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[Begin Tape 4549. Begin Session I.]

LILLIAN WASHINGTON: When I was born from . . .

CHELSEA ARSENEAULT: Once . . . I'm going to intro and then we'll get started, because I got to get the date. So today is December second, 2015. I'm here with Ms. Lillian Washington. You're a hundred and two so . . . or a hundred and one.

WASHINGTON: One.

ARSENEAULT: A hundred and one, okay. A hundred and one. Going to be a hundred and two?

WASHINGTON: January the sixth.

ARSENEAULT: [00:20] Very soon.

WASHINGTON: Nineteen six . . .

ARSENEAULT: Nineteen . . . That was your birthday. She didn't grow up in Mossville, but

you lived in the Westlake [Louisiana] area and your kids went to Mossville. And so that's why we're interviewing you today, because you have some memories of the area. We just want to thank you so much for sharing your time with us today and . . .

WASHINGTON: I'm glad to do it.

ARSENEAULT: Awesome.

WASHINGTON: If I can do it right.

ARSENEAULT: Oh yeah, you're going to do great. So for the record can you state your full name?

WASHINGTON: [00:48] Lillian Marie Comeaux Washington.

ARSENEAULT: And when and where were you born?

WASHINGTON: In Carencro [Louisiana] right off on [Highway] 90. We had a big house on that and I was born there at the house.

ARSENEAULT: You were born at the house. Who helped . . . Who gave birth . . .?

WASHINGTON: A mid-maid and doctor [Gelbow?], E.E. Gelbow.

ARSENEAULT: Was it common for children to be born in the home?

WASHINGTON: [01:24] In the home. All born in the home. [Same?] doctor.

ARSENEAULT: And your siblings . . . How many siblings did you have?

WASHINGTON: We were thirteen. My oldest sister was named Sedalice.

ARSENEAULT: How do you spell it?

WASHINGTON: S-E-D-A-L-I-C-E. And the next one, [Mary Lous?]. M-A-R-Y L-O-U-S.
And I was the third one. My name, Lillian Marie [Comeaux?]. They all was [Comeaux?]. Same
daddy, same mama. Then you want the next one?

ARSENEAULT: Yes.

WASHINGTON: [02:30] Beatrice. She was Comeaux too. Then Julia. Then my pop had
two brothers, [Palton?] Comeaux.

ARSENEAULT: Palton?

WASHINGTON: Palton, P-A-L-T-O-N, Comeaux. Then the next one was named like my
daddy, Julian Comeaux.

ARSENEAULT: Jullian?

WASHINGTON: Then the next one was Edmo, E-D-M-O [Andy?]. Then later on came another little girl, Julia Comeaux.

ARSENEAULT: Julia?

WASHINGTON: J-U-L-I-A. Then it start on brothers. Five brothers. We had . . . Palton and Julian. Then they was born. Then the girls start coming . . . Lula May.

ARSENEAULT: Lula May?

WASHINGTON: [04:20] [Agrees] How many does that make?

ARSENEAULT: I should have been counting. I wasn't. Sorry.

WASHINGTON: [. . . ?]

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Seven boys.

WASHINGTON: Then Lula May. The two last ones was [Odelia?]. That's one. She died very young. Then Lula May. And the last boy was John Roosevelt.

ARSENEAULT: John Roosevelt? He was the baby?

WASHINGTON: [Died very young?] She had the measles.

ARSENEAULT: How old was she when she died?

WASHINGTON: [05:10] Maybe three or four months. He was very young [. . .?]. Had the measles. And I believe I give you all there are. I'd conjure them see if I gave you all.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Barbara and Mary.

WASHINGTON: I thought I said Mary Rue.

ARSENEAULT: Mary Rue? That's a lot of siblings.

WASHINGTON: But she was from the first group.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, okay.

WASHINGTON: See that leaves Mary Louise and Lillian, then Julia . . . then starts Palton.

ARSENEAULT: That's five.

WASHINGTON: Julius.

ARSENEAULT: Six.

WASHINGTON: [06:00] Edma.

ARSENEAULT: Seven.

WASHINGTON: Then came [Beatrice?], and Lula May and John Roosevelt.

ARSENEAULT: That's ten.

WASHINGTON: That's ten. Three more.

ARSENEAULT: Then you.

WASHINGTON: And Mary Rue.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Barbara.

WASHINGTON: And Barbara, B-A-R-B-A-R-A.

ARSENEAULT: [06:34] Okay, and then . . .

WASHINGTON: Then Lillian.

ARSENEAULT: And then you. You were the third . . .

WASHINGTON: And Julia. You got her.

ARSENEAULT: That's thirteen, yeah. There you go.

WASHINGTON: [. . .?] There was that.

ARSENEAULT: [06:49] Can you describe your house growing up?

WASHINGTON: The house was a big house. Something my dad built it for somebody wealthy and we lived there. We had more rooms than we needed.

ARSENEAULT: So someone let y'all live there? Or your dad built it?

WASHINGTON: No, it was there when we got there.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: And we had all kind of fruit trees in the yard: fig, all kind of different fig, pear, plum, everything we needed was right there. We was raised in a nice place, and we stayed

right there until we all grow up.

ARSENEAULT: How many rooms?

WASHINGTON: [07:32] And we had cow. We had pig. We had dog. We had everything. Everything right. And when I started working, they made you work, my mom and them, and a lot of them raised chicken, geese, duck, turkey, everything. And we had cow. They had horse. Had mule. And I was the one to take the place of a boy to work with my daddy. I'd go get the . . . around the horses from the pasture. Bring them home and feed them in the morning. And I remember good when my cousin, my daddy hired him to work with us. And he told me, "Go feed them animals." And I told him, "I'm not going to go feed them animals." You the . . . My daddy paying you to work." And he went and got the [buggy?]. You don't know what a [buggy?] whip is. The worst one. He whipped me with the [buggy?]. I cried for, oh Lord, months. Every time I see him I cry. I'd say, "My daddy pay you. Go feed your own horse." But I had to go get her. I had a horse that stayed close to the yard, and in the morning when four o'clock I get on the horse. I go riding the other horse and bring him by the house . . . bring them by the barn and feed them. The feed was right there. Yes, and I cried days. And that's the only whipping I had in my life after that. That was a big one.

