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[Begin Tape 4508. Begin Session II.]

CHELSEA ARSENEAULT: Alright, I think that looks good. Today is Tuesday, August eleventh, 2015. I'm here again with Ms. Carolyn Rigmaiden-Frank. This is our second interview together for the Mossville Oral History project, and we are working in conjunction with the Imperial Calcasieu Museum to document the history of Mossville [Louisiana]. And I just want to thank you so much for talking with us again . . .

CAROLYN RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: **[00:29]** Welcome.

ARSENEAULT: . . . and sharing your . . . Yes, thank you. Your beautiful memories about Mossville. Last time we talked you shared just memories of Mossville and your family's role in the community. Today we want to talk a little bit more about what life was like here, just for the record and so it won't be forgotten. But first, I kind of want to pick up on what we talked about voting and your father's role in that. I feel like that's really important. You mentioned the importance of voting, especially after . . . and I know it was important after the Voting Rights Act that passed in 1965. You would have been around twenty-three at that time?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [agrees]

ARSENEAULT: [01:07] Do you remember anything about that?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah, I remember that, the voting. And my father was very into voting because he felt that that was important, because he felt that was a right that we should honor. And a lot of people still don't vote, for whatever reason. I don't know. But he thought it was so important that he would get into . . . He got into it, I think, mainly to help the people in the community that didn't understand, or that didn't know exactly what all was going on. He would take them to register to vote because he wanted to make sure that everybody participated that was able to participate. So this made it . . . Being important to him as a young person that I was at the time, it became important to me. So I knew how important it was that when I was able to . . . when I became of age to register, that I would register to vote. I've always talked to people that say, "Well my vote don't count," or, "It doesn't matter anyway." I always would try and tell them that you look back at our older generation that couldn't vote, and so this should make you just want to vote just for that reason because they fought for us to get that right.

[02:53] I just feel that one of my daddy's reasons . . . that was his reason—that that was handed down to him from his uncle, and I would think from farther back than that, that how far, ever far back, when they first started wanting to vote. And so that being handed down, and he handed it down to his children, so I felt that this is something that I would have . . . I had to do to my children, and hopefully they will do that to theirs. But it is a very important thing for this community because, I mean, we were just a small . . . just really small, more or less a town. Well, I don't know if we were a town. Might not been enough people, but . . . It was just because of the close knit of the people, and you wanting everybody to progress and for the community to progress. That's the only way that that would happen if we were able to vote. And if you're able

to vote for the person that's going to help you and help your community, because everybody that run for an office is not going to help your community. And so it was very important that we vote in order to get the right person in office.

ARSENEAULT: [04:27] Do you . . . Thank you for that.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [agrees]

ARSENEAULT: Do you have any memories of the voter registration in the schools, or the efforts . . .

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: No.

ARSENEAULT: . . . in the '60s?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Never. No, I don't . . . I know we didn't do it in the school. We didn't do it in our school. They would just . . . Like I say, my daddy and some of the other people would take people to register to vote at the courthouse. But that was about all that I remember about that.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember when that was, when he coordinated those efforts?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: It was in the early '60s. I don't really remember what year, but it

was in the early '60s.

ARSENEAULT: [5:23] How long did he do that?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Well, he did that for a long time. That was just part of the things that he did. He did that, then when it came voting time, he would see that the people had transportation to get to the voting polls. So he would . . . The different politicians that they were going to vote for would give them money for cars for people to drive others to the polls. So he would see that that was done, and that everybody that wanted to drive, that they would . . . he would get money for them in order for them to be able to drive. They would pick up the people that wasn't able . . . didn't have transportation to come. So it was just things that was ongoing. It just . . . Even though after the elections and stuff, things would slow down. But that was just something that always was there, because when people needed something, or somebody in the community if something happened and they would come to him, and he would go to the representatives or whoever it was that the community voted for if they won. He would talk for them, too, if they had gotten in trouble or anything.

[07:07] So, this is where it come in that what you do to help somebody, then they help you later. So it was always something. It just never stopped. And during the election time, I mean our phone would always . . . We couldn't talk on the phone because Daddy was waiting for a call from somebody, and the phone would ring and it was for me, and I would try and talk. "Get off that phone!" [laughs] And I'm thinking, oh shoot. I'd be so glad when this is over because we just stuck. But I know that he was doing that not just for him, but it was for everybody here. I think everybody appreciated it because they . . . I could tell by that they were

glad to know, because they would call him to see who we voting for sheriff, who we voting for district attorney. So, they liked what his opinions, whatever he would tell them normally that's who they were voting for.

ARSENEAULT: [08:19] How did he decide?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: I don't know. [Laughs] I know he would talk to all of them and see what . . . I guess what their qualifications were, and what they were going to do for, I would say the community, how they were going to help or . . . and if they didn't help, then if he . . . if that was one they voted for, then they wouldn't vote them the next time. Because I can remember one that was . . . when all the civil rights and everything was up and this one, our state representative, one of the ladies from here, rather one of the young girls from here wanted to go to McNeese [State University; Lake Charles, LA]. And so Daddy went to talk to the representative to give them a scholarship, or they would give them money to go. And he didn't want to give them money to go to McNeese, but he would give it to go to Grambling [State University; Grambling, LA] or Southern [University; Baton Rouge, LA], which is predominantly black colleges here in Louisiana. So that ended their voting for him the next time. He wasn't one of the ones that they would vote for. And all before, they thought he was a really good representative until that came up. Sometimes you just aren't sure, but you try and pick the best person that's going to help you and your community out.

ARSENEAULT: So during that time, how did the teachings of Martin Luther King affect Mossville?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [10:18] Well, during that time, we were . . . I mean, I done graduated, left school, left here. So it wasn't . . . I don't remember what they did after that out here in the community. I just wasn't coming over here that much, and wasn't into to know what all they were doing at that time.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about that time?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [Pardon]?

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about that time in the country?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Well, I know that it was a time when the blacks was really trying to elevate themselves and they wanted to have the same rights as everybody else. So it was just that . . . Sometimes you have to . . . Like they demonstrated and marched, and everything. Sometimes you have to just be aggressive enough to do something other than just sit and talk about it. So that was . . . I think that was a good thing that they did. I think the March at Washington, D.C. was a good thing. And the men, the Million Men March, I think that's a good thing. Even here in Lake Charles they have the Million Men March, but I don't know how many men is in the organization. But it's good and it's growing. So it's times when you have to do other things other than just sit and wait for somebody else. You have to get involved in these things, too. But at this time, Daddy had moved to California. He wasn't out here anymore. So I don't really know what all they did or anything after that point.

ARSENEAULT: [12:41] Did you move with him?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: No. He . . . My mother died in '65, and he remarried and moved to California. So, no, I was living in Lake Charles at the time.

ARSENEAULT: Did he notice any differences between the communities? Did he ever make a comparison between California and Mossville or Lake Charles?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: No, he was just . . . In California he wasn't really into anything. He was just still with his church, and the district and things. But he wasn't into anything in Oakland [California] as far as none of the organizations or anything. He would come back down here because he was still in the Christ Sanctified Holy Church district that consist of Louisiana, Texas, and Arkansas, so he was still in that member. They joined in California when he went up there. So California was made part of the district, so he would still come here for all the conferences and everything, and . . .

