at me and all that stuff, about that stuff. But I got—I won that case. When that stuff went downtown there, I won that case. [laughs] And I told them, I said, "Look at what I got!" [loud and laughing] "Look at what I got!" I was happy about that one.

DC: You have to wonder what possessed them to try to rip you off like that for six bucks, you know.

LJS: They got in cahoots with management.

DC: Yeah, I guess.

LJS: They did! They got in cahoots with them because the grievant is out there, protesting it, and they don't settle it. They got in cahoots. That's why I was saying, you know, there's some union people that ain't quite right. It wouldn't have been no way for me to look at

a case like that and see where they'd taken money from one of my guys and I'm going to go along with them taking that money. No way.

DC: That's right.

LJS: It just wouldn't have been.

DC: But some would.

LJS: It wouldn't have been. I'd have been hopping on that until hell froze over. Shhh, uh uh. [Laughs] No. But everybody wasn't like that, you know. That's just one here and there you'll find like that. Some maybe don't know no better. I don't know what it is.

DC: Yeah, but you were willing to take a stand.

LJS: Yeah. Yeah.

DC: Whether for someone else, or yourself.

LJS: Yeah. But all in all, you know, I look back, I come a long ways. I've learned a lot. I've become more wiser, with more wisdom that I can dispense out to my family, to my grandkids right here. You know, hey, it all hasn't been a waste. It has been hard, though. It's been hard. It's been hard. A lot of times when things get at you, you know, you just have to hum a little tune or something, walking, do a little walking or what have you, you know. It get at you. But nobody told me life was going to be real easy all the time. So I learned how to take the bitter with the sweet, mix a little bit of religion in there, and I get by. Do pretty good [laughs]. Do pretty good.

DC: I'm really grateful that you spent some time talking with me. It's been an amazing experience for me.

LJS: Maybe it will help somebody to see what somebody went through to get things like they are for them.

DC: It will help. It will.

LJS: When I first went out there, you couldn't read a newspaper or anything, but when I left, we was reading them, you know.

DC: You talking about in the plant?

LJS: In the plant, yeah. Couldn't read a newspaper, you know.

DC: You'd get fired?

LJS: If you didn't stop. If they'd tell you to stop, you got to put it away or what have you, you know.

DC: Yeah.

LJS: But as I said, before I left, I [?] read all you want to. I've seen a lot of things change. I've seen a lot of them, and I had a hand in a lot of them. You know, a lot of them I couldn't change, you know . . . [tape runs out]

End of Interview

From: http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/fort-gordon.htm (April 10, 2006)

Camp Gordon, named for Confederate Lieutenant General John Brown Gordon, was activated for infantry and armor training during World War Two. After the war, over 85,000 officers and enlisted personnel were discharged from Camp Gordon. Camp Gordon, almost deserted after June 1948, came to life in September 1948 with the establishment of the Signal Corps Training Center. The base's training mission grew with the addition of the Military Police School in September of 1948. The Korean conflict again placed Camp Gordon center stage in preparing soldiers for combat. In addition to communications personnel, MPs trained for combat assignments while the 51st Anti-Aircraft Artillery Brigade formed three detachments. During the decade, Camp Gordon was also home to the only Army Criminal Investigative Laboratory in the continental United States as well as Rehabilitation Training Center and a U.S. Disciplinary Barracks.

Camp Gordon became a permanent Army installation and was redesignated Fort Gordon on March 21, 1956. The U.S. Army Training Center (Basic) was activated here in 1957. During the Vietnam war, infantry, military police, and signal soldiers trained at Fort Gordon. While Signal Corps training continued to expand throughout the 1960s, other activities ceased through postwar deactivations and the MP school's move to Fort McClellan, Alabama. In June 1962, all activities of the Signal Corps Training Center were reorganized under the U.S. Army Southeastern Signal School. On November 30, 1967, Headquarters, U.S. Army School/Training Center and Fort Gordon were organized to direct overall post operations and coordinate service school and advanced individual training.