

**Interviewee: Roger Clay Jackson**  
**Interviewer: Chelsea Arsenault**  
**Transcriber: Anne Wheeler**  
**Auditor: Jessica Roux**  
**Editor: Anne Wheeler**

**4700.2587 Tape 4535**  
**Session I**  
**October 31, 2015**

**[Begin Tape 4535. Begin Session I.]**

**CHELSEA ARSENEAULT:** Today is October thirty-first, 2015. We're at the Rigmaiden Recreational Center on the Old Spanish Trail and I'm here . . . I'm Chelsea Arsenault with the [LSU Libraries] T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History and I'm here today with Mr. Jackson.

**ROGER CLAY JACKSON:** Hi.

**ARSENEAULT:** Mr. Rogers Jackson.

**JACKSON:** Right. Roger Clay Jackson.

**ARSENEAULT:** Alright. We're here today to talk to him about his memories about growing up in Mossville, Louisiana, as a part of a project conducted in conjunction with the Imperial Calcasieu Museum to document the history of Mossville. We want to thank you for taking the time to share your story with us today. Now, the first thing I want to ask is did you grow up in Mossville?

**JACKSON:** [00:39] Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:** Okay. Just wanted to make sure before I started asking any questions. So

what date . . . So when and where were you born?

**JACKSON:** I was born in . . . I was born in Shreveport, Louisiana, on June nineteenth, 1947.

**ARSENEAULT:** Okay. And what were your parents' names . . . or are your parents' names?

**JACKSON:** Allen Jackson and Beatrice Jackson.

**ARSENEAULT:** And what do they do for a living?

**JACKSON:** [01:05] Now?

**ARSENEAULT:** What did they do when you were growing up?

**JACKSON:** Oh. My father worked on the railroad and my mother did housekeeping for different people.

**ARSENEAULT:** Okay. How . . . When did they move to Mossville?

**JACKSON:** I guess probably . . . I was ten . . . now I'm fifty-seven . . . I was ten . . . so probably about nineteen . . . Let's see. About 1950. Yes, about 1950.

**ARSENEAULT:** What brought them here?

**JACKSON:** [01:44] I can't really say. I was a small kid. I just came with my parents. I don't know why they moved here.

**ARSENEAULT:** They never talked about it or anything?

**JACKSON:** No. Probably because of economic reasons probably. That's the best I can think of. They never . . . If they did, I was too small to really know why. Then my mother died when I was ten so . . .

**ARSENEAULT:** And what was your mother's maiden name?

**JACKSON:** Parsons[?]. Beatrice Parsons.

**ARSENEAULT:** And how many children did they have?

**JACKSON:** [02:30] There were five of us—four boys and we had a sister.

**ARSENEAULT:** And what number are you?

**JACKSON:** I'm the baby.

**ARSENEAULT:** You're the youngest?

**JACKSON:** The last one. Yes. I made it here.

**ARSENEAULT:** And what about your grandparents? What do you know about them?

**JACKSON:** [02:50] After my mother passed my grandmother raised me, raised me and my sisters and brothers. And my grandfather, he was there, but I mean they were together. But I say my grandmother because she had a greater influence on my life than anybody else growing . . . during the time we was growing up.

**ARSENEAULT:** And what was their . . . what were their names?

**JACKSON:** George Parsons and Florence Parsons.

**ARSENEAULT:** And when did they come to Mossville?

**JACKSON:** Oh, I couldn't exactly say. They were here when we came so I really don't know. But they were here before we moved here.

**ARSENEAULT:** And that was your mom's parents?

**JACKSON:** [03:38] Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:** What about your dad's parents?

**JACKSON:** As far as I know, they were living . . . When we moved they were still living in Shreveport, Louisiana. Some of his family lived in Dallas, Texas. Still live there. But my father passed maybe in 1981 . . . '82 in California.

**ARSENEAULT:** How long did your parents live in Mossville?

**JACKSON:** Oh, my mother passed in '57, and I guess maybe seven to ten years living in Mossville. My father passed . . . No, he didn't pass right after my mother. But after my mother passed he got in some trouble and went to the penitentiary for about three years. After that he moved to Dallas, Texas when he got out. So from Dallas he moved to California. He passed in California around 1981 . . . '82. Not exactly sure.

**ARSENEAULT:** Where was y'all's house in Mossville? Where was it?

**JACKSON:** [05:12] Located down . . . Wait I may be giving you the wrong information. I grew up . . . I went to school here, but I grew up really in Westlake [Louisiana].

**ARSENEAULT:** Okay. See we're trying to figure out where Mossville started and where it ended, and I know the boundary between Westlake and Mossville.

**JACKSON:** It's a whole two different things. I grew up in Westlake. I went to high school and to elementary and junior high school in Mossville. Yes. And my parents, we really didn't move to Mossville. We moved to Westlake. That's what it was. Yeah, and where my parents lived in

Westlake was on Simpson Street and . . . 1310 Simpson Street. I remember our address there. Across the street from the Catholic Church, Saint John Bosco, which is still there now. And my grandmother's house is still there and my parents' house. We lived with my grandmother and then they had a little house on the side on the same property. And my cousin lives now in my grandmother's house. It's still standing there in Westlake.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Is that where y'all went to church?

**JACKSON:**      Pardon?

**ARSENEAULT:**      Is that where y'all went to church?

**JACKSON:**      [06:35] At Saint John Bosco? No, we were Baptist. It was the Catholic Church. It was built during the time we was growing up. I went to church at Good Hope Baptist Church. It was down maybe about half a mile from the Catholic Church but on the same street, on Sampson Street.

**ARSENEAULT:**      And what did your house look like growing up?

**JACKSON:**      What do you mean what did it look like?

**ARSENEAULT:**      Do you remember? Can you describe it?

**JACKSON:** It was little. Plain. It wasn't a brick house. It was a wood frame house with asbestos siding on it.

**ARSENEAULT:** Yes, because they used that back in the day.

**JACKSON:** [07:27] It was about three bedrooms, kitchen, hallway, bathroom. It was an okay house, for that time. My grandmother kept her house real clean, and my mother too. My grandmother insisted on it. She was a true soldier.

**ARSENEAULT:** What kinds of things would she do? Just like . . .

**JACKSON:** Oh this is after my mother passed and stuff and we were staying directly with my grandmother. She taught us how to wash clothes, how to sort clothes out, how to iron clothes, how to cook, how to clean up. You did it, because if you didn't, you were in trouble. It didn't take a whole lot of persuading from my grandmother to get you to do what you were supposed to do. Me and my brother and my sister, we did whatever my grandmother told us to do, and then you had your free time but you couldn't go out and . . . I loved to play baseball. My brothers did too. But you had to do all your work first. You had to do your ironing and stuff. My grandmother didn't believe in getting up and ironing when it was school time. You ironed all your clothes and stuff. You got up early Saturday and you'd wash your jeans and everything, and dry them out and by the time you got a chance to get away, it would be maybe three or four in the evening. You had to do all your washing and ironing and stuff on one day. That was how it was done.

My grandmother was a great cook. We had a lot of . . . We weren't rich or anything, but

we always had a lot of good food. My grandmother cooked enough all the time. Her only thing about eating was if you got seconds or whatever, you could eat as much as you want, but as long . . . If you take it . . . if you ask for it, you eat it. Not eat some of it and throw it away because she didn't believe in about throwing food away. We had some great times. My grandmother used to have the Baptist preacher come and eat at our house, so the Baptist preacher know where the good food is and he would come and eat on Sundays at our house. My grandmother was the best cook around.

[10:13] I learned a lot from her. Not only to cook, but like to preserve figs and pears, and how to make peach cobblers, blackberry cobblers, and biscuits, and yeast rolls, and all of that. Still can do it now. I mean, I learned from . . . I brought some chili today that was real great I made from just learning watching my grandmother. I used to be around a lot in the kitchen and she'd have me get this thing, get this . . . mixing up things and stuff. I was always asking questions and stuff about why she was doing this. Why you doing it? Why you put this in it? That's the way I learned to cook with my grandmother growing up.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Did she have a famous recipe?

**JACKSON:** [10:58] A famous one? No. Look like everything was . . . My grandmother could cook everything. German . . . That's the very first German chocolate cake I ever ate was one my grandmother made. My grandmother used to make real coconut cakes. I mean, when you have to break the coconut and grind it and all this. The real coconut.

**ARSENEAULT:**      No one does that anymore.



**JACKSON:** Not from in the store. You used the real coconut. Yes, there it is.

**ARSENEAULT:** Did you have a favorite food she would make?

**JACKSON:** [11:35] No, because everything seemed to be good. Everything! It was hard to have a favorite.

**ARSENEAULT:** That's Mr. Leroy.

**JACKSON:** Oh, that's Blunt. Yes, you know him?

**ARSENEAULT:** We're trying to interview his mom.

**JACKSON:** You know him? Okay.

**ARSENEAULT:** Mr. Leroy.

**JACKSON:** Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:** Yes, indeed. Ms. Vera.

**JACKSON:** He in his camouflage stuff.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Looking good.

**JACKSON:**      Look like . . . Yes, a great dude.

**ARSENEAULT:**      So did y'all have a garden growing up?

**JACKSON:**      [12:06] Yes. My grandfather was like a professional farmer. He could . . . He would . . . My grandmother could cook and he could grow everything.