ARSENEAULT: [14:04] So he was still a minister?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah. Oh, he never would give that up. That was one thing that he had . . . He worked at Firestone Tire and Rubber plant for I think about twenty-five years. But he had a heart attack in '64, and they . . . the plant doctors said that he had too much extra activities, so they told him that he would either have to give up his churches, or still work with them. So he gave up Firestone. He went on and retired and just kept his churches. So that's one thing that he

would never give up. He never gave that up.

ARSENEAULT: [15:01] That was his life calling.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Right. Yeah. Because when . . . I know that he was really out in the world before that. So he fought when God called him. He didn't want to go into that ministry or anything, but when you're called, eventually something going to happen that you're going to get into it.

ARSENEAULT: You're either going to run and get swallowed by a whale . . .

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [Laughs] Yeah, so he became minister in '45, 1945. He was ordained.

ARSENEAULT: How did he tell that story?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [15:45] The people . . . Like I wasn't even born yet, so I didn't know the wild side of him or the . . .

ARSENEAULT: Because you were born in '47?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah. So I didn't know the part where he was drinking and all this different stuff, gambling, and had stills and all this stuff. So I just knew what I was told. My

sister and them, the older ones, would tell us about how he was and stuff. But I can remember he said that the night that he finally gave up all of that. . . My mother would always go to church and take the kids. And so this one night he went . . . he would go meet her and walk her home because they didn't have a car. So he went and met her. He was standing outside waiting for the church was over. He said he was standing outside, and he said something just told him to go in. And he went in and he joined church. From there, he became a minister. So that was the ways that God had been telling him and he wouldn't do it, he still wanted to do what he . . . everything in the world. But that one night when he went, and he said he was staying outside. He had no intention of going in. But when God say it's time, it's time. So that was his beginning.

ARSENEAULT: When was your dad born?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: He was born in 1905.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: [17:32] Did he talk about what it was like growing up?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: No. And that was the thing right now that I hate more than anything is that they didn't really talk about things, bad things. And my mother either. She was from Branch, Louisiana, and she never would talk about her family or anything. I know that she

worked . . . She started working when she was young. I know that she worked for this white family. When she was thirteen, she lived there.

ARSENEAULT: What did she do?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [18:20] Maid, I guess. I don't know what they . . . But that's all I know. She worked in the house, so she was in the house. But she was thirteen, and I think that is so young. How can you let your child go live with these people? But that was the way that it was done then. But that's all but really I don't know anything hardly about my mother's family. We've gone to ancestry.com to try and find, but it's a lot of things we don't know to get started to try and go up. Now my granddaughter traced the Rigmaiden family way, way back. She was able to trace them because I told her, I said well I thought we were Germans . . . that the Rigmaiden started with German, but she got them in England. So I don't know.

ARSENEAULT: Is there like a white side of the family?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah. Oh, yeah, it was white. Yeah. And so I don't know if that's . . . They never talked about that part. Or if that's why . . . I don't know if that's why my mother never talked about her family. And right now I hate that because I've lost that. Even some of the older people here in Mossville, well they've died out, so I even lost talking to them. Because it was some that I would go talk to, and they would tell me things about the family and stuff, but now they're all gone. So it's sort of like . . . it's just what you know and what they've told you. If you have some of the people who family told them things that that's where our history is.

ARSENEAULT: It's in the memories.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [20:29] Yeah. of . . . And right now it's the younger people. I mean, they not young. I mean, we not young no more [Laughs]. But it's sort of in . . . Say the people that's in their seventies and early eighties, because all the rest of them done passed on that was able to actually tell you from fact, that knew what was going on. And it's bad when that's lost. That's why I was glad that they're doing this with the Mossville community, saving at least the information, what we do remember. I think that's a wonderful thing. And because I said . . . Well first I said well, I wasn't going to bother about anything, and then I thought, well I want to at least let them try to put on about daddy. I mean, I wanted his information here because, he had worked hard. They just did so much in getting things here. Not only the recreation, the swimming pool, the pavilion . . . But Daddy he had done passed, but the pavilion, but that's my brother's name on the pavilion, so I know that that continued. That was the one thing that Daddy wanted was for my brother to continue to do things like he had done here. And my brother just wasn't the same type of person. So when you're not that type of person, then you don't tend to do the same things. But he were into helping the people, but not as much as my father was. But so, I just wanted to make sure that that got in. Not so much me or us. But I just wanted for them.

ARSENEAULT: For what they did for the community.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Right. Yeah .

ARSENEAULT: [22:44] But we have to get you, too Your story's important, too.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Well, I mean [Laughs] my . . . I was just here until I graduated from high school. But I've always enjoyed . . . I loved living here. I mean, we could just . . . When we was coming up, you just weren't afraid of anything, or anybody breaking into your house, or vandalizing your house or anything. You just weren't afraid. Everything was . . . everybody knew everybody, and if they knew they done something, everybody was going to know who had done it, because somebody was going to tell; that's definite. So it's just . . . Mossville is just a small . . . it was. When I was coming up. I know we got the other subdivisions and things, and that made it . . . more people and everything. But before all the people came in, we were just a little community, and everybody knew everybody, everybody almost was kin to everybody. So it's . . . When you did something or something, you would help everybody. Everybody would help each other. Because I know when my father had his heart attack, our neighbors would send their sons over to cut our grass because at that time it was just me and Momma home.

ARSENEAULT: [24:34] Where did y'all live again?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Just right down the street.

ARSENEAULT: So you lived on Old Spanish Trail?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Old Spanish Trail and Prater?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah. But no. We had lived closer here.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, okay.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Matter of fact, we were about . . . Let me see. We have the water tower, and then we have the Praters, and the Praters, and then Smith Avenue. And we lived right next to Smith Avenue.

ARSENEAULT: What kind of house . . . Was it still . . . is the house still standing?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah, it's still there.

ARSENEAULT: You'll have to give me the address so I can . . .

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: It needs to be torn down, whatever [Laughs]. But Daddy sold it when he moved to California. And I'm not sure who has it now. I thought one of the Montgomerys, but I don't know who owns it now. But yeah, it's still standing there.

ARSENEAULT: [25:32] What kind of house is it? You may have told me already, but I just . . .

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: It had siding, a green siding on it. And matter of fact, it's right next to my nephew's house, [Kerry?] Rigmaiden and his mother [JoAnn?]. Smith Avenue, they

still there. I don't know if they going to move or when they going to move [Laughs], but they're still there right now.

ARSENEAULT: Who were your neighbors growing up?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [26:07] I had . . . Let's see. Ms. Ava Prater, which was our home ec teacher. And Mr. Audrey Prater, he was married to my father's sister at one time. Lived right next door. And then it was the Hartmans and then Uncle Josh, the other Rigmaidens. And then across the street, we had the Dellafosses and the Paynes. Not the Paynes right here, but another set of Paynes further down. They were kin.