And I milked the cow. I milked two cows every morning and every afternoon. We had our own milk. Got our own butter. We had everything. Then when you went to work in the field we had to work pick cotton when it's cotton time. He plant corn. When they had corn good enough to eat, our own corn, cut it and cook it. We'd plant some sweet potato, Irish potato, even popcorn when it was time to plant the corn. We plant our own popcorn and our own corn, make

our own corn meal. They had a place not too far from Mossville that grind the corn, make it some corn meal, flour, whatever. We had it there. And when it come to work in the field you'd plant the corn, you'd plant sugarcane, plant cotton when the season for cotton, corn, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes.

ARSENEAULT: You said Irish potatoes? What kind of potato is that?

WASHINGTON: [11:26] Irish potato is . . . Irish potato, white potato.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: To make salads with. You never seen that?

ARSENEAULT: I didn't know it was called that. I just call them potatoes.

WASHINGTON: You just call them potatoes. Irish potato. And we had our own corn meal. We had our own milk. We had our own butter. We plant sugarcane. We have our own sugarcane.

ARSENEAULT: How would you make the sugar?

WASHINGTON: They had a place that grind the corn, and the sugarcane is just . . . You saw the sugarcane plant. That's all we had to buy was sugar.

ARSENEAULT: That's all you got at the store?

WASHINGTON: [12:20] We had . . . We raised potato, sweet potato, Irish potato, and we didn't raise rice. We had to buy that. And sugar, we had to buy that. But my mama raised a lot of chicken. If she needed something we'd go to the store. We'd sell her chicken. Trade it in for some . . . whatever we needed. But we raised everything you could eat. And when I tell them they say, "What y'all ate?" I say, "Fresh food every day." Say, "What you mean it was fresh food?" I say, "Well we had corn when it's time for the corn. We'd break it. We'd make some maque choux, they called it. Corn on the cob."

ARSENEAULT: It's called maque choux?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees] In French.

ARSENEAULT: What is that?

WASHINGTON: It's corn.

ARSENEAULT: Maque choux.

WASHINGTON: Maque choux.

ARSENEAULT: Maque choux.

WASHINGTON: [13:24] Yes. We called them sweet potato. We had that from year-round. We had a little store house we put the sweet potato, Irish potato, all different one in there. And my daddy made some syrup. We had our own syrup.

ARSENEAULT: Did they make it from the cane?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember how he made it?

WASHINGTON: Yeah. They had a machine that they could ground up corn.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, it was corn syrup.

WASHINGTON: Yeah. Juice and they make they call the syrup of the juice and it turn to syrup. We had our own. So we didn't buy nothing much, you know. Didn't have to charge nothing. We raised everything we needed at home. Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: What kind of things would your mom cook?

WASHINGTON: [14:24] My mama she would just cook. She wouldn't work in the field like us. We had to go work in the field. But my mama would cook for us. Around eight o'clock she'd come meet up in the field with our breakfast if we didn't want to go home and eat. We'd eat

just out in the field.

ARSENEAULT: She'd bring your breakfast in the field?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: What time did you have to get up in the morning?

WASHINGTON: We get up around four sharp, because I have to go round up the cows . . . the horses at four o'clock. But we was used to it. It didn't matter. And we'd take a break. She'd make us take a break. She'd come with breakfast. If we wanted to come home and eat we could. My mama cooked. She cooked lunch at dinner time. And she cooked anything. She asked if we wanted what kind of meat we want. She had chicken. She'd kill one and cook it.

ARSENEAULT: Had everything you needed right there. Wow.

WASHINGTON: Yeah. And they have a little store close off where we would trade.

ARSENEAULT: [15:36] Where was the store?

WASHINGTON: Right on the Highway 90. You know when you go where that school is? You know where Arceneaux Street is?

ARSENEAULT: [Disagrees] I'm not really . . . Is this in Carencro [Louisiana]?

WASHINGTON: That'd be before you get to . . . Right in town. But they say passed that now . . .

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: . . . is Carencro. But it used to be just a street on [Highway] 90 going to Opelousas [Louisiana].

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: [16:11] And they had a store. It was a small little man, a little French man. He'd take chicken. He'll trade anything you have with what you needed in the store. We would mostly buy sugar and coffee.

ARSENEAULT: Oh yeah, because I guess coffee doesn't grow here. Can't really grow coffee here. Do you remember the name of the store?

WASHINGTON: [Sye?] Jones they used to call it. Sye Jones. That's all I know. But he was very friendly little man. He had a family. His wife had something wrong with her leg. She was nice too. She taught us Catechism at church. Very nice.

ARSENEAULT: What was the name of the church?

WASHINGTON: Saint Peter and Paul in Carencro.

ARSENEAULT: Was it close to your home?

WASHINGTON: [17:23] [Agrees] But we had a buggy and we had horses. You could see the buggy on the picture on the wall.

ARSENEAULT: I see it. Did y'all all fit in there? All thirteen?

WASHINGTON: No. We'd go different times. They had different masses.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, okay.

WASHINGTON: Sometimes we would walk to church.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: [17:44] But we would ride as many as we could in there. It wasn't far from the house. And we enjoyed our life in the children. We had a place my mama made the girls play in the corner of the yard. We used to have fun with dolls and then take the backyard my brother and they played marbles and we played jack. We played with dolls, too. We'd make

some dolls with some rags. And my daddy would watch us. When the corn had some . . .