**ARSENEAULT:**      That's the perfect couple.

**JACKSON:**      Yes. He could grow everything. I'm talking about like peanuts and strawberries and sugarcane. Anything my grandfather . . . you could think of that, within reason, people ate like greens, and cabbage, and squash, okra anything. We had a garden, a big garden, and a well that you could put a watermelon in a bucket and sit it down into the spring water when it chills and gets cold you pull it up and cut it. That's . . . Yes. You don't know anything about that I don't think.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Sounds like the good old days.

**JACKSON:**      Yes. Put a watermelon in the bucket let it down into the water and sit it in there for about thirty minutes and the water was coming like from underground, and the well would always be . . . it had water in it. It was an underground spring. He'd drill down make a well and

you just put the water melon in there. You could also put it in the refrigerator, but we thought it tasted better and stuff doing it in a well. We all . . . my brothers and I liked to put it down in the well and get it cold.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Cooler.

**JACKSON:** [13:32] Yes. It seemed to be anyway. See we always thought it tastes better.  
[laughs]

**ARSENEAULT:**      There may be something to it.

**JACKSON:**      Yes, the natural thing. Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      So your grandfather was a professional farmer?

**JACKSON:**      That's what I call him.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Did he . . .

**JACKSON:**      But he didn't sell stuff to feed . . . He gave a lot of stuff away and stuff. I call him a professional farmer because he could do it all. Yes. He knew how to do everything. I mean, he knew how to make things grow. In the watching plant things it was like he had some rows of . . . in the garden. You know what a garden row looks like, right? He would like have like seeds and

things too, like mustard seeds or whatever. In the ground, in the row, he would put his thing in like this, like stick it down in here, and drop a little seed or whatever and just cover it up. Because he would use his finger, and go all the way down, and that's how he planted.

In planting, he said not to plant the same crop the next year where you had planted a crop stuff. If he planted corn this year in this spot, in this area, in these rows or whatever, change it around and plant something different. Don't plant the same thing there next year. I don't know what was . . . Well the purpose was that it wouldn't grow. It wouldn't grow good. It wouldn't grow if you put the same thing right there the next year. It wouldn't grow good. I mean, it would grow but it would be a big harvest like it was before. So it was better to change whatever you grew here. If you grew corn here, put some mustard greens here the next year.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Did he plant by the moon or did he plant by the almanac?

**JACKSON:** [15:34] [laughs] I couldn't tell you. Whatever it was the moon or the almanac. All I know is my grandfather planted things each spring, and in winter, or whatever time of year it was to plant it. I don't know if he was looking at the moon or reading an almanac or what, but it would grow.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Whatever he was doing it worked.

**JACKSON:**      Yes. It worked.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Did y'all have chores on the farm?

**JACKSON:** We wasn't on a farm. We wasn't on a farm, lady. No, not really. I mean we kind of came to . . . Well you could say harvested but it wasn't . . . It was a nice sized garden but we helped out my grandfather when he needed like to cut the okra or whatever when the stuff was ripe. Yes, we pitched in and helped them . . . got it in. Yes, my grandmother preserved a lot of food in jars and things like jelly. You know what a mayhaw is? Or have you ever heard of them?

**ARSENEAULT:** [16:39] I've heard of mayhaw jelly.

**JACKSON:** Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:** But I don't know what a mayhaw is.

**JACKSON:** Yes, mayhaw jelly. You make the jelly from the mayhaw.

**ARSENEAULT:** What is a mayhaw?

**JACKSON:** You remember mayhaw jelly then right?

**ARSENEAULT:** [16:48] I've heard of the jelly, but I don't know what a mayhaw is.

**JACKSON:** A mayhaw is a wild plum.

**ARSENEAULT:** Okay.

**JACKSON:** Yes. It looks like a little red apple. I mean, like it's more . . . You know what the . . . What you call it? A maraschino cherry?

**ARSENEAULT:** Yes.

**JACKSON:** The cherry with the long stem.

**ARSENEAULT:** [17:07] The maraschino.

**JACKSON:** Yes. Well this is what it looked like. But it's not red it's more of an orange color.

**ARSENEAULT:** Okay.

**JACKSON:** Not really red.

**ARSENEAULT:** So it's not really plum color?

**JACKSON:** [17:17] Pardon?

**ARSENEAULT:** It's not the color of a plum, but it's the size of a plum?

**JACKSON:** No not the size of . . . It's like the small apple. I mean like . . .

**ARSENEAULT:**      It's the size of a cherry and it's yellow.

**JACKSON:**      No, it's not really yellow. It's orange. It's got an orange color. It may have a little yellowish color to it too, but it's a wild plum. It's tart, but it makes some of the best jelly. Have you ever eaten any, or you just heard of it?

**ARSENEAULT:**      I've just heard of it.

**JACKSON:**      Yes it's a great jelly.

**ARSENEAULT:**      It's good? So how would she make it?

**JACKSON:**      [17:52] Like most jellies you have to get the fruit, wash it, and then if you going to preserve it and can it, putting it in a jar, you have to wash the jars out. That's what you do first. Get your jars ready, but you going to have to deal with them again though. But you get them ready. You wash them in hot water. Then you boil them in hot water, take it out clean . . . I mean, rinse them out, and then boil it in hot water. This is to keep bacteria, to sterilize it really good. But the cooking process, you wash off the fruit, the mayhaws. Put sugar in it. The amount of sugar you want, but then you got to taste it once you boil it. Same way with berries or whatever. You put sugar in it and water and you boil it. And then you strain it. But once you strain it, okay, you ready to put it into . . . back into a pot that's just liquid. You have to add what you call a sure gel.

**ARSENEAULT:**      What is it?

**JACKSON:** [19:08] Sure gel.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Sheer gel?

**JACKSON:**      Sure, S-U-R-E.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Sure gel.

**JACKSON:**      Sure gel.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Okay.

**JACKSON:**      Yes. It's a mixture to make it gel. Like Jell-O does, but you boil it and you add your sugar in there too, then into your mixture. I said you put sugar when you first put the fruit together, but you don't. You boil the fruit first and then you strain it. Once you put it on the fire and stuff you pour your liquid in and strain so there's nothing but clear liquid . . . but from the plum and the water. Then you add your sugar, and then your sure gel, and you're stirring around and let it cook for however amount of time it says on the sure gel box or whatever. My grandmother never worried about that. She had done it so many times growing up, she knew when it was time, whatever, to take it off. Then you put it in jars and then it's going to . . . You pour it in a pint jar . . . the Mason jar. You heard of a Mason jar, haven't you? Okay.



**ARSENEAULT:**      It's come back in fashion now.

**JACKSON:** [20:17] Right. Yes. So you pour it in there, and to seal it up you have to have a ring and a lid.

**ARSENEAULT:**      I've seen that.

**JACKSON:** You know that? Then you put that on there. Then you put them back into some hot water in a pot, or whatever big enough, to cover them. You pour the water over the top. Heat your water again. Be boiling.

**ARSENEAULT:**      So you boil it . . . you boil the cans, then you boil the jelly, and then you boil it when it's back in the can?

**JACKSON:** Yes, back into the jar.

**ARSENEAULT:**      [20:51] Okay.

**JACKSON:** You boil it again once you put the seal and the ring on it. That is for the purpose of . . . the ring . . . no, the seal has rubber on it.

**ARSENEAULT:**      And melts it?

**JACKSON:** Yes, and when you screw the ring onto it, okay, it's tight. But it's not sealed good, so therefore you put it back into some . . . put it in some water and let the water boil and the heat from the water is going to melt that rubber some from inside and put the tighten on there and then that's how you seal it. Take it out once you know it's boiled enough. You maybe leave it in there about fifteen to twenty minutes. Let it boil, and cut the fire or whatever. Take them out with some tongs or whatever. Set it down and you're set. At that time it's still hot and liquid but it's going to, as it cools it's going to gel up to jelly because of the sure gel. So there you go.

**ARSENEAULT**      [21:54] Now I can make jelly.

**JACKSON:** Yes, it's not that hard.

**ARSENEAULT:** Did y'all have livestock growing up?

**JACKSON:** No. Oh, we had a . . . yes, a lot of chickens and turkeys and . . . You know what a guinea is?

**ARSENEAULT:** That's a hen? Guineas?

**JACKSON:** What?

**ARSENEAULT:** [22:16] I don't know, maybe not. It looks like a small chicken?

**JACKSON:** Yes. It's shaped like a football kind of. It's gray.

**ARSENEAULT:** It's got a weird thing on its head like a little plume?

**JACKSON:** Yes kind of. Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:** I think I know what you're talking about.