ARSENEAULT: So not Ms. Vera?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Right. Not her.

ARSENEAULT: But the other . . .

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: Their kin.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [26:47] Yes. It was Vera's father-in-law's brother.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah. That lived across the street from us. And then the Vincents. So then it was a lot of vacant lots and things. And it just seemed like that didn't even bother us, that is was so much woods [Laughs]. It was just . . . it was just good. We walked to the store. We had the store right here, just across the track. My aunt and them had the store and the Garretts.

ARSENEAULT: Was he white?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: No.

ARSENEAULT: [27:33] Was there ever a white shopkeeper in Mossville?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: There was?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah, on Prater Road. They moved there . . . Let's see. When did they move there? Probably about in the '50s. I think they moved there in the 50s. They were the only whites here [Laughs] around here. It was nobody else.

ARSENEAULT: That's unusual.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: I know. I don't know . . . I don't even know how they came to open a store there. But they did. But Daddy still wanted us to go to our auntie's even though their store was bigger and had more things. But we would go to Westlake once a week and do our grocery shopping and we would just go there over to Aunt [Marah's?] store just to get bread or milk or something in the week that you might run out of. But we always went to Westlake or over in Lake Charles to George Theriot's and do all the grocery shopping.

ARSENEAULT: [28:44] When did those stores close? The ones in Mossville?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Let me see. Now, I don't know when the one where the white ones did, because it was still open when I left. In '65, it was still there, but [Aunt Marah?] and them, theirs, theirs must have closed down around in the late '50s, I think.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember any like protesting in the '50s and the '60s? The civil rights protests or anything like that?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: I don't know of any out here, or even in Lake Charles. I know that some people tried to eat at Woolworth's, but as far as for anything big or it being a big problem, it never was out here. Never did have that type of problem.

ARSENEAULT: So school. So you finished school here, you went to Mossville High School.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [30:00] [agrees]

ARSENEAULT: And then, where did you go to college?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [30:03] Well, I didn't go to college [Laughs]

ARSENEAULT: Oh.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: No, I got married and . . .

ARSENEAULT: Did you meet your husband here?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah. Matter of fact, I met him at a school event. He lived in Lake Charles. And so they would . . . We had what they called the Del Sprites. It was the high school ladies, the sorority Deltas. And so they had high school kids that was going to join the sorority.

ARSENEAULT: So sprites . . . like they're little?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: [30:50] I see.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: So I was in that, and we would have . . . it was having a

coronation. So we had to go over to Lake Charles to practice and everything, and that's where I met my husband. [Laughs] It was at W.O. Boston High School, and we were in the auditorium and a lot of these guys, when they'd see a lot of girls, they hang around and to talk to see who they wanted to talk to and stuff. And after we had finished our practice and everything, there was a canteen. We used to call them canteens, on Shattuck Street. Not too far, about a block from the school. We all met up there until our ride would come to get us. And that's when we started talking. Yeah. Ended up marrying him. [Laughs]

ARSENEAULT: How long did you . . . Did you call it dating? Or was it courting?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: We called it dating.

ARSENEAULT: [31:53] How long did you date before you got married?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Let me see. We dated a little over a year. Yeah, little over a year.

ARSENEAULT: And this is just my own curiosity, this is not a Mossville related question.

But how did you know he was the one?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Well . . .

ARSENEAULT: I'm always curious to know that.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [32:20] [Laughs] Well, it was his attitude. He was nice, he was outgoing. Just had his own opinion about things. He was just really a nice person. He told me when he first saw me, he knew that I was going to be his wife [Laughs]. I thought, oh, I don't know about that! And when he came to the house and met Momma and Daddy, I mean they thought he was okay. But they liked the guys more or less that I dated from Westlake . . . closer to home. Some that they knew the families. See, they didn't know his family or anything. So that was a minus [Laughs]. But they got to know him, and they liked him, so that was a plus, too.

ARSENEAULT: So this was in the '60s?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: What kinds of things were young couples doing together in the '60s?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Well, really it wasn't much that we could do because he didn't have a car. And so he had to get a ride to come over here to see me. And so mostly was it. We would go to the canteen here, and that was mainly what we would do. Just sit at home and talk and then just go to whatever they was having over here. If we . . . If it was during school time and they had a ball game or something, we would go to the games. But other than that, as far as going out, say to the movies and stuff, they had that in Lake Charles. But like I say, he didn't have a car, so we just didn't have a way to do those things. So it was mostly just whatever happened here, out here . . . whatever we did here.

ARSENEAULT: [34:28] Did y'all get married here?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yes. Well, we got married in Lake Charles, yeah.

ARSENEAULT: I wanted to talk a little bit about . . . since you're . . . Were you a librarian?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: No.

ARSENEAULT: That's your cousin, is a librarian.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Did you ever work?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Oh, yeah, I worked. I worked at Gulf National Bank. I worked at the . . . well, my main job, really that I worked thirty-one years for Montgomery Ward. I did their accounting in the office, and when they closed down, they filed bankruptcy and shut down in 2001. Well then I worked for Lowe's as an administrative manager for seven years, and I just got tired of that. Didn't care for that too much. And then I went to the school board in the accounting department. So I worked there until I retired.

ARSENEAULT: [35:36] I was curious just if you noticed any differences . . . like working, has it changed for women . . . the working environment?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [35:49] Well, I didn't . . . The only job that I worked that I guess that would have been more of a man's type job was at Lowe's, but I was in the office so it wasn't . . . But they wanted you to do . . . drive the forklifts, do all this stuff [Laughs] and that just wasn't what I wanted to do. But at that time, when Montgomery Ward's closed, positions in the office and things were sort of tight here. There weren't many, not in the position that I wanted, so I took that just because at that time it was just something that I could do that was still in my field. I worked there seven years, so I stayed quite a while. And I noticed that the store managers, a lot of them, did not like the women workers. They . . . That was just . . . I noticed that, and especially in management positions. It was okay if you was the cashier or something, but not in management. You could tell how I was treated compared to the other managers. It wasn't that . . . I don't think it was the color, but it was being a woman . . .

ARSENEAULT: Your gender.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: . . . in that field. That was . . . I think that was a lot of their problem. We had a couple of managers that was prejudiced, but you could . . . I just had to work around that. But the main thing I think was that they wanted men in those manager positions [Laughs].

ARSENEAULT: Made no sense to me.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [38:01] Right. Yeah. Because we were doing the job, but you can just tell the feeling because one of the managers, him and all the guys, all the other managers,

would go out and eat. I was the only one that he wouldn't take. [Laughs.] It was like "Oh! We forgot about you!" Oh, okay. How could you forget about me? [Laughs] And so I just thought oh well, just let that go because they have to come up with something. So, but it was. . . I knew what it was, but so . . . yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Man. Well, I guess getting back to Mossville a little bit. What kind of . . . Kind of talking about work and everything and growing up here, what kind of values do you think your parents instilled in you?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [39:03] They instilled in me religious values, the church. That we should love one another, do for one another. They taught me to work. Even if I wasn't working on a job, but to still be able to work at your home. My mother was . . . my mother didn't work out of the home. She was a homemaker; she stayed at home. And so they told us that . . . The one thing that I said that they didn't teach me was how hard life can be. I saw a life that . . . Like I say, my father worked at the plant, so he made good money. This was the life that I saw—that you work . . . that you have. I mean, and they lived a good life. I mean, we lived a good life. We weren't rich or anything, but we were comfortable. So this is what I saw.