ARSENEAULT: The tassels.

WASHINGTON: Yeah, had the hair. We say . . . We'd steal it from my daddy and put in on our dolls.

ARSENEAULT: Hair.

WASHINGTON: If he would catch us he'd fuss at us for that.

ARSENEAULT: What else would you play?

WASHINGTON: [18:50] We played jack.

ARSENEAULT: What is that?

WASHINGTON: Jacks, you know. They got some over here.

ARSENEAULT: Is it the little . . . And you drop the ball and pick them . . .

WASHINGTON: We played that. We played all kind of game. And on weekends growing up we'd play ball. And we have some white neighbors called the [Seraronos?], they would come

play ball with us too.

ARSENEAULT: Like baseball?

WASHINGTON: And our cousin [. . .?] Arceneaux, he would make ice cream on weekends on Saturday and Sunday and sell it a nickel a cone. While we're playing ball the children would get up. They had the big pasture in the front, like this right here. Bigger than it. We'd play ball, girl and boy together. And that's how . . . and watch us. Or parents would come watch us. And my cousins would sell ice cream. We'd stop and eat ice cream, a nickel a cone. We had a good time when we was young. And some people say, "Oh, it was slave town." I can't say that. And when I got old enough I know. I was tall. At seven I was tall. And the [Beche's?] wanted me to go stay with the children when they was somewhere. They come pick me up and I go stay with the kids.

ARSENEAULT: Were you working for them?

WASHINGTON: [20:28] [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: We was on the farm that the land belonged to the [Beche's?]

ARSENEAULT: Oh okay.

WASHINGTON: We just leased it.

ARSENEAULT: So y'all farmed for them?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: [20:39] And I raised two of them boys.

ARSENEAULT: You helped raise the [Basahay?] children?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: The grandchildren . . . it was her grandchildren. There are two boys: Trey and Burt.

ARSENEAULT: Burt?

WASHINGTON: And Burt they say he was a priest, but I don't know. I took care of them. And then I worked for the Conque. They was some neighbors who were close. I worked for the

Conque. And she wanted to go and vacation, her and her husband, and they wanted someone but they brought us in Algier's at [?]. And while we was there, the old lady say, "Y'all must spend two week with me. But I'm going to take y'all's visit [Algier?]. Different place they have, I'll bring y'all." She brought us to church first. Went to church. It was a white church. Blacks . . . But I sit with them. And the next day she took us to Maison Blanche and they had the rolling step . . .

ARSENEAULT: The escalator.

WASHINGTON: [22:03] [Agrees] And she treat y'all for ice cream. She wanted to treat us ice cream. And she said, "Whatever y'all want." So they say, "Ice cream." And at that time I didn't know about the black people couldn't go.

ARSENEAULT: Segregation.

WASHINGTON: [Agrees] Well it wasn't me. Allan, he ordered the ice cream. And so when it came to sit down and eat, the clerk say, "She can't sit with y'all." And he say, "Grandma, Lil can't sit with us?" And she said, "No?" He said, "Well what you want to do?" She said, "I don't want my ice cream if Lil can't sit with us. She be with us all the time." And said, "Norbert, you want your ice cream?" He said, "No. If Lil can't sit, no. No, I don't want mine." And, "How about you Lil?" I say, "I can't sit here anyhow." But I didn't think it was for real. And really we didn't. We left. We didn't eat the ice cream. She said, asked the lady again. And she, yes again. She said, "Why?" But the lady wouldn't tell her . . . tell him. She say, "She just cannot sit with y'all." And the grandma said, "Well y'all don't want the ice cream, give it back to the lady." And we left.

And you know, it never bothered me concerning that until I got here over a year ago[?]. I went to the movie in Lake Charles [Louisiana] in Westlake . . . I say Lake Charles. That's it. And they showed the movie and Oprah played the part [about us?]. And it brought it back to me. I said, "Oh Lord."

ARSENEAULT: What movie was that?

WASHINGTON: I didn't know I was mistreated until now.

ARSENEAULT: Selma [movie name]. Yeah.

WASHINGTON: [24:32] And we went back and everywhere else they didn't do nothing like that. But they sure did with me. So I say, "Oh yeah, I was like Martin Luther King." [laughs] And didn't know it. That's right.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about his assassination?

WASHINGTON: That's all. That's all I remember. I never was mistreated. The children would sleep with me. They didn't want to go with their parents. They thought I was their mama. I don't know what they . . . I asked somebody when I went home. I said, "Y'all know what Norbert and Allan at?" They said, "No." I said, "They must be somewhat grownup big men, or maybe they left town. You know?" There were some called Conque, C-O-N-Q-U-E, and the daddy was George Conque.

ARSENEAULT: George?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: Conque. And that was the [Beshae's?] grandchildren? No?

WASHINGTON: That was some neighbors across from us.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, okay. Okay.

WASHINGTON: The grandchildren, there was a little girl.

ARSENEAULT: How old were they when you were raising them?

WASHINGTON: [25:58] They were about seven . . . six and seven. All five of the seven were little boys, and I stayed there until I married. I was growing up. I still was working for them. Yeah. Now they old men. If they're still alive maybe. I'm lucky to be alive. I don't know. But they was nice people to me. Yeah. And when I grew up I didn't have boyfriend. I didn't want no boyfriend. I would dance with them, but I didn't . . . that's it. And one dance and make it to [. . .?] Arceneaux house and invited whoever they want to come to the dance.