**JACKSON:** Yes. Look like a little small turkey. Small, yes, and shaped like a football.

**ARSENEAULT:** I've actually eaten that.

**JACKSON:** Pardon?

**ARSENEAULT:** [22:39] I've actually eaten that.

**JACKSON:** Yes. They say it's good in gumbo. I've never eaten any guinea gumbo but . . .

**ARSENEAULT:** That sounds good.

**JACKSON:** . . . I hear it's . . . you eat it with your other ingredients. You could use parts of a guinea in gumbo. I'll tell you a story about a turkey. This is before my mother died. My grandfather had all, like I said, chickens and ducks and a lot of things like that . . . geese and

turkeys. I would like to go and gather the eggs in a big chicken yard. It was fenced in, and it was kind of large. Anyway, it had what you call a chicken coop where the chickens would go at night, and roost and go to sleep or whatever. Anyway, I would like to gather eggs all the time. I would go and get the eggs. That was one of the things I liked to do.

[23:40] So this time I went into the gate to go get the eggs, and I go into the chicken house where they roost there. I see kind of up on a little higher level, it was a lot of eggs. I saw a lot of eggs, and the turkey is sitting on the eggs there. It's not the chicken. I see all these eggs. I'm a little guy. That's exciting. I got my basket and I reach up to get the eggs, but this turkey hen is sitting on them. She's going to have some little baby things. You get what's about to happen to me. [laughs] So, when I reach up to get the egg the turkey come off the nest. She's mad because I'm fixing to take eggs from under her. I reached for the eggs. She come off the nest and peck at me. When she peck, I dropped the basket and turned around, but she in the air already to get me back here right in the back.

[24:46] I take off. I don't go toward the gate, because I'm just running trying to get away. I run away from the gate where I came in, and the turkey is chasing me away from the gate down to like I'm going north, and she chasing me this way. The thing was like . . . The tag was right here . . . starts here. The gate is back here. I take off and go this way and she's behind me and flying to hit me in the back. I'm screaming murder. My mother runs outside. By this time I'm going west now. I'm running down the back toward the backside of the chicken yard, and the turkey is still after me. She can't really get me like she wants to, because my grandfather had clipped her wings, and that's the purpose of clipping the wing so they can't fly over the fence. They can fly for only a little short distance. Anyway, my mother comes out, sees me, and she's out there, "Run baby run!" I'm wide open. That turkey still [?] coming to hit me! Look, when I

come back around my mother inspired me I guess when she said, "Run baby run." I put a little gap on that turkey and come out that gate. [laughs] Oh, man. My mother . . . I was so glad my mother was there like, "God had save me" or whatever. She was there and gave me an apple to quiet me down because I was crying and scared to death. This is a true story on the real.

**ARSENEAULT:**      That's a good story.

**JACKSON:** [26:28] My grandfather's place . . . I mean my grandfather's turkey got on me.

**ARSENEAULT:**      That's a good story.

**JACKSON:**      Yes. It's real.

**ARSENEAULT:**      So what is your earliest memory of Mossville?

**JACKSON:**      Okay. When I came to Mossville, I was in the eighth grade when I moved. No, no. My earliest memory of Mossville is when I had to come here from Westlake . . . walk from Westlake. I'm fixing to be raw with you.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Okay.

**JACKSON:** [27:03] And tell you what it was.

**ARSENEAULT:**      I understand. I've heard some stories about Westlake.

**JACKSON:**    Yes. Okay. I lived only maybe less than a quarter of a mile from the swimming pool across the Ball Park and stuff because I couldn't go there because I was black. There had some other guys from Westlake and we had to walk here to . . .

**ARSENEAULT:**      How far was the walk?

**JACKSON:**    [27:26] About . . . From Westlake to here about three miles at least. Three, maybe four.

**ARSENEAULT:**      And you had one right across the street from you?

**JACKSON:**    Yes. Swimming pool. A lot of the guys who lived in Westlake too, our parents were paying taxes like everybody else, but we couldn't go to the swimming pool there. Anyway, we would come here. That's my first memories of Mossville, coming to Mossville, walking to Mossville, going to the swimming pool which is right there. That's where I learned to swim. Have you talked to Blackie Payne yet? Eddie?

**ARSENEAULT:**      Yes he did an interview with his brothers and Ms. Barbara.

**JACKSON:**    Oh okay.

**ARSENEAULT:**      He didn't talk too much.

**JACKSON:** [28:03] Who, Blackie?

**ARSENEAULT:**      He didn't talk too much.

**JACKSON:** He . . . Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      He was real quiet.

**JACKSON:** That's pretty much him. We're good friends since when I first met him. He was one of the first guys from out here that I met. We were good friends ever since. This, I'm talking about being about eight years old. At that time they lived right where his family lives now across the street and stuff. They all knew how to swim, the Dellafosses, the Paynes . . . which Blackie is a Payne, and [Prides?], and Dolorous Prater and the Braxtons. They all knew [how to swim] because they would come at night and get in the swimming pool and just learn on their own self.

**ARSENEAULT:**      [28:55] I hadn't heard that. They would sneak in?

**JACKSON:** But when I came . . . Pardon?

**ARSENEAULT:**      They would sneak in?

**JACKSON:** [28:54] Sneak in across the fence, sneak in and swim. Lucky nobody got drowned or anything. When I came I was coming to take swimming lessons, me and the guys from Westlake and we had to take the swimming lessons. This dude named [Herb Fontenot?] was the life guard and swimming instructor. He had us doing . . . going through all the moves.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Getting on the board?

**JACKSON:**      No we didn't have to get on the board.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Oh okay.

**JACKSON:**      We didn't have any boards to get on. We were just holding on to the bank and stuff and kick our feet. Whatever the program was, we had to go through the stages and stuff. Teach you how to tread water and all of that. But and me and this girl is real good friends today, Dolorous, she was eight years old too at that time, but she could dive off the board. She could swim. She was one of the ones that would sneak in. I used to hate that girl, because she was on the side, laughing at us. She look, "Look at the little . . ." I think she called us the little rookies or something because we would be steady swimming going through the instructions, and they could already swim and dive off the board. "Look at the little rookies." [laughs]

[30:06] Anyway, that was my first good memories . . . I mean my memories from Mossville when I first came. Later on when I first came and then later on when I start to come to school here I was in the eighth grade and I came in. I went to school in Westlake, at this little elementary school. Then when I got in the seventh grade and was going to the eighth grade,



eighth grade started here in Mossville and had to come here. That's when I met a lot of people. A lot of different people and stuff, but I really knew Blackie Payne from the time that I used to come and swim . . . learn to swim and stuff. But that's it. That's my first real good memories of Mossville. As I . . . Went to school and stuff, played football, ran track. Had a great time. I have to tell you a track story now. This was . . .

**ARSENEAULT:**      Who was your coach?

**JACKSON:**    [30:58] Coach LaSalle.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Mr. Williams?

**JACKSON:**    Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Coach Williams.

**JACKSON:**    Yes, that's a great coach. He'll make you laugh. He could inspire you with his speeches and stuff. He'll cry and all of that when he inspiring you. [laughs] It was funny but it wasn't funny. We'll laugh about it afterwards, but he was serious when he be talking and stuff. He'd be so emotional and stuff. He'll cry when he talk telling you what he need you to do and all that. We played hard for him. So we won a lot of games and stuff. We lost state and I still just . . . Memory still haunts me when I think I could have . . . I know I could have made the right play. I was programmed to hit it . . . tackle instead of go for the ball and I could see this guy, the

quarterback, he was about to throw it to a halfback. We had time running out. They had the ball but the quarterback, and I see what he's going to do. I'm playing defensive end. Still haunts me today that I made the wrong play.

[31:59] I see him go back with the ball to throw to the halfback that's running, like in the [flats?]. I don't whether you know what the flats mean, but it's right out toward the sidelines. And I'm in position to get the ball. When he throws it, I see him. He's going to throw it. When he throws it, I could have stepped up and caught the ball and ran into the in zone, because we had them backed up maybe ten yards from the in zone, but instead I made the wrong play. I tackle a guy. I let him catch it, and then I tackle him. He didn't get anywhere, but time was running out with less than a minute and I made the wrong play. If I'd have gone for the ball I could have caught it, but I had been programmed to hit. That was my thing. Tackle. Don't let them get away. I didn't make the right move. Anyway, that's a story about football and we lost state eight to seven in the rain and mud. We was in a place called [ . . .?], somewhere in those woods back up around Baton Rouge [Louisiana]. You ever heard of a school called [ . . .?]?