I thought that this is what would be . . . when I go, when I get grown and married, you work, and hey, everything's comfortable. I didn't realize how life itself can be so bad. As I said, they didn't teach us that when we leave home that you know, you're out there on your own. And man, things can get hard. You can . . . You may not have enough money—how you going to survive? How you going to still pay your rent, take care of your family, do things? I wasn't taught how to do any of these things. Like I say, because everything was comfortable. And so

when I got out, everything was different, because me and my husband weren't making the money that even, say, Daddy did by himself.

[41:40] So it was tight, and it was hard. So I always made sure that I taught my children that. That things is not going to be easy once you get out on your own. So I just let them know. At times my husband was like, "Don't tell them that!" I said, "Yes. I want them to know," because this is the thing that I didn't experience at home, and if I would have, I would have been more prepared for what was yet to come for me until things got where we were comfortable, had enough money to do things. Because it's hard when you don't have enough money to do the things you want to do, or say even do the things your friends are doing, because we used to like to travel on weekends. We would go to Galveston [Texas], different places. And then there were times when it came that we didn't have the extra money to do this. So that makes . . . it makes problems. It causes marriage problems and . . . everything.

So it was even though we learned the religious part and the things that we should do, how we should carry ourselves, and do unto others as you would have them do unto you, and all these different things that we learned, we still did not learn about life. I think that's the main thing, everybody ought to teach their children about life. We were like, confined right here in this community because we didn't really . . . I mean my mother cooked every day, so we didn't go out and eat. We didn't do none of that type of stuff. I didn't go to movies until I was grown. [Laughs] So it was like we were just . . . the community was it. So you were comfortable around everybody, because everybody could tell you what, if I was somewhere and I was doing something, I shouldn't do. Whoever . . . whatever adult was there, they would chastise you right there. It wasn't nothing waiting until you got home. And then quite naturally, they would come home [Laughs], and they would tell your parents too. So you got chastised more than once for

what you did. So it was like we were comfortable here and didn't know anything else, how life is, how life was even in Lake Charles, a bigger city. So that just shows you how sometimes the small communities, they hinder the children as well as help them, but because they keep them from a lot of things, and we need to know these things.

ARSENEAULT: [45:04] That's a good point.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [Laughs] Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: So when did you first consider yourself grown up?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [Laughs] Wow. I guess when I made eighteen [Laughs]. Me and my brother had got into it one time, and I told him that . . . Well, my mother had died, and Daddy had moved to California. We were still both here. I forgot . . . We got into an argument. He was saying something, and I said, "I'm grown. You can't tell me what to do." [Laughs] And then he looked at me like, "I changed your diaper!" I was like, "So?" [Laughs] I mean, it was like he was grown and I couldn't talk back to him . . . which, if my parents would have been here, I probably wouldn't have. But I felt that hey, I can tell them now that I'm grown now, you can't be telling me what to do anymore. And it felt good at that time, but . . . and then when you would think about it . . . I thought about it, I probably shouldn't have told him that. He was trying to tell me something, for my own good. But it was just good to say.

ARSENEAULT: [46:25] Legally, you were grown, so . . .

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [Laughs] Yeah

ARSENEAULT: [46:31] Who were the people most important to you?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: My father, my mother and my older sister.

ARSENEAULT: What was her name?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Ida Mae Porter.

ARSENEAULT: Ida Mae?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah. She was stayed here until in the early '60s when they moved to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania because the jobs had sort of dried up here for me and . . . So I had an uncle in Philadelphia and they went . . . they moved there and got jobs over there. So she . . . When Momma died, she was always like a second mother, I guess you would say, to me. She was the oldest girl, I was the youngest child. And it's like thirteen years between us, but we was still real close. She died this March. She had been sick. We had been called before that the doctors didn't think she was going to make it. So we had already been called, had to go there spur of the moment. But she always . . . Even when Momma and them lived, when they lived here, it was a lot of things that Momma and Daddy didn't go to. Like they didn't go to the ball games and stuff, and she would take me to things. So she was like the person that [was there for her] . . . well, I was born during my parents . . . my mother's change of life, so they had gotten old.

ARSENEAULT: [48:42] They were too tired.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah [Laughs]. So they didn't do things with me like they did with the others. So it was a lot of things that she did with me, took me places and did things. So I really appreciated her and loved her for all that she did. And Momma and Daddy, I just . . . I feel they were the best parents in the world. I know everybody thinks that . . . I mean most people think that about their parent, but I do. I just thank God that . . . for them, and for my sister, and for my other sisters, too, and my brother. But it was just more of a closeness with my oldest sister.

ARSENEAULT: What else do you remember about her?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [49:39] Well, like I would go and visit her. But she would [visit often] . . . She loved Mossville. I mean, even more than me. She was . . . She would . . . Their vacations would be here. Every summer, her and her kids would come here. They wouldn't . . . I mean they might would go to other places sometimes. But she felt that this is where she belonged. And she would come here and I would have to take her everywhere. Because she want to see everybody. And that's what we would do. When she would come, she would go visit and visit. So I really liked that. I told them, when she died and I spoke at her funeral, I told them about the year that she came and she stay . . . I said she came, she bought a one-way ticket [Laughs] I say she came in November, went home in March. I said she stayed and stayed, I thought, oh, okay now when you going home? [Laughs] But . . .

ARSENEAULT: Getting sick of each other, huh?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yes. Oh, wow. And I said my home was like her home. Like she would call me and tell me, "Okay, well, Kip, I'm coming June the fifth, and I'll be leaving June the thirtieth . . ." whatever. She just called and tell me. Don't say are you going to be doing anything, did you already have something planned for that time, or nothing. And so her kids told her, "You need to ask her. You know to ask Kip if you can come." And she said, "Well yeah, I do." And so she told me, she say, "They telling me I need to ask you." And I said, "Well, you do!" [Laughs]. But she never did, so that was . . . yeah, she was a character. Yeah. I really miss her.

ARSENEAULT: Was she kind of bossy?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [51:59] Yes, definitely [Laughs]. I think she saw me as being like her oldest child or something. Because . . . let me see. I think I'm ten years older than her oldest child. So it's not really . . . Families, you know, it's that length of time between children. So because she would . . . And sometimes I would have to tell her, "I'm grown. You can't be telling me these things." And then after that, that just goes out the window because we back to her telling me what to do [Laughs] and everything. So, but. . . I guess I liked it because I did it. [Laughs] It wasn't like I wasn't going to do what she tell me to do. But, yeah. She would come here, and we would have to go . . . she would have certain people that she would go and visit, and sit down and talk. Now, she remember a lot of the past things. And I hate that I didn't write . . . we wrote some stuff down, but I just let all that slip. And now, I hate that . . . that I didn't get

all the information like some of the people here remember. So that's just passed.