And I saw my husband. There was three or four boy at the door. And I had two good friend, girls, that were neighbors with us. They told me they both did, but I said, "Oh I saw nice boys at the door and a black boy," like I was white. [laughs] And they say, "How come you pick

the blackest one?" I said, "Well, if I dance with him he will be my husband." They say, "Shut your mouth." They curse me out. And it's real, I'm not lying. I'm telling y'all the truth. I had never talked to a boy to talk with a boy, but if I go to a dance I dance. Only time I speak with the . . . And the first one I talk with my daddy didn't like the family, or whatever. And he wanted to whip me for that boy. But he didn't visit me at my house. But then, when I see around there and it really happened that the other boys . . . some white boy would come to the dance with us too. But them boys was light complexion. And they were some [Melancon?] and some [Mouton?] too. And them girls was [Hebert?].

ARSENEAULT: [28:45] Hebert?

WASHINGTON: [. . .?] and they said, "Shut your mouth. Shut you mouth. You ain't going to." And then he danced with them two other girls first. Then he danced with me and I said, "Now I got it." [laughs] [. . .?] And it really happened. And I didn't know the boy. First I'd seen him. I know that was the first time he see me too, but he didn't tell me. And he came to see me the Sunday . . . that was Saturday night and he came up. And my dad, when he came home, my daddy said, "Who's that boy?" "I don't know him. I didn't know him. I just saw him, you know." And he say he didn't come to stay. Told my mom. He said, "Ma'am, I didn't come to stay. I just want her address." I give him the address. And he said, "I'll write to you. I'm going to Alexandria [Louisiana] to work."

And he wrote to me, and I answered him back. And he said he would come to Saint Paul on Sunday. And he did come, and he asked my dad. He had asked me on the letter. "Would you marry me?" And I answer him yes. I didn't know him. So he came that Sunday. My dad's sister

was sick and she was in the bed, and I was laying down by her. Somebody knock on the door. I said, "Come in." And that was him. And my mama and daddy both was there. They was sitting outside. My daddy said, "Who are you?" He had a loud voice. And he said his name, and he look at me because I was there but I didn't say nothing. I was ashamed. And he asked them to get married. And we got married.

ARSENEAULT: How old were you?

WASHINGTON: [31:15] I was old enough. I was old enough to be married because my mama said, "Oh, she thinks she's [?]. She old enough if she want to be married because she old. She just made her birthday and she was twenty-one." Three week after that we was married at the Catholic church. And we stayed married until he got sick and died. 1991.

ARSENEAULT: What was his name?

WASHINGTON: Adam.

ARSENEAULT: Adam.

WASHINGTON: Adam Washington. Then we went to work at the dairy farm on the highway going to Scott [Louisiana] . . . Scott to Lafayette [Louisiana]. And we stayed there two years. Then, later when we decided to come here, but I had my first little child. We work in the farm. I didn't go in the field because I had little children. And I had my second one, Mary Lou.

And she right there. And we moved here in Westlake [Louisiana]. I had two kids . . . two girls. I went to work for a lady who had asthma, and I could bring my children with me. And they were little. But that's not the old lady name, but she was staying with her daughter. She had asthma. She was good to me. And I could take my children, and Gerald. His place was right there.

He grew up to be a big boy, but when they were little I put them in the same bed. And watched them and took care of the other old lady. When they was [good enough to go back to school?], then I worked different place. I went to wash for white people at night and iron their clothes so I could do something for money. And I'm still in Westlake. I had my two girls, and I had two boys. [Joe?] was my oldest one. His picture's up there. And Gerald was my third one. Then I had [Sherrill?] and Mary Louise. Mary Lou is . . . Mary Lou right there. Then on the last I had two daughters again, Sherrill and then Cathy. Cathy was the baby.

ARSENEUALT: So four total?

WASHINGTON: [35:05] I had four girls.

ARSENEAULT: Four girls and two boys?

WASHINGTON: Two boys.

ARSENEAULT: Okay, so two girls, two boys, two girls. Okay, so six.

WASHINGTON: And they went to school, and I worked. I worked for a good lady, and she

wasn't married. She lived in Lake Charles. She had a nice home. She go to work. I worked for her on weekends, and I work at the cafeteria at [. . .?] during the week. I was a waitress in the front. I did that [till they grow up?]. I wanted Mary Louise to go to college, because she had asthma. From she was six years old when she caught that asthma, and I had the [. . .?]. She graduated, well she went to McNeese [State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana].

ARSENEAULT: Did all your children go to Mossville High?

WASHINGTON: [36:10] They went to Mossville from the beginning, and from there they went to McNeese. She said they gave her trouble.

ARSENEAULT: At McNeese?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees] About the first black going to school down there. Then Mary Lou went to McNeese too.

ARSENEAULT: When did you first hear about Mossville?

WASHINGTON: When the first years . . . I don't remember when the years what started going to school . . . I don't remember that. But Mary Louise and Mary Lou went to Mossville. Sharon [. . .?].

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: It was in the '50s when we went [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: To Mossville?

WASHINGTON: And then when they integrate the school, Sharon and them went to . . .
Mossville.

UNIDENTIFIED WOMAN: Westlake High.

ARSENEAULT: When they . . . What year was that? Remember? Like '59 I think . . . or '69
rather.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I went to Mossville from 1959 to '62.

WASHINGTON: [37:32] Yeah, they got that picture. They all graduate.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about Mossville? Did you ever . . . What was like
your first impression of the area?

WASHINGTON: Where?

ARSENEAULT: Of Mossville.

WASHINGTON: It was nice to me. It was alright. But I visit them for little PTA or when
they . . . for the school. And my children played ball. My oldest son liked to play football,

baseball too.

ARSENEAULT: For Mossville?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember any of the coaches?

WASHINGTON: [38:13] Coach Williams.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about him?