**ARSENEAULT:**      [33:13] Sounds familiar.

**ROGER:**      Well anyway it somewhere down around Baton Rouge. That was a . . . Now let me tell you, the track story, it was the real gem. This guy . . . We did a . . . Now that's one of my greatest memories at Mossville. We were . . . This guy, he's dead now, but the other three of us is still living. This guy name was [Esper Harris?]. We were on the mile relay team. That's the last race in any track meet. We called it the four forty relay team. Well, it was a mile relay though. Lot of fast running around. Each person had to run one time around. That's a quarter of a mile.

Anyway, there was Esper Harris, McKeever Edwards, myself, and this guy named Herman Moss. We called him Plug. He was the anchor man, the last person to run with the baton. We'd go to Lake Charles [Louisiana] to a dual track meet. You know what a dual track meet is? Only two people. I mean, only two schools. Like us and you. You go to [Boston?]. I'm from Mossville. We go over to Boston, to run them, but we're not actually at Boston, but we're at what they call Wildcat Stadium. It was white stadium, white school.

[34:37] But we were there to run track that day. It was in the daytime so we could use their stadium. So we go in the evening after school in the dual track meet to go up against a triple A school. That's where my wife went to school, at Boston. So we go there, and Esper Harris is the lead man for our team, but when we get there, well, we know that before we even leave he didn't come to school that day, so we going to have to have another person run the leg . . . for the first leg for us against Boston when the race come in the end. We going to be the last people in the race. Boston had a great track team and they had a good relay team of four forty team. [noise of people in background] I hear my wife. She dressed in that seventies stuff. They like the flowerchild people.

[35:28] Anyway, we tell this . . . Coach gets this guy names Roy [Ingins?] who is the discus thrower. You know what a discus is? Okay, the discus. He's the discus thrower. He's not a sprinter like us and stuff, running. He's a real tall dude, long legs and stuff. Coach tell him and we tell him, "Ingins, we don't need you to try to out run this guy in the first leg. We know you not a sprinter. All you need to do is just kind of keep you a pace. Keep us in the race, but we know you not a track . . . sprinter to run with him. Just try to stay within striking distance of them." "Okay, okay." We tell him over and over. We passing the baton . . . practicing. Now it's time for the race. Ingins' going to run the first leg for us. McKeever, he's . . . We were all good.

McKeever was the second guy. I was the third leg. Then Herman was the anchor and he was great as a track man. He was great.

[36:34] So, when they shoot the gun to start the race, Ingins takes off running like a jackrabbit. [laughs] He take off fast. Ingins take off fast, but we already told him, "Don't try to run fast, just keep up with them." Because you take off it's . . . You got to go all the way around the track. That's a quarter of a mile and it's not no speed race. You got to pace yourself and then when you wait around and you're coming home you give it everything you got. But Ingins gives it everything he got from the start and about fifty yards down the track, the dude from Boston just slip past going on. The gap is opening up. Oh man, the people from Boston screaming. They fast. And look, then Ingins . . . The gap is really over a hundred yards when they come in. Over a hundred yards.

[37:37] Look, McKeever get the baton, all the people from Boston they fans is screaming and laughing because the gap is so large. Then McKeever he runs . . . he maybe gained twenty, twenty-five yards, on the dude. The lead is still tremendous. [This day?] when McKeever bring the baton to me, I'm at least seventy-five yards or so behind this guy. This is the third leg now, and I ran as hard as I ever ran in trying to close the gap some. Okay, when I come in, the dude was in front of me he done passed it to the last guy. The last guy is gone. He just took off . . . from Boston. Herman, he . . . I'm coming in and I'm just dog tired. I could hardly pick up my legs and stuff. Herman is like, "Come on." He looking down the track. He turned, "Come one, cat. Come on." Look, I stumble in there. [coughs] Excuse me. I stumble in, fall. I gave the baton. Actually, Herman came back about four or five feet and yanked it out of my hand. I fell down and I'm on the ground looking.

[38:50] The dude from Boston is gone into the first curve, going around. He about a

hundred yards ahead. Herman take off. And what happens, the guy . . . Boston is screaming and hollering but Herman is running. I've never seen him run that fast that long. He . . . The dude just going around the . . . And then he hit the back stretch. He hit the back stretch, Herman is gaining. You could see. Closing the gap on him, and Herman's still running hard. I'm thinking he can't keep up this pace. Herman can't for that long because that's a whole quarter of a mile he's trying to catch this guy. What is happening, Herman is closing the gap the people are still screaming, but they trying to tell him that he need to look back because this dude is coming at him. They just hollering and this dude, he not into a full run because he don't . . . the gap is so far he thinks. But Herman is still coming and nobody . . . We couldn't understand how Herman could keep up that pace. He always ran with a cross in his mouth. Not a cross, a chain that had a cross on it. He put the chain in his mouth just to keep spit in his mouth. A metal chain like that would help to keep spit in his mouth when he'd run.

[40:16] So, when they come into the last curve, Herman is like . . . The dude realize Herman is back there close, maybe about twenty yards from him. I couldn't believe it man, still on the ground. Herman is dead close on this dude and he looked back. He see him and the crowd is hollering. Look, they coming down toward . . . They about . . . When they come into the last curve, a hundred yards from the finish, they hit the last curve so they got about eighty yards to go to the finish line. Herman is right after them, maybe about five feet behind him now. Herman head is back. He's straining. He's straining to catch this guy. The kids just got . . . And look. This what you will not believe. This was . . . Well it wasn't for money. Wasn't for a trophy or medals. It was just trying to beat this dude. Herman's run was so intense and so dramatic that their students was hollering, "Catch him! Catch him!" [laughs] It was unreal. Their students was hollering, "Catch him! Catch him!" When they go to the . . . They never do this. Put a tape across

that. Not this race but those other sprints. They see it was going to be close so they stretch a . . .

What you call it? Just a little piece of like a little ribbon across right at the finish line for whoever come across first, the tape is going to be on them . . . if you lean into it or whatever. Look, when they crossed the line Herman falls . . . Our little . . . You talked to [T. Porter?] yet?

**ARSENEAULT:**      Yes.

**JACKSON:**    [42:02] Okay. His brother, we call him Pork Chop, he was a trainer for us. He was a little bitty guy. Little Pork Chop was on his knees at the end of the race like this. Herman crosses the line. The tape is on Herman. Herman fall into Pork Chop's arms. The dude from Boston, I mean, he loses. When Herman falls in the Pork Chop's arms, little Pork Chop spin him over and start working on his legs. Charlie horses is in his legs cramping him and stuff. But he won. It was dramatic, man. It was the . . . To see those people hollering for, excuse me, "Catch him! Catch him!" It turned the whole thing around. Their own people was hollering for Herman to catch him because he had run so hard to . . . And he caught that guy. Beat him.

**ARSENEAULT:**      I've actually read about McKeever in some of the papers.

**JACKSON:**    Oh Yes?

**ARSENEAULT:**      He won a lot of awards.

**JACKSON:**    Well the preacher or McKeever . . .?

**ARSENEAULT:**      McKeever Edwards.

**JACKSON:** [42:59] Oh, okay.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Is that the one you're talking about?

**JACKSON:**      Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Won an award for football I think.

**JACKSON:**      Yes, he played football with us, with me, and him, and Blunt. Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Oh y'all all played together?

**JACKSON:** [43:08] Yes. McKeever was a good football player. Blunt too. We always had a good team. They were offensive players. McKeever was and Blunt. I played defense. We always had a good team.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Did you ever go to any of the canteens in Mossville?

**JACKSON:**      Yes, I had . . . Freelow had a canteen. It was close to school and then there was one right across the street from the school. Yes, we went there mostly on Sundays.

**ARSENEAULT:**      What did y'all do there?

**JACKSON:**      Dance.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Is that what it was?

**JACKSON:**      Talk to the girls. That's what I did. That's what it was about. Yes. As a guy. Yes. You go on Sunday. Put on your little starched khaki jeans . . . khaki pants and a nice ironed shirt and stuff and have your shoes shined. Going to the canteen. Kicking around. I had . . . I don't know if you talked to him yet, but he had a car when we were in our last year and things. [Owen Key?] had a mustang. We'd pick up plenty of girls in the mustang. We had a lot of good times. I won't go into all of that, but we had a lot of good times. He'll probably be here tonight. I talked to him earlier, he said he was coming. I don't think you talked to him yet.

**ARSENEAULT:**      What's his name?

**JACKSON:**      [44:27] Owen [Kayhe?]. Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      What kind of music did y'all listen to in the canteen?

**JACKSON:**      Music by . . . Well you could call it rock, rock and roll music and stuff. By like Chuck Garry, and James Brown, and this guy Al Green. [ . . . ?] the singers and things like that. Bennie King. B.B. King for the blues stand. Yes. Had a lot of good music back then. A lot of



people could dance real good. Swing out, it's a fast dance and stuff. This little guy, he's still alive too, him and his sister they used to dance a lot together, swing out. They were great. His name's [Willie?]. Willie Jasmine. His sister's name was Shirley. They could dance real good. My brother and my sister could dance good together too. We were growing up, used to go to the canteen and stuff. My sister could be doing something in the kitchen or in the house with the broom or something and the music come on, my brother just grab her and throw the broom away and they get going. It was great times, yes.