ARSENEAULT: I think we're digging up some of it.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [53:51] Yeah. And I'll be able to go back and see and say, "Oh I remember that! I remember that happened," because I know Edward Julia, she knows a lot. She remembers a lot, so . . . I know if she done did her interview or if she didn't so . . . I know I'll get a lot from what she remember. Her and her family.

ARSENEAULT: I think she told us about a sassafras tea?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Oh, yeah, well I don't . . . I've heard of it [Laughs]. I really don't know anything about it. But yeah, that's what I say. I know like her, I know she would remember a lot of the old stuff.

ARSENEAULT: I think you're right about that. I was curious. Growing up, how were unmarried people viewed in Mossville?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [54:54] Well, they . . . I guess it was . . . I guess it's like anywhere else. You're like different. It's like people, they'll communicate with you, but very . . . lightly. It's not . . . They wouldn't . . . Like you weren't, I guess, in their group. And they didn't have a group, but it's like you . . . not unless you were actually their blood family were you like really included. But if you, say, just . . . knowing you and everything, you weren't . . . you sort of like

an outsider. And that still goes on today. People still . . . if you're not married, they just . . . it just seems like you're . . . you don't belong, I guess [Laughs]. Because sometimes I feel like that, because my husband deceased, and I never remarried. And like some of my friends that's married, sometimes I don't go around or sometimes I'm reluctant because it seems like, I guess I just don't belong anymore to that group. So it's . . . And they don't even think about that. But it's just the way that you perceive them as thinking because you don't have your mate with you, and a lot of things is couples. So I mean . . .

ARSENEAULT: You're the fifth wheel.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [57:08] Yeah. You can take somebody . . . but it's just still . . . it's a difference. Even way back then, I . . . you could know that they talk about different ones that wasn't married and things.

ARSENEAULT: How would they talk about them?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Well, [Laughs] some of the things that they would do . . . go out and I guess went and do things that they wouldn't do . . . Faster. And it probably wouldn't even be nothing. It's just because they were settled. When you single, you can do what you want. Most of the people out here were churchgoers; they went to church. They weren't in the clubs and things and some of the women were. And some of the women liked doing that, so they always talk about them. But that's just . . . it's just a stigma that single women carry, no matter where you are.

ARSENEAULT: What about the single guys?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [58:37] It wasn't nothing wrong with them [Laughs]. I mean, they could go wherever. Nobody talked about them. Didn't talk about them being fast or chasing women or nothing. It was . . . They were just single and it was fine because they would still go . . . It didn't matter with them like women. Women tend to not go to things that where there's more couples and things. But a guy will go. I mean, it doesn't matter with him. He would go. They might talk about him being wild and drinking and things, but it's not really the same as . . . You could tell how they talk about the women. They portray the women as being fast and doing things that, I guess, are immoral, whatever . . . however they put it. But the men, it's just like they just do this and it's fine.

ARSENEAULT: Like a double standard almost.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Oh yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Interesting.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yes. And I come to find out that that's everywhere, no matter . . . even in the church. A single woman with children would be in church and they'll talk about her. Especially if she was never married and have children, they definitely talk about her. A man will come in and I mean . . . of course he don't have the children, but they know what type of man he was . . . that he got children all over. And yet still, it's a difference. It's even how they treat them

in church. So it's just a problem with society.

ARSENEAULT: Very interesting. What kind of stories do you remember your father, grandfather, uncles telling you about World War . . . any of the wars, World War I, World War II?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [1:01:15] No. I don't . . . My grandparents were all deceased when I was young. I didn't have . . . really have any . . . my grandparents. My uncle, Uncle Rosco, he was in the navy, but he didn't live out here. After he left home he didn't come back and live, so it wasn't like we were close that he would tell me anything. But other than that, none of the men from here ever really said anything . . . because it was like cousins here that went into the military, not anybody that was real, real close in my family.

ARSENEAULT: So no stories?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: No.

ARSENEAULT: Alright. So you said that your mom cooked every day. What were some of the things that she would cook?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Well, my father liked steak. He didn't eat . . . he didn't like pork and beans because he had ate some that had spoiled or something one time, and the same with potato salad. So that was out. He liked steak, gravy and rice. That was our meal like every other

day. It's what we ate. If he didn't . . . Well we would have fried chicken on Sundays. We would have roasts, fried chicken and . . . salad, but not potato salad. We would have other salads. Momma had to . . . well I'm saying had to, but she would cook . . . And we didn't eat . . . Daddy didn't care for leftovers. She would cook enough for our meals for that day and that's what we . . . We very seldom . . . we never did really have leftovers. When he would be gone . . . A lot of times his churches was in Texas and he would go on the Saturday morning and come back the Sunday evening. So that's when we got to eat stuff like hamburgers, hotdogs, things like that because other than that, it had to be a meal. It couldn't be junk . . . what we call junk now. If he wasn't there, then we could . . . that's mainly what we had. But if he was there, it had to be . . . well normally, it was steak, gravy and rice, but we had to have the gravy and rice. Gravy and rice . . . whatever we had, we had to have that.

ARSENEAULT: [1:04:41] Lunch and dinner?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Oh, yeah.

ARSENEAULT: I would've gotten sick of that.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [Laughs] Sometimes, we would have beans at school, then I would go home and Momma had cooked the same beans and I say, "Oh you just cooked the . . . we got the same thing. We got to eat this over again." [Laughs]

ARSENEAULT: What was your favorite food growing up?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [1:05:02] I liked fried chicken and corn on the cob. [Laughs] That was . . . that's what I liked. Well mainly almost anything fried. I like fried pork chops. Because when I stopped wanting to . . . got tired of the gravy, the steak, gravy, and rice, and gravy, and stuff like that . . . the good food, I guess . . . what they'll say now, the healthy food. I would fry me a pork chop or some chicken or something when they would eat something else . . . because when I didn't want something that they had, well Momma would fix me something else different. So then one day, I'll never forget that, because it hurted me so much. One day she told me I had to eat what she had cooked, and I'm thinking, I got to eat what you cooked? I don't want this! I wanted something else. And she said, "Well you going to have to fix it yourself." I said, "I'm not . . . " So I sit there and sit there. Everybody ate, I didn't eat, and I thought, I'm hungry! She said, "Well, you eat what we have, or else you have to fix your own." So that's when I started frying chicken and frying pork chops and everything. Everybody just liked my fried chicken, so I say I guess it's because I started young with doing it because . . . I'll say because Momma say if I don't eat what she cooked, I'm not going to eat. And especially after . . . I couldn't eat after everybody . . . if the kitchen was clean, so I had to hurry up and decide what I wanted to eat and eat it. So I always had different from the rest of them a lot of the times because I just didn't care for it.

ARSENEAULT: [1:07:12] So what about like sweets?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: My mother made blackberry cobbler. Very good [Laughs]. And she would bake tea cakes. But her main thing she would do would be cobbler. She liked to bake. We would go, me and my sister would go and pick blackberries and bring them for her to make

her cobbler and she would make a peach cobbler. But she baked cakes and everything from scratch. Everything. It wasn't no, like we do today [Laughs]. Everything was from scratch. And on holidays, oh, we would have every kind of cake, every kind of pie. It would just be so much stuff. But everybody, the family, everybody would come and eat. She would do all the cooking. Everybody would come and eat, so she would have enough to last, and everybody take things home.