WASHINGTON: He was nice, but I . . . He was nice. They were nice. I can't complain about them. I never had trouble. My children all have been in no trouble. They were boy scouts when they was old enough. I put them in boy scouts. And then none of them didn't go to jail . . . [but?] one. But that's [. . .?] big trouble. But not one of them, they have they had to call me and tell me go see about them. You know?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You followed the football team.

WASHINGTON: Yeah, yeah. And play ball.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: In Mossville.

WASHINGTON: They had a good record. My oldest son make me laugh.

ARSENEAULT: Oh you were in the . . . Is this the band? What do you remember about this?

WASHINGTON: [39:26] She did good. She fell and [broke herself off?] on a bicycle.

ARSENEAULT: Wait, what happened?

WASHINGTON: She fell riding a bicycle. She broke her back or something. I don't know what is was. But she was good. They didn't give me no . . . any trouble. I can't say nothing. Like the one that's sick, he killed himself. Gerald was a good little boy. Not because he was mine, but that was a good child. And Joe was good too, but he made me laugh just his sweetness funny. He said when they pick him up for the service and they has a bunch of boys, you know, and they pick him up. And they was calling his name and he had a nickname [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: What?

WASHINGTON: [Dougga Boy?]. I don't know. That was his little nickname, [Dougga?] Boy. He said the captain was calling Joseph Adam Washington. Said for the longest, and he not going to get up and say, you know, the man came by him and he say, "Boy what's your name?" He said, "[Dougga?] Boy." I said, "[Dougga?] Boy what?" He said, "Washington." And he said, "Boy, you don't know your real name?" "No," he said he didn't know his real name. Just knew

[Douga?] Boy.

ARSENEAULT: He knew his nickname.

WASHINGTON: And he [right there?].

ARSENEAULT: [41:21] I was going to ask you . . . where were your parents from?

WASHINGTON: In . . . At least my grandpa, on my daddy's side, they was living in Lafayette [Louisiana].

ARSENEAULT: Your grandfather on your dad . . . Your dad's father was living in Lafayette? Do you remember his name?

WASHINGTON: Pierre Comeaux, and his wife was Maria Comeaux. But she was an Arceneaux before she married. And they grow up down there. They worked in Lafayette; they stayed there.

ARSENEAULT: What did they do there?

WASHINGTON: Before, I don't know where they come from. They say they had come on a boat wherever they was from.

ARSENEAULT: They came on a boat?

WASHINGTON: On a boat. And they say when somebody would get sick on the boat they would drop it in the river. I don't know how true that was but . . .

ARSENEAULT: They would throw the person over-board? Oh my!

WASHINGTON: [42:37] But I don't know where they was from. They never say, and neither on my mama's side . . . my grandmother's side. But I know they were Arceneaux, my grandmother on daddy's side. And my mama's side they were Matthews.

ARSENEAULT: Matthews?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees] And [Senegal?].

ARSENEAULT: [Senegal?] Do you remember them? Did you grow up around your grandparents?

WASHINGTON: Yeah, not too far from them. And then went . . . They was staying in Carencro. They moved from Carencro to Kinder [Louisiana], and on my mama's side that's where they were staying; in Kinder. You know where Kinder is around here?

ARSENEAULT: I think I've seen the signs for it, but I've never been there.

WASHINGTON: [43:37] And my daddy, on his side they was from Lafayette. After that they moved to where we went. He got married very young with my mama. She was young. Her mama had died. And my aunts raise him. I remember my aunt that raised them, she raised us too. They was [Senegal?] too.

ARSENEAULT: They lived in Carencro?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees] They lived close to Mouton [Switch?] in Carencro. That's . . . I remember that. And when one of us was sick, well she would . . . the old lady was there to help my mama take care of us. And she was old.

ARSENEAULT: Did she have any home remedies?

WASHINGTON: [44:52] And then I went to school when they make a school for the black kids and the Indian children. So that's when I went to school. I was in the eighth grade.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I don't think she heard you. The remedies, I don't think she heard you.

ARSENEAULT: Did y'all have any natural remedies? Did your aunt use any natural remedies, home remedies?

WASHINGTON: Home what?

ARSENEAULT: Like home medicine?

WASHINGTON: Oh yeah, that's all we did. We didn't know nothing about medicine.

ARSENEAULT: What kind of stuff would she do, like if you got a cold or something?

WASHINGTON: [. . .?] castor oil for sure. So when you start coughing they'd clean your body with some oil. They called it castor oil. I never went to the doctor.

ARSENEAULT: Never? Wow.

WASHINGTON: [45:50] Never was sick.

ARSENEAULT: What about any kind of herbs?

WASHINGTON: And in all the diseases that went around like chicken pox, the mumps, well I caught the mumps. And I didn't catch no chicken pox. I didn't catch no measles. That's what my mama told me. I was the only one that didn't catch all the disease that went around. I got one little brother, John, that last one, he died with the . . . whatever they call when children catch the like a measles. He died with that. He had pneumonia.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Didn't Pop make some teas? Some herbal teas?

WASHINGTON: Well he would treat people, you know. I don't know. With something.

Later on . . . I remember it real well because I would go bring her medicine. He would go in the woods, and he . . . I should know how to do it because I boiled the tea for him. He had a big black pot. He would go in the woods. I'd go with him, and he would get different things. Some plants, they are flowers in the yard . . . some by the yard, and they make like a fan, the leaf. I remember him putting that in the water. And he sure would heal people, and they would get well. But I don't remember the rest.

ARSENEAULT: So he was a healer?

WASHINGTON: [47:46] [Agrees] And he would let some whiskey too. And he would sell it.

ARSENEAULT: He made whiskey?