[45:40] It was like not being rich, whatever, but we was surviving, like a lot of families was struggling and stuff. We didn't see the thing as us being poor, because we had a lot of fun, a lot of love in the family still and things. I don't know. People looked out for each other. Things with . . . you can count on people if somebody was down or having some problems in the home, money problems, or grocery problems, or whatever. Somebody would kick in and help them out. You could leave your door open. The people wouldn't break in, steal, like go in your house and stuff like that. If somebody was doing that they'd get told on and taken care of quick. It was a time when them things started to change. As the years went by, people did more unlawful things. That's just the way it goes, it roll like that.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Were there any clubs in Mossville?

**JACKSON:**    [46:49] Yes. It was one especially called Cowboy Inn, but that was like the cowboys. There was a lot . . . I didn't really go there because . . .

**ARSENEAULT:**      What do you mean the cowboys? Like actual cowboys?

**JACKSON:** [47:11] Rough. No, I mean rough. People carried guns and there was a lot of shootings going on and fights, and people being cut and stabbed. It was real, like the old west type places. It was called the Cowboy Inn. The Cowboy Club, or the Cowboy . . . I think it was called the Cowboy Club. Yes. A dude ran it named Peter [Deville?]. Like ride his horse up into the place. [laughs] He had a horse that he'd ride up in this club. That kind of stuff. That wasn't my shot. Wouldn't take a girl to a place like that. But there was the main club.

Then they had a club that I never gone to, back this way somewhere around where T. Porter lives now. It was called The Swamp House. I've never been there since . . . ever in my life. I think this club is still there. They may be closed down now. They had another club called Joy Hill. It was kind of in between Mossville and Westlake. I never went there. That was . . . I was a kid really growing up at that time. Those older clubs like Joy Hill and Swamp House . . . But I was a teenager when Cowboy club was opened. The Cowboy Inn. That's what it was called, The Cowboy Inn. I wouldn't go there. That's about it for clubs at that time when I was coming up.

**ARSENEAULT:**      What else did y'all do for fun growing up?

**JACKSON:** [48:41] Rode bicycles, fixed bicycles and like put them . . . made bicycles. Like go get you some parts from the junkyard. You may get a frame from the junkyard and paint it up. You had to paint . . . The only thing you couldn't probably find good. . . You could find rims at the junkyard and a frame. You know what the frame is on a bicycle, right? You had the frame and you could find your rims sometimes. Most of the times you had to buy tires. You put them together and from an old bike or put bikes together. Everybody going to make . . . You're the only one going to have a good bicycle. Everybody got a bike but you. So you go to the junkyard,

get parts and somebody got some here, some there, you got some in between. We'd make a bicycle and then paint it. There you go. Yes.

[49:40] Let me tell you another story about when I messed up growing up in Westlake. This girl is still alive today. My mother was alive then too. She had bought me a brand new bicycle. Well, we lived across the street from the Catholic Church. Was maybe a quarter of a mile from where all the rest of the black people lived in Westlake. We lived down the street from them right in front of Saint John Bosco, the new church. I wanted to go and show my bike off to my friends down the street. It was late in the evening. My grandmother . . . My mother told me not to go. To go wait until tomorrow because it was almost . . . It was coming towards sundown. But I didn't listen. I couldn't wait to show it off.

[50:26] So I slip out, and go out through the backyard and go through these white people . . . Mr. Jeans . . . whatever his name was. We call him Mr. Jeans. He was a white man. And we slip out through his yard and ran around and I went down to the . . . where the majority of the black people stayed in Westlake, on Grant Street. Anyway, my friends there and stuff. They see my bicycle and stuff. I'm telling them how fast it can go and stuff. I said, "Let me show you how fast it can go." The road was gravel then. So okay. Look, I take off on the bike. I take off on the bicycle and . . . Brenda Bernard is a good friend of mine too. She was a real pretty girl when we were small and stuff. This is kind of deviating from the story, but I used to call her straight legs. She was real pretty. Had them long, pretty legs.

[51:23] Anyway, her and this girl named Viola [Marlboro?]. They're playing hopscotch in Brenda's yard. But it . . . Brenda's family . . . In the driveway but the driveway has . . . What you call these? It's not . . . You don't all it weeds . . . shrubs . . . like some shrubbery, but you can't see unless you come all the way out on to the street. The shrubbery was in the driveway. So

I'm riding the bicycle down, showing them how fast it's got. I take off and go down the street this way going real fast. And Brenda and Viola playing hopscotch, but I don't know this. But when I get right about Brenda's house by the driveway Viola comes out of the driveway backwards.

Jumped out backwards. I hit it. Right into her. Bam with the bike.

[52:23] It was dreadful though. Look, I hit her and she go falls . . . goes down. I get the . . . I'm sliding. When I hit her, I fall off the bike and the bike slides. My arm and hands just on the gravel road. I'm cut up and stuff. By the time I finished sliding, Brenda is screaming and I look up. I tried to pick up the bike. The guys running down. Brenda is screaming and Viola bleeding from the nose and stuff. She's a little girl. We both eight years old or something. I done cracked into her with the bicycle. Guess what I do? Tell me what I did.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Run home?

**JACKSON:** [53:00] Took off. Hit and run. [laughs] Hit and run and left her. Went home. The bad news had beat me home though. The old people had to call already, man. That's the worst my mother ever whipped me, because see I used to do things and stuff, but I was a good kid in the sense I could say speeches and things and stuff. My mother read them to me, like three or four times, and she'd say, "I want you to say this." It wasn't them real long speeches and things, but for a little kid I could pick up parts of it. If she'd give me speeches, I would really learn something. Anyway, when I would do something, she would whack me a couple of times. I'd holler real loud and she'd let me go. I was always into something. Anyway, that day, she wasn't playing.

**ARSENEAULT:**      About to get mad over it.

**JACKSON:** [53:53] I had to . . . I broke away from her and ran outside. Look, but the scene was . . . The girl had to be taken to the hospital. She developed blood clots. Almost died. It's a little bitty girl and I had wrecked her. Hit her. It was . . . Messed her chest up too and stuff. Blood clots had formed in her chest. Anyway, she survived it though. That day my mother was whipping me. I broke away from her and she could have had my brothers catch me, but she didn't. I ran and I went outside. It was dark then. I sit on the steps and stuff, and finally she came and said, "Come on in baby. I'm through whipping you, but I got to talk to you." Then well when I went inside she talked to me and stuff and told me what . . . she showed me the consequences of not listening. What this girl is hurt bad, and we'll probably have to pay some doctor bills for her and stuff like that. Anyway, it was . . . I never messed up again, but my mother didn't live but for another two years. I never messed up again . . . from what she told me, when I was a little kid at that time. Yes, that was a dreadful time.

That girl's still living. We saw each other about . . . maybe about . . . They had a . . . It was in January of this year. They had a thing for Coach LaSalle [Williams] here. Did you hear about it? Okay, I came home for that and I saw her there. She was there. So we talked about that. We was laughing about it. Her husband was telling me, "Yeah, my wife told me you almost . . . She almost didn't make it because of you." I said, "Yes she telling you the truth, because I definitely ran over her." Yes, it was a lovely, exciting time in my life, but I did a lot of things.

[55:45] I'm really blessed to be here, because during the time I was growing up, this is all before . . . So many things happened before my mother passed and stuff happened. But, I got an ice pick in my foot. I threw the ice pick into my foot, my own self, throwing it on the floor.

Just sticking in the wood floor. Throw the ice pick through my foot. I fell out of a tree. That's why they gave me the name [Cat?] because I used to climb trees all that time. This time I fell out the tree I didn't hurt myself. I didn't break anything, but I was a little guy. I fell out that tree. I stuck a pencil in my throat. My mother . . . Now this was crazy. I had the pencil, playing around, and it got lodged in my throat. My father and mother trying to get it out. They had this kerosene lamp that my father had me leaning back . . . Why you laughing? But any . . . It's funny? I guess. But this all is real, all true. My father . . . My mother holding me. My father just . . . He catches it, and he pull it out. As he pulling it, it kind of hurt and then I kicked. When I kicked, I kicked the lamp out of his hand and it falls on my leg and burned me. That burn stayed there for . . . I know a good . . . I'm sixty-eight years old now. That burn maybe left off of me maybe five years ago. Finally faded. But it was like a crescent shape, like a moon shaped thing on my leg for a long time. That was one of the things.