ARSENEAULT: Does she have a recipe she was famous for?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [1:08:32] No, she didn't do no recipes.

ARSENEAULT: Oh.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: No, it wasn't no recipes.

ARSENEAULT: It was all out of her head?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Oh yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Who taught her how to cook?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [1:08:45] Probably her mother . . . or, well her stepmother probably, because her mother died when she was two. So, I guess her stepmother. But yeah,

because I wanted . . . I loved her cornbread. I asked her, I said, "Well, tell me how to make a cornbread." I wanted to know how to make it. And she just said . . . I said, "Well I don't know how much!" [Laughs] Because I took home ec at school, so I'm used to measuring. And she said, "Well, I don't know. I just . . . put this and that and make my cornbread." So I had to sit down one day and just look at her and try and figure out about how much she put to come up with how her cornbread was. But mine never did come out as good as hers, but she started letting me try to make it.

[1:09:49] But yeah . . . no she didn't have . . . it was no recipes or nothing. No [Laughs]. We didn't get no recipes or anything. And now my oldest sister, she made stuff from scratch. Her cakes and everything was made from scratch. She didn't have recipes or anything. So she . . . I guess watched more than me. I didn't sit there and watch. But she watched more than . . . And so she learned how to do all those things, and I didn't. I know my daddy used to tell Momma that, "You need to teach her how to cook [Laughs] because she need to learn how to cook." So when Momma died, and me and Daddy was home one day, and so he wanted some okra. And I thought, I don't know how to cook okra! [Laughs] And so my home ec teacher, Ms. Prater, she lived right down the street, so she had come to visit, see how we were doing and everything. So she cooked the okra. She showed me how to do it and everything. And Daddy say, "I used to tell Alice she need to teach her how to cook." But I guess Momma liked her food, and she liked cooking for us. That's what I guess she felt she was going to do all her life. She didn't think about that she was going to be gone one day, and somebody still had to do that.

ARSENEAULT: [1:11:35] But you can make fried chicken.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah. Oh yeah, I could do that.

ARSENEAULT: And fried okra.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Now I know how to do okra. So, yeah. And I make good popcorn balls [Laughs]. My children all say, "Why you stopped making popcorn balls?" I said "Well, I get tired. I don't feel like it." But see, I like Steen's syrup. And they like this other syrup, and I say, "I have to fix it with Steen's syrup, and if I don't have Steen's syrup, then I'm not making popcorn balls." So when I go over there, they have pancakes, I say, "Oh I don't have my syrup!" But they don't care for the Steen's syrup. Different generation [Laughs].

ARSENEAULT: So if there's one food that brings back a childhood memory, what would that food be?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Well, I guess it would be our holidays. We would have the turkey, ham, dressings, rice dressing, cornbread dressing, string beans, sweet peas. Just all of the things, and family would all be together. I think that's the things that I remember more than just the regular meal is our holidays, how they were spent.

ARSENEAULT: [1:13:12] Your mom would always cook?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yes. Yeah. And that's the thing, like now you say, "Hey, bring a dish." Everybody brings a dish. But no, she never did. Nobody didn't bring a dish. Everybody

just came and ate. And that was just her.

ARSENEAULT: She cooked the turkey and everything?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Right, everything.

ARSENEAULT: [1:13:35] So did she start like the day before, or a couple of days before?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah. She did it all. Never wanted nobody else to do it.

ARSENEAULT: Bless her heart.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [Laughs] Yeah. Now that I see . . . Because I would do the Thanksgiving dinner for all my children and grandchildren and everything, and then my daughter and them, they started going to Atlanta [Georgia] to her husband's family at Thanksgiving, and so now my son does the Thanksgiving. He do the Christmas. So I have to bring the macaroni and cheese because they like my macaroni and cheese, and whatever else that I want to fix and bring. But now mostly it's over at his house that we go. He does the barbecuing and everything a lot of times. My son-in-law do, too. He barbecues, too. They always want me to tell which is the best [Laughs].

ARSENEAULT: It's a hard job

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Yeah. I can't tell one, "Well, hey I prefer this one than that," because then they ain't going to want me to come and eat [Laughs].

ARSENEAULT: Well do you have a favorite?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [1:15:06] Yeah, but I can't say it because if they listen to this . . . [Laughs]

ARSENEAULT: [Laughs] We'll never know.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: No [Laughs].

ARSENEAULT: That's funny. So what's . . . Do you have any favorite memories of holidays? Or just . . .

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Well, it's mainly with the family getting together, and . . .

ARSENEAULT: What was the big holiday? Was it Christmas, was it Thanksgiving?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [1:15:27] They both were. They both. Now, at Christmas we normally would just come together and eat, and then they would go to their homes to do things with the kids and things, but we mainly would just eat. But mostly I guess the Thanksgiving is where we would really stay, and just talk about what's going on, what's happening and different

things. It was really a good time because you looked forward to that. To you meeting and just doing things with family, which you don't do all the time. So it was just a joyous time to just sit and talk and just reminisce about things—what you did, your family done, what all you were doing.

Sometimes now, I think about that. I hate that the parents, that they're gone and they didn't get to see all of their grandchildren, or which would be their great grandchildren. And all the children now that's here, they . . . all they know is what we tell them. So it's . . . I miss that part with them being there with the ones of us that was there, and then when they passed and then it was just a missed spot, yeah it was just . . . Because my mother like held the family together. At the time, I didn't realize how her role was so important to all of us. And then when she passed, it's like . . . we didn't get together anymore. It was like, you on your own, this is on their own, and Daddy was with whoever . . . wherever he would decide to go. So it lets me know that how important her role was and that . . . I guess she knew that her role was important because things that we would . . . I would always go to her first before I would ask Daddy for anything.

[1:18:15] I know that Daddy took care of all the finances. But if it was something I wanted, I would go and ask her. And then she would say, "Go ask your daddy." And I would think, "Oh." I say, Daddy, he sits up there. He knows I'm waiting to ask him something. He would read the paper. He would hold that paper up there. And I don't think he ever turned the page. He would sit up there with that paper. I would say, "Daddy, I need to know if you would buy me a pair of shoes, if you would do this." And he would just sit up there, wouldn't say nothing. And I'm thinking, now he hear me, but he would just still . . . he was reading the paper. So, I had to wait until he finished. And then he would tell me, "Go ask your momma." I was

going back and forth, and I would say, "Oh, Momma, Daddy said for you to decide." I could always more or less get her to do what I wanted. She was the easy one. I guess in her role of just being . . . talking to us and nourishing us, that when she passed, it's like our family almost fell apart. We weren't close anymore. I mean me and my older sister, it's like me and her was close, and her and my brother was close because they were closer in age, and . . . but, it's like me and the others . . . I don't know, we just weren't that close anymore. It's like Momma kept everything together, and everything running smooth. And Daddy just didn't have that ability [laughs]. He just couldn't do it. He tried, but he couldn't do it.