WASHINGTON: Yeah, with some corn. I'd help him. Anything he had to do he'd always make me help him because I was the tallest one . . . the oldest one. My oldest sister, she was smarter I say because she always complaining sick that they wouldn't make her do nothing that much. Thought she sick. Seems like it's not real. And I never taste the whiskey. I work with my daddy and I never taste the whiskey. My sister next to me, she would drink when my daddy didn't see her. One day she got drunk. Real little. When she got better my daddy would whip her. But to taste that whiskey. And you would sell the liquor. He made [beer?] too. Make tea for the one that was sick.

Yeah, and when he got sick he died by himself, you know. We all was married. All was gone. But one sister was staying with him, and he must have caught a stroke or a heart attack because the doctors, when they find him in his house he was so decayed they could smell him from way far. It's a neighbor passed by the road and he saw the house porch was light. Still light in daytime. Said, "Oh no this man never keeps his light on. I'm going to see what's wrong with him, if he dead or what." And he said you could couldn't even get close to the house. It was smelling so much. He was ninety-seven. And he had neighbors close to him that, I know they smell him, but they never say anything. Yeah, that's how he died. The funeral home said they couldn't tell. He was too decayed for them to tell. And that was sad.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember how he made his whiskey?

WASHINGTON: [50:56] Hmm?

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember how he made his whiskey?

WASHINGTON: I know some corn. Boil that corn. That's all I see him put in that is corn. And did it so many days. I don't know what he put in it though. I don't know.

ARSENEAULT: And he sold it?

WASHINGTON: Yes.

ARSENEAULT: How much? Do you remember how much it was?

WASHINGTON: [51:22] [Agrees] Yes, he would sell it. He made the tea. He wouldn't charge for the tea. Just make it for them. And I remember old lady that she was really sick and she got better. I don't know what it was, but I know that something from the woods.

ARSENEAULT: Did he have any other remedies that he would use?

WASHINGTON: [Disagrees] That's all I know. If he treated them some other ways he didn't tell. But he was not a man to talk that much.

ARSENEAULT: Where did he learn to be a treater?

WASHINGTON: I don't know. He would go to church. He had the horses, and he had a race horse. Him and my uncle, my mama's brother, they would bring their horse to Jennings [Louisiana]. And they had race horses tracks. And his horse won first place two times in the parade in Lafayette and in Jennings. But he liked the horses. And his picture on the wall over there, with the horse.

ARSENEAULT: Did you help him train the horses?

WASHINGTON: [53:07] [Disagrees] He do it himself. He and my uncle, my mama's brother, they was always together like two brothers. And they was [brought up]. The other one

[Jewel?] had some horses too . . . race horses.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember what kind they were? What kind of horses?

WASHINGTON: I don't know. I guess . . .

ARSENEAULT: Yeah. Just curious. If it was a special breed or something.

WASHINGTON: This was the boy horse, this one right there.

ARSENEAULT: The boy horse?

WASHINGTON: But we had a good life. I can't talk about nobody mistreating me, but refused me to sit down. That's all I can remember. But when I came to Westlake I was friendly with everybody. Everybody.

ARSENEAULT: What year did you come to Westlake?

WASHINGTON: [54:19] Forty-something.

ARSENEAULT: '43?

WASHINGTON: '42.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember anything about the protests?

WASHINGTON: About who?

ARSENEAULT: The protests.

WASHINGTON: [54:32] Oh yes. I saw that, yeah. But it didn't bother me. Nobody didn't mistreat me. You say I'm lying, but that's really the truth. I don't know what part is that bother me. The little children were crazy about me. Right here. My neighbors. I say one day he came . . . Big man. He say, "I want to ask you something." Said, "What?" He said, "What it is about you? You different from other people." I said, "What way?" He said, "You treat us like I'm your child." He said, "One night we was bored. Children start fighting." You know how they act often. They play ball right there. I'd go outside and say, "Which one started first?" They'd tell me. I'd say, "Well babe, go home. Go by your mama there." Whether he didn't want to go I'd say, "Go. Go home." Play together. They can play if they don't fight. The one fight, go meet your mama. And that' [. . . ?]. And he say, "I can ask you if you mind if I call you mama?" I said, "Why you want to call me mama?" He said, "When I was little you sent me home when I start fighting, and you make me the man I is today." I said, "Well really? I don't even remember you when you was little." He said, "I remember." And if you go somewhere, he want to take me with his mama too. And he said, "My mama was home, but she did not say 'stop fighting or go in the yard and play in the yard.'" He said, "My mama stay in the house, and you're outside. You hear what's going on."

And my nephew was staying right next door then, the oldest one boy. When I told him,

"Go home," he took the ball and he pass it through the window in the room. He throw it. Bust the window. I didn't report him to his daddy. I didn't say nothing. And I said, "Boy, you don't want to listen but somebody going to train you on the rules somewhere." He dead now. Yes, he was the best basketball player.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: In Lake Charles. He went to Mossville.

ARSENEAULT: You remember his name?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [57:42] Johnathon [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: Oh, got you. Johnny Comeaux.

WASHINGTON: My nephew.

ARSENEAULT: I read about him in the old papers.

WASHINGTON: I didn't tell his mother I felt sorry for her, because I said, "You play ball. You act good maybe. I don't know." He was a tough little boy. And he played basketball for Grambling [University]. Number one.

ARSENEAULT: Did you ever see any of his games at Grambling? Did you ever go to any of his games?

WASHINGTON: [58:21] Did I ever went to the game?

ARSENEAULT: [Agrees]

WASHINGTON: I wouldn't go nowhere. I went and take care of my children. I wouldn't visit them. They was . . . I'd say you see me and I'll sit on the swing and I enjoyed sitting being outside on the swing.

ARSENEAULT: Did you go to any of the games in Mossville?

WASHINGTON: Yeah. My boy played.