[57:25] I got my eye shot out with a bow and arrow. My brother shot me with the bow and arrow. That's why I got this patch on. I didn't . . . I lost the sight in it at that time. This is what happened. My daddy told. We had this homemade bow and arrow. It's me and my two brothers playing. I'm the youngest out of them. Now this is the second oldest boy. It was . . . His name was Billy. My other brother was Karl. My oldest brother was [Donny?]. But this was with me and Billy and Karl. We were playing in the yard. Father come home from work he see us with this old bow and arrow. And he takes it, in the house. He tell us like, "One of y'all will probably get hurt with this. Give me this thing." He takes it and go in the house. He's just coming from work. We in the yard.

[58:11] So my brother's know my mother let me have my way a lot of times so they talked me into, "Go ask Mother if you can get the bow and arrow. She'll probably give it to you."

I go and ask for the bow and arrow. Later on she gives it to me. Tell me not to get dirty because she give me a bath when I go in there. I'm about . . . I guess about four or five at the time. When I go in she give me a bath so tell me not to get dirty, "Okay, you can go back outside but don't get dirty." I say, "Alright." So I go give the bow and arrow to my brother. Then this is particular thing about it—he doesn't shoot it like this on the level; he shoots it straight up in the air. I'm across the yard, siting on this tire that a tree is growing out of . . . or something my grandfather had planted a long time ago, like a tractor tire. I'm sitting on it. He shoots it straight up in the air. The wind takes it. I see it, it's way up there. The wind takes it and it drifts over and is just going like this. It looked like it hypnotized me. I could see it coming, but I don't move. It fall right into my eye. Bam. What are the chances of that?

[59:20] My mother was outside again. I was screaming murder. That was hurting. Went right through here, through the top through the bottom of my eye. And I broke it off, because it was nothing but a weed. But it was sharpened. You know what I'm saying? A sharpened weed would be a . . . because of the board that was on me . . . the arrow was on me. I mean, we had pulled out the ground sharpened it up and we shooting it. Anyway, that happened. My mother took me to the hospital. I didn't lose my eye per se then, and then I did. I lost the sight in it. I couldn't see out of it. That was when I was real little, about four or five. I had to tell them to take it out. When I was eighteen, I got hit in it again, playing football. One of the guys from here did it. He dead now too, that [ . . .?] Prater. He's the brother to the girl that I used to hate, but I said . . . Used to could swim. But me and her are good friends. We graduated together and stuff. It was her brother. What's up there [Lil Breeze?]?

**UNKNOWN MALE:**      Hey! [Lil Cat?]

**JACKSON:** [1:00:21] Alright. Anyway, I got hit in it again playing football. The doctor told me that I could either have it taken out because I possibly become addicted to medicine, I mean drugs, because it was going to be painful all the time, and I would always have to be taking medication. So I tells him to go ahead and take it out because I couldn't see out of it anyway. So, I had my eye operation, and something I didn't do. After I had this operation, they send me to Shreveport, Louisiana to have the operation. I had it, and during the operation, I didn't find this out until later, but I was to be fitted with a prosthetic and my eye had to heal up for three to four weeks. But during the time I was in Shreveport, I came back home to Lake Charles and one of . . . to Westlake and to living with my grandmother then.

So, one day I was looking . . . I was in the bathroom and my eye was itching real . . . started itching. This is the eye that they had taken out. So it's itching. I'm rubbing it and this thing fall out in the [face bowl?]. I don't know. I could see it coming. I really tripped out. I go, "What is this? I can't be growing another eye because [ . . . ?] thing." My eye opening up and it falls into the face bowl. It's a little round thing and its hard plastic. And, I don't know what this is. So, I tell my grandmother what happened. She said, "You need to take it to the doctor and he'll probably tell you what it is." So I said, "Okay."

[1:02:19] I take it to the doctor and he tells me. He said, "They didn't explain this to you, while you were in Shreveport, what they had done?" I said, "No." He said, "This was implanted into your eye, into your skin, for it to heal up and once it heal the prosthetic is to fit over . . . to fit into your muscle." It was sewn into the muscle behind the back here. It was to give my eye movement. It was like a round ball and when my eye was like . . . Imagine when it heal up it would be able to move because it would fill out and be . . . The prosthetic would sit right over it. Anyway, it came out and I never got it redone. That's why my eye . . . I wear this patch because



my eye is droopy, like almost closed. It's an artificial eye, but I can have it fixed now with all the medical things and technology of today. I'm sure it could be fixed good. Anyway, I lost my eye, and I got my arm caught in the washing machine. In an old style washing machine. My mother told me again. See, I was right . . .

**ARSENEAULT:**      Like an open . . . ?

**JACKSON:**      Pardon?

**ARSENEAULT:**      [1:03:39] Was it like an open bucket? How did that work?

**JACKSON:**      Old style washing machine?

**ARSENEAULT:**      Yes.

**JACKSON:**      It was a washing machine but the wringer part . . . the wringer . . . You ever seen a washing machine that have a wringer?

**ARSENEAULT:**      Yes.

**JACKSON:**      [1:03:49] That goes with two things and you stick the clothes in it and it go through.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Presses it?

**JACKSON:**    It presses it. Run the water out. Yes. Soon as she told me not to do it, turn her back. I pick up a towel and try to do like she had been doing and thing caught me. Pulling. I hollered. She turned around and she . . .

**ARSENEAULT:**      Your hand?

**JACKSON:**    [1:04:06] Yes, it had my arm and head and was pulling me in, going up my arm. She yanked me out. I survived that. I got hit by a car, yes, on a Sunday, in front of the church. Me and this guy playing . . . He's alive today. Lives in Denver, Colorado. My brother's married to his sister. Anyway, at that time I got hit. This old white man hit me, but it wasn't intentional. It was my fault because I ran into the street. We throwing little shell rocks at each other in front of . . . We was coming out of Sunday school. We playing in the road. I run into the road the dude. . . He hit the brakes but he don't run over me he hits me, but he knocks me down. He hit the brakes and slid into me. I survived that, but I'm lucky to be here. Blessed to be here, because I had a lot of adventures coming up. For real. All of this happened before I was ten. Yes, my mother died when I was ten years old . . . 1957.

**ARSENEAULT:**      You must have given her a . . . some anxiety.

**JACKSON:**    [1:05:18] Yes. I was her baby.

**ARSENEUALT:**      Yes. Did you have any favorite teachers at Mossville?

**JACKSON:**      Yes, Ms. Rogers. Great lady. English teacher. Everybody liked Ms. Rogers. She was a [whip?]. She's still alive too. You ever heard of anybody else talk about Ms. Rogers? Somebody else said that was their favorite teacher?

**ARSENEAULT:**      [1:05:42] They said it "behooves" you.

**JACKSON:**      Yes, and "it's deplorable." If you made a bad statement, used the incorrect grammar. Like, "Jackson that is deplorable." Yes, Ms. Rogers was cool. Look, this is a funny thing too. She told Joe [Marrow?] . . . Joe Marrow was . . . You know how you take pictures? Your pictures get sent off then you . . .

**ARSENEAULT:**      Yearbook pictures?

**JACKSON:**      I guess.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Oh, like a professional picture?

**JACKSON:**      [1:06:22] No. Well I guess you could say a yearbook. They would let you take pictures and then they'll send pictures to you. You could select the pictures you want or whatever. Joe Marrow . . . We're in class and the pictures came back. And we're in English class. Ms. Rogers had the pictures so she's giving everybody pictures, letting them look at them and

stuff. And Joe Marrow said, "Oh Ms. Rogers, I don't want these old ugly pictures." Ms. Rogers say, "Marrow, Joseph. The camera took what it saw." [laughs] Oh man we laughed.

[1:07:02] Ms. Rogers was so smooth. The . . . Let's see how she said about the fingers. Something about the fingers. The moving finger writes, having written moves on. She was always . . . Like somebody at the board, "Hey . . ." Ms. Rogers writing at the board, her back turned. "Hey man, what time is it?" Ms. Rogers turn around, "Time is passing. Are you?" [laughs] Oh, she was something else. She still alive. She got to be close to ninety, but she still look good. I saw her maybe about four or five month ago at a funeral. I talked to her. Yes, she's a . . . Man, she was the lady. Yes. Ms. Rogers and Ms. Jones were the favorite teachers of most everybody. She was a young pretty lady, tall. That's my cousin right there. He was a drummer used to be in a Grambling's band back in the day [Grambling University]. When Grambling was at the top of it.

**ARSENEAULT:**      The Tiger band?

**JACKSON:**      Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Yes. Coach . . .

**JACKSON:**      [1:08:06] He was a drummer. Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Well we're at an hour if you're ready to . . .