[1:20:18] So it's just really important that . . . family. And like . . . This is the thing with the community, that now it's just going away. But the community now, or at least these years, weren't what it was years ago. It definitely wasn't. The people didn't get along. It's just different things. It had really changed. But when I was coming up, it was just a good, beautiful place. I mean, you just felt home and you always wanted to come back home. No matter where you were or anything that came up, you wanted to come home. But once people left, these later ones, well, it just didn't matter anymore. Because I hated when they closed the school, because I saw where my ancestors' house, they fought and worked hard for us to get that school, and that they let it close. I thought that was awful for the people that was left here. But, that was a different generation, ones that weren't born here. They had come in, so they didn't have the . . . they didn't see or know how the older people had fought for that. And you had to be here and see and know that it just wasn't given to this community. The people had to keep on going and going and with meetings and fighting for us to get this.

[1:22:33] When they closed it, I really hated that. But I wasn't living here anymore, so it wasn't nothing that really I could do. And the ones that was trying to keep it open, it just wasn't

enough to do it. Then it started dwindling. The people started sending they kids to Maplewood, to Westlake. So Mossville, the school just didn't have enough children anymore. So they knocked it down to a middle school, and then they knocked it down to elementary, and then they closed it. So for the ones that know what the people did, how they struggled and fought for us to get all of these things that's here . . . you would had to have been here to know that it wasn't just given. I mean, they struggled to get these things for us. So, and for to just give it up. That was hard. I clipped out all the, everything in the papers, all the little clippings of the school every time they would have meetings at the school board about the school and everything. Even when Sasol bought the school . . . because I was working at the school board office, and so they had said that Sasol was coming to buy Mossville School. And I said, "I'm going." Because they said, it was like an auction. It was going to be an auction. I said, "I'm going to go and see." So I told my supervisor that I was going to see the buying of the school. So I went and I sat in there, and they started the auction with I don't know how many millions [Laughs] but I thought [I could buy it]. But I don't have enough, nearly enough.

[1:24:54] But it was just good. I guess it was a final thing for me with the school to know that it was no longer Mossville School, that it was going to be Sasol. And I saw them sign the papers and everything. But as . . . I don't know how other people feel or felt about this community, but I know me and my family, I know we loved Mossville. Even though I left, my other two sisters left . . . Well, we all left really, except for my brother. He was the only one really that stayed here until he died. But it was just still a place where, when the parents was here, that we would come. After our parents passed and Daddy moved to California, then I would still come to my girlfriends' houses and stuff, but it just wasn't the same anymore. From just Mossville, if somebody would say Mossville that wasn't brought up here, wasn't raised here.

It was just another place to them. It wasn't anything special. But if you were raised here, and you knew all the people that was here, it's like . . . to you, this is like a palace. Or just, I mean, just . . . it's just a beautiful place. But you have to have lived it and loved the people. I know a lot of people that moved in. Even when they moved it, I know some people moved in in 1957 after Hurricane Audrey. It tore up some of the people homes and stuff, and so they came here. And I know even as grown. Just talking to them. They didn't like Mossville that much.

[1:27:25] So it's a difference in you being brought up here from birth than you moving in later. You don't think as much of the people, of the place. It may be some that did, but the majority of them don't because they didn't do the things that we did as little children. Our playing. We didn't have a playground to go and play different things like that. We would play just among ourselves. We would do things, like we would go crawfishing at the railroad track. We would make our pole, tie a string on a stick, and we would get some kind of piece of fat meat, or whatever our parents had. We would go crawfishing as a group. We normally did things as a group. The whole . . . all the little children that was in our little section. I guess I'll say our little section, because you had the Mossville further down that, they did things in their group. But when we started school, we were all like one big family. We knew each other from going to church and different little things like that.

[1:28:59] But all the . . . We know we played in our own little sections, and everybody would play. It wouldn't be like we wouldn't let this one play or that one. We all did the same things. We would . . . We made our own swings, or somebody made them for us. And so we would play badminton, outdoor games, because we was outside. We did stuff outside. We didn't have computers and all this stuff to do things inside. So we just did things, played softball. But we all did it together. It was like we were one big, big family that we did things together. And

when I moved from here, this is what I missed, is the family atmosphere of everybody being able to tell you what to do if you were a child and they saw you were doing something you shouldn't do. That they could tell you what to do. And it wouldn't be no nothing that your parents would say, "Oh, no, you can't tell my child what to do."

[1:30:31] Everything was so different when I moved to Lake Charles for me. We didn't have that closeness anymore. That was gone. You were close to whatever family was there. Normally that's it. You might know your neighbors, and you might not know your neighbors. So and then so much goes on in the bigger cities, and so you had to, more or less, it wasn't as bad as it is today, but you had to really watch your children playing and everything. Now, unless they would play in a group. A lot of times, kids would get together and play in a group. They're different from adults. Adults mainly stay to themselves more. But when . . . Out here, I guess because everybody knew everybody. It's just a different atmosphere. It's . . . You would have to have lived it, I guess, to really understand and know exactly how everything was because if you didn't live it, then you wouldn't know how . . . I mean, even say if it was fifty families out here. This was like one big family of fifty families.

[1:32:15] If somebody needed help, if somebody was in a financial bind where they may not have a job, be working at this time, and need food for their family, they always could go to somebody. It wasn't like you . . . I guess they had welfare and all that. Food stamps. I don't know. I guess they had that back then. I really don't know. Because everybody did their own thing here. We very seldom went to Lake Charles. We went to visit, I had the cousins over there. I remember we went to visit. We would go to Sear's every so often if we needed something. But other than that, we were home. We were here. And so it's . . . I know that the people that . . . I'm sure a lot of them that sold their homes and everything . . . and I say that I don't know why the

ones that hasn't sold yet . . . some of them say they're not going to sell and things. I wonder why. Why would you want to live around all the plants coming up? But I guess they just trying to hang on to what it was. But that's gone. So many people done moved out when I come and see and I say, "Oh, whose house was this?" Because it's nothing now. I just . . . it just makes me think that . . . after a while, next few years, it's not going to be no houses here. It's just going to be . . . I guess whatever Sasol put if they going to put something down this part. I know they coming down Evergreen Drive now.

[1:34:37] But the thing that now my family and all is buried at the cemetery, Morning Star. So I haven't been to the grave lately. I don't know . . . I know that I wrote the *Informer* to inquire whether or not we would still be able to go there, to go in the graveyard and everything. And they say yes, that it will still be access to go back there. But I haven't went to see. Somebody had told me that I guess Sasol had did work on the road to go back there, because that's where my family is. So that's the thing that if . . . when I come over here now, that's what it would be, to go over there and . . . I know one of my cousins used to take care of the cemetery . . . our family and stuff. He passed, so I don't even know what it looks like now, if it's . . . how much the grass has grown, whatever. I would go out there, me and a friend of mine, and we would clean and paint my parents' and my family's graves and things to keep that part up, but I hadn't been in years, so I don't even know what . . . how it is. Somebody told me they had put a gate up, but I don't know if that's true or not because I hadn't driven back there to see, but that would be my main reason for coming out here now because most of the people that's gone that I would come and visit. It's a few still here. My sister-in-law, nephew, they still here. And I have some friends, but other than that I wouldn't be coming to . . . coming out here. I don't know even if they going to . . . if it's not going to be a name anymore. I don't know what they . . . because it

really won't be a community anymore. So I don't even know if it'll still be Mossville. I guess, even with the plants, I guess that's how they'll be identified. In Mossville. I don't know.