ARSENEAULT: Did you see Johnny play?

WASHINGTON: My boy played.

ARSENEUALT: Your sons played?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: Did they play on the same team with Johnny?

WASHINGTON: [58:51] Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

WASHINGTON: Because they was . . . My brother was right there. Then the next house, my other brother.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, okay.

WASHINGTON: He just had one boy but four girls. And they keep in touch with me. They thank me for what I did for them.

ARSENEAULT: I think that was a good team those couple years. They got a lot of reviews in the paper. I saw it was Johnny Comeaux and I think McKeever Edwards were on the team. And then the Payne brothers were all really big men and they were all in the papers together. Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [Lionell Goodwin?]

ARSENEAULT: That's right.

WASHINGTON: [59:39] Yeah. Had a good time. I had a good time. I had a good life. I went to church. I worked for the church. Did [. . . ?]. So say I was . . . Decided they want to build a church and I said, "I'll pass and bake." "You will?" I say, "Yeah. I'll pass and bake to all the [soldiers?] in Westlake." And one man say, "Lady, how old are you?" I said, "Fifty." "Fifty,

and you there baking for the church?" I said, "Yes." We a group of ladies and we want a church. It's like . . . So we did build a church, Saint John Bosco.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, okay.

WASHINGTON: And they named it . . . I'm the mother of that church because I did the most. It's alright.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It was segregated back then.

WASHINGTON: Yeah. We had a side of the black and a side for the white. But we never had no trouble. Nobody didn't [harm?] nobody. So not too long ago there they called me in and say, "We want to treat you." So I went to the city, to the park. It come on the paper. I don't know if I still got it. Y'all got it? At the park when you had to go and they honor me.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Our book is basically . . .

ARSENEAULT: [1:01:39] I want to look at that after.

WASHINGTON: But I enjoyed it. I enjoyed it.

ARSENEAULT: What do you remember about school?

WASHINGTON: I didn't have no trouble either at school.

ARSENEAULT: Did you learn English at school or at home?

WASHINGTON: No, I went . . . When I was young our cousin [?] Arceneaux, he give the land for black school. But they didn't name it the black school. They say, for black kids and Indian kids. And I went up to eighth grade. And then when I came to Westlake they had school at night. So I went to that. So they give me up until twelfth grade education. But I did my business myself. I didn't have no problem.

ARSENEAULT: I'm curious about your school in Carencro. What did it look like?

WASHINGTON: [1:02:46] It was nice. Yes, they both could . . . They didn't break it, they hauled it to Carencro in the city.

ARSENEAULT: Was it a one-room?

WASHINGTON: No, they had a room for boys . . .

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: . . . and a room for girls. They had two teachers, was from Lafayette.

ARSENEAULT: Two teachers?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees] Ms. Agnes Bright was one. The other girl was a Mouton, Barbara Mouton. They were good teachers. Didn't have no problem. And it was [right?] [. . . ?]
Arceneaux.

ARSENEAULT: How far was it from your house?

WASHINGTON: [1:03:45] From my house we just had to cross the road.

ARSENEAULT: Oh. I wasn't far? Oh.

WASHINGTON: Right at home. We'd go eat home for dinner . . . lunch. Then go back to school.

ARSENEAULT: Did you have a favorite subject?

WASHINGTON: I liked to spell. We had spelling match. I was the number one for spelling. I learned to spell. And the children got so much trouble now to learn. I don't know what the reason is. It's a different school. You know your ABC's and your spelling. That was just good. And I went . . . My sister had her little child . . . grandchild that died. And I went to the funeral in Lafayette right by Mouton [Switch?] as you enter Lafayette. And the most of the people there we [DeQuire?]. Their last name was [DeQuire?], and I wonder, but we didn't stay after the funeral.

My son-in-law took us [. . .?] grandson that drowned in the . . . They had a little swimming pool outside and she left them with the big little girl. And I don't know what happened but the little baby drowned. Little boy drowned. And we went to that funeral. I ain't never see so many [DeQuire?] in the area as you enter Lafayette. So I didn't talk with nobody after the funeral so I would ask. It may be the same teacher was there.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: She would have had to have been over a hundred.

WASHINGTON: Hmm?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: She would have had to have been over a hundred.

WASHINGTON: [1:06:14] Oh yeah. Yeah, because she was a young teacher. Just graduated from Lafayette. [Agnes DeQuire?] and Barbara Mouton.

ARSENEAULT: Were all the same grades in one room?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: How would they separate the work?

WASHINGTON: [1:06:36] We just had classes in different spots. Ms. DeQuire had hers. Ms. Mouton had hers. And they was young ladies. Young, wonderful ladies. [They stayed at

Sister Arceneaux?].

ARSENEAULT: They stayed at the school? They slept there any everything?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees] And they would visit us. They would play with us. I was younger than them, but they play with us. My oldest sister was they age.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [. . . ?]

ARSENEAULT: I see. So do you remember using the telephone for the first time?

WASHINGTON: Hmm?

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember using a phone for the first time?

WASHINGTON: [1:07:38] Yes. I remember using the phone. We didn't have no phone.

ARSENEAULT: When did you use one . . . the first time you used one?

WASHINGTON: When I got married here.

ARSENEAULT: In Westlake?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees] Yeah, we were neighbors. We would visit. We didn't have no telephones. I didn't grow up with phones. The only thing we had was a radio.

ARSENEAULT: What would you listen to on the radio?

WASHINGTON: And no fan. We didn't have no fan. We had heat with wood fireplace, fire stove. When I got married, when I move in my first little apartment where I was staying I had a heater, and then we had a fan. That's it. Didn't have light. We had lamp. I still got my lamp.

ARSENEAULT: Kerosene? Yeah.