**JACKSON:** Huh?

**ARSENEAULT:** We can wrap it up a little bit here.

**JACKSON:** Yes if you . . . I can talk as long as you ask questions.

**ARSENEAULT:** [1:08:17] I got a lot of questions.

**JACKSON:** I'm . . . Oh, you out of questions?

**ARSENEAULT:** No, I've got a lot is what I'm saying.

**JACKSON:** Alright.

**ARSENEAULT:** I got a ton. I just don't want you to miss out on your reunion.

**JACKSON:** Yes. Okay, well . . . Okay.

**ARSENEAULT:** I guess I can ask you one more.

**JACKSON:** Okay.

**ARSENEAULT:** Then we can kind of wrap it up. What are your fondest memories of

Mossville?

**JACKSON:** The fondest memory? Man, that's hard to say. I had a lot of good times. Well my fondest memory is what I tell you about the track tournament. That was part of Mossville. That was my fondest memory. The way he ran this guy down and the way the fans from the other school was hollering for him to catch him. That would be my fondest memory. I always remember that guy. He's still alive. He lives in Missouri.

**ARSENEAULT:** [1:09:15] What year did you graduate?

**JACKSON:** 1967.

**ARSENEAULT:** When did they start integrating the schools?

**JACKSON:** About 1968. Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:** What do you remember about that time?

**JACKSON:** I was out of school and . . . I remember that my friend Brenda, the one that I tell you how I was friends with her and her birthday was on the same day as me? We was . . . Viola and Brenda was doing the hopscotch. I remember her as being the first black person, her and this girl names Mathilda Bates, to go to school in Westlake . . . to integrate. And it was in 1968. I think she was a senior then. But Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      How did the community react?

**JACKSON:** [1:10:02] Well, it wasn't any big protest . . . not openly, or whatever. We always had some people who had feeling about things like that. But it wasn't anything that was a violent protest or anything like that . . . or even a protest where the community came out. A peaceful protest. It wasn't open like that. Just people accepted it, whether they liked it or not, but they accepted it. It wasn't anything where anybody got hurt. But another thing that happened in Westlake, but it was concerning Mossville people too, because the guy had gone to school here when he was to become the mayor. I know you heard about that, right? When somebody killed him. Well we all say somebody killed him. They called it . . .

**ARSENEAULT:**      The day after he was elected?

**JACKSON:**      The day before he was going to be sworn in. He had already been elected. The vote had come, but he was supposed to be sworn in that Monday. Somebody killed him at the school. They say he committed suicide, but I know better than that, and everybody else does.

**ARSENEAULT:**      What year was that?

**JACKSON:**      Probably about five years ago.

**ARSENEAULT:**      That was in Westlake?

**JACKSON:** It was here in Mossville. At the school.

**ARSENEAULT:** Here?

**JACKSON:** [1:11:25] In Mossville at the school just down here.

**ARSENEAULT:** Oh, okay.

**JACKSON:** In the . . .

**ARSENEAULT:** In the school?

**JACKSON:** Found him in the parking lot.

**ARSENEAULT:** Oh, they found him in the parking lot.

**JACKSON:** [1:11:31] Yes. Shot in the chest with a three-fifty-seven magnum. And this is the hope to God truth. I was living in Houston and I just happened to be home for the New Year. My brother had come from California and whatever and we were down in Westlake, and this guy I asked you about, Owen [Kayhee?] that you talked to him. He called me. We're good friends, and he calls me that same night. Invites me here in Mossville to come and eat some gumbo and play cards with some people that I didn't know. And I tell him, I said, "I don't know those people or anything. He said, "Well I wouldn't have called you and told you to come if it wasn't cool." So I



said, "Okay. If you say it's cool, it's cool." And he was inviting me to come down here. We in Westlake, me and my wife.

[1:12:25] So we leave Westlake to come to Mossville, and as we pass the school, there's the police tape and stuff, there's a fire engine, a couple of police cars, and a truck in the parking lot. And I tell my wife, I say, "Something happened. Maybe somebody was doing drugs around here or something." But somebody got killed here. So we go on down. We go to the place. To this house. and we had waited about fifteen minutes and somebody calls and said that . . . Now this . . . The guy who got killed, his nickname was [Teddy?] and they had this other guy from Sulphur [Louisiana] who had been to this place where me and my wife went to . . . where Owen had invited us to. His name is [Tookie?] . . . [Tooty and Tookie?]. So when we get there somebody called and Tookie is already gone but I didn't see him. When I got there he was gone. But he had just left, according to what happened.

[1:13:29] Somebody called on the phone and the house lady pick up and she talking and say, "Oh no, that can't be true, he just left from here." And she hangs up. [?] saying, "Who's calling? What's up?" And she say, "Somebody killed [Tookie?] at the school, and they, "Ah no." It can't be true, he just left here. What would he be doing at the school?" Somebody suggested, "Call his house and see if he there." He was staying with his mother. They had the number so the lady called, the house lady called and said, "Ms. Jones, is [Tookie?] home?" And the lady from what she said, "He is?" She say . . . The house lady say, "You sure?" She said, "I'm sure." Because she said, "Okay. Okay, thank you." She hands up. What happened? He home in the bed. His mother said he in the bed. So we say, "Somebody just probably playing a joke." That's not cool or whatever. We hang up and started to play cards again.

[1:14:34] About less than two minutes the phone rings again. She one the phone, "What?

Oh no. No, that can't be true." The lady busts out crying. Her husband, "What's wrong honey? What's wrong?" "It's [Tootie?], the mayor. Somebody killed him." He was found dead in the school yard. And me and my wife had passed by everything. So I said, "That must have been what was happening when we passed because . . ." And look, but we go down there. And we say, "Let's go back and see what happened." So we go back, me and my wife, this time when we get there the schoolyard is full of people from the community. Both police is there. Lot of police. They have a tape. We come in the school yard into the school. This is in the parking lot by the gym where the body is and stuff. The body is laying on the ground. They have not covered it up yet. They should have. Let me make sure if it was covered. Yes, it was covered at the time.

[1:15:36] But when we come in the driveway and get out the car and we walk down in front of the school going toward the parking lot, we come up toward the tape . . . where one part of the tape is we stop. But we are maybe about forty yards from the body lying on the ground. People are walking all around him there. I mean, like nobody's stopping. You're not supposed . . . That's not supposed to happen like that. People are walking all around. The police standing up and stuff. While we're there and stuff they pick the body take the car and take the car, put it on a truck on the . . . one of these trucks like where you have a wreck and you can tilt the truck back and pull it all in there and put his truck on there. They wind up taking the truck to Westlake, back to the forensics place where they can look at it. They take it to his house. Washed the blood and all of this down. Wash it off the ground. Moved the body. Washed it down and all of this.

None . . . This is bad police work. I know all of this not supposed to happen. Especially the people walking all around with a crime scene . . . inside the tape and stuff. Anyway, this all happens between ten and twelve o'clock at night. The morning paper comes out about five o'clock. I'm back at my mother-in-law house. I get the paper. I'm looking for my lottery number.

When I look in the paper mayor . . . The newly elected mayor commits suicide. How can you come to that conclusion in a few hours like that? That's . . . I have a lot of the papers right now about the [fuel?] and they even exhumed his body and stuff. Looked at it again and sent his body to Philadelphia [Pennsylvania]. People raised money and stuff and helped the family do another autopsy and all that. And it come up with an inconclusive thing still.

**ARSENEAULT:**      What do you think happened?

**JACKSON:**    [1:17:46] That somebody killed him, a white person. One of those old haters, because a lot of the young white people helped to get him elected. Because it's more white people in Westlake than blacks and he was a well-liked guy. He was kind of young.

**ARSENEAULT:**      He was a black man?

**JACKSON:**    Yes. He's a black guy.

**ARSENEAULT:**      From Mossville?

**JACKSON:**    Yes, from Westlake.

**ARSENEAULT:**      From Westlake?

**JACKSON:**    But he went to school here too. This had been before integration came that he

went to school here in Mossville. But he had been an alderman . . . alderman you call it? It's an alderman. It's somebody like one the city council or something.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Yes.

**JACKSON:**    [1:18:24] An alderman.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Yes.

**JACKSON:**    I think they call it that. Well he was that. And then anyway, the guy who he had defeated was an old white man who had been the mayor for twenty-four years. And a lot of people believe in . . . Well you if you're going to be real about it a lot of people don't like change. They want it to stay the status quo. Wanted to stay just like this forever. That's . . . Somebody killed him. That's what I believe. That's what the majority of black people believe. How can you reach a conclusion that quick from between ten and twelve, and wash all the evidence down? And take the . . . What'd you take the truck to his house for? Who ever heard of that? And who took it to his house was a policeman.

**ARSENEAULT:**      From Westlake?

**JACKSON:**    Yes. From Westlake.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Working for the old mayor.

**JACKSON:**    Huh?

**ARSENEAULT:**      Probably working . . . Maybe working for the old major.

**JACKSON:**    [1:19:25] Maybe. Whatever. They took the truck to his house. I don't know if they ever did a forensic type thing on the truck, do what the police are supposed to do, or the crime lab or whatever. But yes, and that actually happened. I was here and I saw this with my own eyes when they washed the blood down and all. With a lot of the people from the community . . . At first it was just a few people, like a couple of police cars and all that. Had a fire truck was there early when we first passed. But between the time we went down to where they were having the gumbo and playing cards and by the time we went back to the scene, well couldn't have been more than forty minutes, and they had a lot of people there by that time we got down there the second time. But yes, they had . . .