[1:37:25] But that's . . . It's just . . . Fifty years ago I wouldn't have never thought that this would happen. I wouldn't have never ever thought that this would happen. Because for myself, I always thought I would come back and live here. But my husband didn't want to live here, and my children didn't really want to live here. It was . . . But I always felt that I wanted to come back and live here. I really enjoyed my childhood and everything here. It's just an ideal place to live. But I know things changed when the other subdivisions and things came. Crime and different things happen. And so it was different. It started being different. But the Mossville that I knew was a Mossville that I loved, and I loved everything about it . . . the school, everything. Even when we had the little buildings. The school. Everything. We were . . . We had good teachers. They taught us. They were really concerned. They wanted us to learn. And that is very, very important. Still today, if you have a good teacher, oh, that is one of the . . . Education is one of the greatest things that a child could get. If you have a good teacher, that's really . . . because . . . They weren't concerned not just about say two or three children, but they were concerned about all of us. And that just really made a difference in a lot of the children lives. Not all of them did things after they left school or anything. But the majority of us that was here in the beginning, they all majority of them had good lives. What I would call a good life. I mean, nobody rich or anything. But you lived a good life.

[1:40:17] And a lot of it had to do with the school, that we had such good teachers. And I know that the teachers . . . Because one I started working with at the school board. And I went into one of my coworker's office, and I looked at the picture. And I said, "Is that your mother?" And she said, "Yeah!" I said, "Ms. Calvin was your mother?" And so she say, "Yeah!" I said,

"Oh, I remember her from . . . at Mossville." And she say, "Oh, she loved Mossville. She told me that was the best school." And I said she taught my nephew. She was way behind me when she came. But she was a brand new teacher, just out of college, and came and taught. Because she lived with my cousin and them, Carolyn Fay Rigmaiden and them down there. She lived at they house, and . . . while she worked. And I say "Wow, it is amazing." And to hear that she loved here. That she say, "She tells everybody," she say, "I would get so tired of her saying that, that she like . . . that was the best school she taught." And I say, "Wow," I said, "The kids liked her. My nephew thought, oh he just loved her." So it was just . . . But that's the way that the teachers were. Most of them started at Mossville just out of college. But then we had the older ones, too. But most of them started out of college and they liked it. They liked the people around here. So I think that tells a lot about the community. I was glad to hear that . . . When Monica told me that, I was so glad to hear that she said how her mother liked it.

[1:42:53] And so, it's just a good feeling to know that . . . what people that came in thought about the community and the school. So. I can't say enough about it. I don't know why nobody wouldn't have liked to live here. And I know some people don't. Because my husband didn't want to move here. Oh, no. No way [Laughs]. But it's just . . . Like I say, it's just you had to have been here and grown up here to know the value of it, of a little community. How great it was, and how great it was to the children that grew up here. That taught us a lot. We had mentors. A majority of the people were our mentors. The things that . . . We saw how they lived. So you could not go wrong if you followed them, if you saw how they lived. It's just no way you could go wrong. If you took it at heart. And knowing that they done this for you. My parents, and all the other parents, they did this for the children coming. Wanted us to have better than what they had. And so they succeeded. They succeeded, and they all should be proud of what they did

because I'm very proud of them. That's the reason I wanted to come, and I wanted to come here because I felt like it would be something special for me to come here at this center. And so I just . . . that's the reason I wanted to come here instead of at home or somewhere else, but it's just going to be missed. And I'm sure it's missed by others now that has already left. So it's . . . but it was a beautiful place to grow up. I know it's just a little . . . somebody passed through, they wouldn't even know what it is. Just this little place. But it's home. It's home.

ARSENEAULT: What are you going to miss the most about Mossville?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: [1:45:54] I guess just being able to come here if I want to come and just drive through and be able to tell my children, grandchildren, this is where so and so lived, this is where so and so lived. We did so and so at this place. Because my granddaughter, my youngest granddaughter that's sixteen, she don't know nothing about Mossville. And it hurt me when she said that. I did not realize that she hadn't been over here to even see nothing. And when I was talking about it, she said, "Well, where is that?" And I'm thinking, what?! And so it just lets me know how I let it slip with the younger ones. And I'm thinking gee, I just didn't realize that she don't know anything, not even anything, about Mossville. And so now with all the people so far that's out, I can't really tell her, "Okay, this was my cousin, this is cousin, friend, friend," whatever . . . because they're gone. And so I think that that's what I'll miss more, is to be able to show my . . . the next generation where I grew up, and for them to be able to talk to the people like I could talk to them. And a lot of times, I didn't. That's why I don't know a lot of things [Laughs] that I should know about Mossville. That they will know more and learn and be able to tell somebody else, be able to tell their children, "Oh, this is where my great-

grandmother grew up.” So I think that's the part is that all that's going to be gone. That that won't be here anymore to pass that part down to our children and grandchildren, great-grandchildren.

ARSENEAULT: [1:48:36] So we are at an hour forty-eight.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Oh, wow! [Laughs] Okay.

ARSENEAULT: [1:48:46] So I think it would be a good time to stop. I wanted to ask you one last question, about Mossville, of course. And you've told us already, I'm just going to ask it anyway. Like, what does Mossville mean to you?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: To me, it was the place where I grew up. I was born at Saint Patrick's Hospital. I was the only one of the children born outside of the home. All the rest of the children were born at home, so they all was born here in Mossville. I was the only one not. But I have been here . . . I was here all the first years of my life. This was a starting point, a learning point, a religious point. Anything that you could think of for life, that's what it was here for me. It was just a place where you were a close-knit community. And you don't find that anymore. It's hard to find something like that anymore. When I was here, after I got grown, I felt like this was too small to just . . . it wasn't what I wanted anymore. But then, once I was away, then I saw that it was what I wanted. That this is what I would have loved to have stayed all my life. It was a place that people never leave. So that makes it, to me, be that type of a community where it inspires you. It just . . . it's just in your heart. It's in your spirit that this is home. Mossville is home. Never matter where else I go, or what I do, this is home.

ARSENEAULT: [1:51:32] Well thank you so much for sharing.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Okay.

ARSENEAULT: And it's an hour fifty-one, so you shared a lot.

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: Wow. And it just don't seem like it.

ARSENEAULT: I know. Once you start talking, it's just . . . it's good. And is there anything else you want to say before we shut it off?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: No, that's it.

ARSENEAULT: [1:51:48] You said everything?

RIGMAIDEN-FRANK: I think so.

ARSENEAULT: Alright, well thank you so much.

[1:51:50]

[End Tape 4508. End Session II.]