          [1:20:15] I know another thing that happened. A friend of ours got killed . . . got hung. Think some white people did this. Some white . . . young men called the [Yan?] Brothers. [ . . .?] Mayfield. It's a guy . . . Seven of us would always be together. It was me and my two brothers, the three Mayfield boys, it was two of them were twins. Then they had another brother called Paul Tracey. And then there neighbor Papa Joe, his name is [ . . .?]. Everybody still living though. One of my brothers is dead. The one that shot me with the bow and arrow, he's dead. And Calvin, that's the one that was found hung. And the rest of us still living. But I was ten years old. That was the same year my mother died and my mother died in December of . . . The twenty-second of December in 1957.

          In November of 1957 Calvin Mayfield was thirteen years old, and he was found hung in a

tree in Westlake. They call that a suicide. Hung with a brand new rope with a hangman's knot, and said that he committed suicide. But in those days white people was cold. They call you "nigger" like it was nothing and passed by you at night hit you with a baseball bat and lean out the car throw piss at you, anything. And you couldn't . . . Best not go to the police you might get put in jail yourself if you go make a complaint. On the real, yes. They could do anything and get away with it. And they came to the conclusion it was a suicide.

[1:22:08] What happened, like his mother we were in the area where he was found was a place we had a tree called the African tree. And the tree was real large and it had large branches and you can jump up on . . . muscle up on. We're kids we could get up on there and walk under the limbs and all of this. So they were looking for him. We had been in the woods. We were playing in the woods digging up holes. Make a little for like people come through there. Cover up with leaves and step in it. We're real little boys growing up. Mischief and stuff. Hiding and watch somebody step in the hole. Laugh and take off running and stuff, making bird traps and all this kind of thing. We did a lot of things like that in the woods. We'd make us a bird trap and thing or whatever. But we was in the woods a lot . . . all the time. And those [Yan?] Brothers used to come through with some older white guys. He was probably nineteen or twenty years old. He was, "Niggers get out of here." We'd take off running from him. We were bigger boys and stuff. We just laugh and stuff. We had set a thing and one time one of them stepped in a hole.

[1:23:19] Anyway, that's when we leave . . . But this would happen. He was missing. And we had been in the woods playing and stuff. So it's on a Sunday. His mother came to our house and Paul Tracey that was not his twin brother. His twin was named Charles. One was Calvin, one was Charles. Calvin was missing. She came and . . . [Yes, as mama recalled . . . His other mama. Do you have mama do?] "Yes we saw him earlier he said he was going home." She

said, "Yes he did come home, and I was fixing dinner for him. It was about around two, we was going to have dinner. His other brothers was home when we were about to eat he wasn't there, and he wasn't next door at Papa Joe's house. We wanted to know if he came by here." We said, "No. He didn't come here." So that was maybe, I guess, around four. Something like that in the day time. She came back earlier that night about around six . . . six thirty. It was dark then. "No he still hasn't been . . ." What's up? I'm having an interview.

**KIM MCKEE:**      Okay. They want to take a picture [ . . .?].

**ARSENEAULT:**      We can stop it.

**MCKEE:**      Can you stop it?

**ARSENEAULT:**      [1:24:38] Yes we can stop it. I'll . . . We can do a follow up later.

**MCKEE:**      Yes, she can follow up later. We going to take a picture darling.

**JACKSON:**      Okay.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Well thank you for your time.

**JACKSON:**      Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      We'll send you a copy and we'll be in touch.

**JACKSON:**      Anyway . . .

**ARSENEAULT:**      [1:24:54] Want to finish the story and then we can . . .

**JACKSON:**      Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      We can pause it.

**JACKSON:**      Tell them I'm going to be in there in about two minutes.

**MCKEE:**      No, come take your picture and come back. They can wait.

**ARSENEAULT:**      I'll pause it.

**JACKSON:**      [1:25:04] Okay Yes. With [Mama Dew?] and Paul Tracey are . . . the one with the twin. They came for the last time around twelve at night to our house. Still his mother was real upset, crying and things and she couldn't find her son. So night turn into day. We went to school that morning about . . . School had taken in at maybe about eight fifteen or so it came over the loud speaker. I can't remember right now. Yes, the principal's name was Mr. Williams. He came over the loud speaker and said that . . . Everybody was aware that Mayfield was missing. The students had been told. Who did know . . . But they . . . When we went to school



everybody knew about it. So he came over the speaker and said that Calvin Mayfield had been found and he just told us straight out that he was found hanging in the woods right off of Samson Street and he was dead. The girls and some of the guys were crying and things. I was one of the guys that was crying because he was a good friend of mine and my brothers.

After that evening he had been found . . . And during that time it was November and cold. Not freezing, but it was cold. He was found in what we call the African tree and he was found by his brother, Paul Tracey, and his neighbor Papa Joe. He wasn't found by his twin brother. But his youngest brother and Papa Joe found him. They decided to look through the woods and stuff and they had gone by the African tree and he was found hanging in the African Tree.

[1:26:56] And the way he was positioned . . . Excuse me. When I saw the picture in the newspaper it was with a sheet around him . . . around his shoulders, and the sheet touched the ground. He was in a kneeling position with one knee touching the ground and his other leg kind of bent. But one of his knees was touching the ground and you could see the rope hanging . . . I mean, the rope coming from the tree around, going down where the sheet covered it. You couldn't see around his neck but you could see by the rope that was still on him. And when his brother and them found him it was more dramatic because he was just hanging, but this was I guess after the police got there or whatever and covered up and stop a picture.

But they found him in the raw hanging like that. And they had like a small investigation and this older white man who ran a store his name was [Rue?]. He was a mean white man. When I say that I'm talking about he was mean to black people. But everybody dealt with him because he had a store and you could get credit and a lot of people got credit from him. A lot of black families got credit from him. He knew everybody. He knew all the families. I mean, all the black families. Because you could send your kids to the store and all they had to do was sign their

name and he really knew this Mayfield son, or this Jackson's son, or whatever. Anyway, he was . . . And he sold rope. He was asked because Calvin was found hanging with a brand new rope and with a hangman's knot. And old man Rue sold rope and he was asked did Mayfield come in there and buy some rope at any time within the last few days. Old man Rue said no that he didn't come. None of the Mayfields came in there and bought rope.

[1:29:14] So it was like it wasn't Calvin's rope according to old man. I know he was going to tell . . . If he sold some rope he was going to say he did. And he said no he didn't sell Mayfield no rope. So, therefore he wasn't hung with a rope that Calvin bought himself. Somebody had a brand new rope and hung him with it. And that's how it went down. It never was anybody found guilty of doing anything wrong. It was like Calvin Mayfield committed suicide. Probably playing to see . . . This is what it said . . . Probably playing to see what it might have felt like to be hung but not intentionally going all the way through with it. Kind of a [mistake?] there. That was it. Yes, like he was testing it out to see what it might be like and over did it in other words. That's how that went down. That was in 1957 in Westlake. And everything I'm telling you is real and true. You can believe it all happened, everything that happened to me to all these other incidents. Yes. Go ahead.

**ARSENEAULT:**      [1:30:30] Great. Last question. I'll ask you a wrap-up question and then . . .

**JACKSON:**    Okay.

**ARSENEAULT:**      . . . we can be done. What does Mossville mean to you?

**JACKSON:** Oh, it means a lot of memories. A lot of great memories that lay with me until I pass on. That's about the best that I can describe it, because you really can't describe everything that happened and all the feeling that you experience over the years and things, but it's been a great community to grow up in and a great community to come back to. Like I'm here today for this little probably. . . the last part . . . next to the last party. The last gathering among the people of Mossville per say because it's supposed to be buying all the land and everything in here in this area. So this probably is the last hurrah. But it means a great deal to me. It means everything really. It's a whole way of life. It's going down. Yes. So there it is.

**ARSENEAULT:**      [1:31:39] Is there anything else you want to share for the recording?

**JACKSON:** No. That's about it.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Yes.

**JACKSON:** Yes.

**ARSENEAULT:**      Alright. Well thank you so much for your time. We appreciate it and we'll be sending you a copy.

**JACKSON:** Okay. You find me an interesting interview?

**ARSENEAULT:**      Huh?

**JACKSON:**    I said, do you find me an interesting interview?

**ARSENEAULT:**    You're okay. You're okay!

**JACKSON:**    Yes. Okay. I see you did a lot of laughing.

**[1:32:02]**

**[End Tape 4535. End Session I.]**