WASHINGTON: [1:08:55] Yeah, but to me that was a good life. I had a good life. Yeah. The doctor when I told him he said, "I want to question you." Said, "What? Question me for what?" "How you live." I said, "I had a good life." And he said, "You don't mind me asking you, did you ever drink?" I said, "No, I never drink." I didn't tell him my bootleg whiskey. My daddy. I said, "I never drunk." One more, after I'm married one of my cousins got married. And they had a big reception, and I know my two brothers that they would drink, you know. The one right there would drink more. But he raised his family. Did good. And they had a lot of bottles of liquor on the top of the table. And they went danced I took two of them big bottles and put them under the table at that place. And I never told nobody. I don't know if they see it was missing, you know, but keep them . . . And when I told them that after everything was closed I say, "Y'all quit dancing the Carmouche[?]." They had the club in Lafayette on Highway 90 going to Carencro and Lafayette.

ARSENEAULT: What was it called?

WASHINGTON: The [Carmouche?].

ARSENEAULT: The [Carmouche?], okay. Is that somebody's last name?

WASHINGTON: That's their last name.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: [1:10:42] They had a club right off of 90. They always dance. I didn't go dance, and I took them off the table and I'd hide them under the table. And I don't know if they ever find them. I guess I felt everything was [clear?]. We had to leave. We had to come back to Westlake. And I told that to my husband. I said, "I took two bottle off of that table and I put it under the table." And I said, "I wanted them to find them." Yeah, they missed them two. I said, "They were all drunk before they go home." And that was all my cousins. They cursed me out for that. I said, "That's not . . . Y'all didn't drink." I never did drink. I never did smoke. I wouldn't try. Yeah, and doctor said, "Well that's good. I don't know how you did it, but you did it." I said, "Yes, I did it. You do a thing if you want to. You want to drink, you go drink." But oh no . . . on the ninety, oh man, no.

[1:12:08] I didn't say my children didn't drink. My oldest son, he never was a drinker much, but he went in the service. He was a marine. I don't know what happened to him. He don't talk about it if he don't want to talk about it. But he really . . . The Vietnam . . . The whatever it

was . . . And my baby son was . . . he volunteered for the service. They both went to the service. They draft my oldest son, and they say all his group got killed and he didn't die. But he went mentally, and they discharged him from mentally. And he still off and on. He don't want to go nowhere. But he got his own home, and he talk about it. He don't want to . . . He [. . . ?] nobody too much about it.

And then my baby son, he got killed. They say he killed himself. And I don't believe this, because he had wanted to be the mayor for Westlake. He was to take his office that Monday, but he came to me that Saturday afternoon. And he said, "Mom, I want you to come see how I fixed my office." I said, "I'll go with you Monday, and I'll stay with you while you're over there Monday." And the people come and he didn't say nothing. And he just kept on talking. "I would like for you to go see how I did it." And I see it and that was Saturday afternoon late, but not that dark. And the phone ring. He had the phone in his pocket. Phone rings, and he answer the phone. But I don't know what they told him, but I know they talked to him about the three seven [Tressette, a card game]. I know he elected to go to the boat . . . go to the boat.

ARSENEAULT: The casino?

WASHINGTON: [1:14:57] But he didn't want them to ask him if he win or if he lose.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

WASHINGTON: He said, "It make me lose . . .

ARSENEAULT: Bad luck.

WASHINGTON: . . . if I tell you." And somebody called him and say something the three seven. And he said, "I know you joking." Whoever he talk with. I couldn't hear what the other fellow said or a lady or whatever . . . who it was. And I didn't want to ask after that. But he say, "The three seven." Then he left. And they say something else. He said, "But I can't meet y'all now because I'm at my mama's, and I walked to my mama's. I left my truck home. I have to go get it first." I hear him say that, and they say something else too. And he said, "I'll meet y'all later. I'll meet y'all." But he said, "I know you joking." And that's how he left. And that was the end of him. Got killed. Got shot. One bullet.

ARSENEAULT: Where did they find him?

WASHINGTON: [1:16:21] On Mossville property. Where they had the chair. People would stop and see it there. They had a band . . . a table too. And they say that's where he got killed. And they didn't go put a cross there. They never did nothing.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: In front of the school.

WASHINGTON: They found . . .

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: In the parking lot by the school.

ARSENEAULT: On the Old Spanish Trail?

WASHINGTON: [1:16:52] Yeah. They had a bench and a table there. [. . . ?] I ain't passed it no more. And he had never been in no kind of trouble. No kind of nothing. Help anybody that come around. He had a good job. He worked for Conoco [oil and gas company] right there. And I got his picture [here with me?] when he graduate. I got him when he get in the service and when he come back and want to go to the service. And he said, "Mama, I just want to go." But he wanted to go marines because his brother was there, and he had a chance to go to Vietnam. And one day the captain saw him there say, "Who's this boy?" And the brother say, "That's my brother." Said, "He not supposed to be here." But he said, "I volunteer and I just can visit my brother. Told me he had got hurt." And he did. Never got better. He better in one way because he don't want to do too much of nothing. Yeah, and Gerald gone.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We have some history of Mossville you could look at.

ARSENEAULT: Thank you. This is perfect. Oh it's big. Who are these? You know who these people are right here? Are these any of your sons? Wait, this is Goodwin, Lionel.

WASHINGTON: That's my son-in-law, her husband.

ARSENEAULT: [1:18:54] Oh, gotcha.

WASHINGTON: Which one Lionel? I don't even recognize him on that picture.

ARSENEAULT: He was so young.

WASHINGTON: Who's the big one in the middle?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [. . . ?]

WASHINGTON: Oh yeah, yeah. That's . . .

ARSENEAULT: Both of your sons played?

WASHINGTON: That's my son there.

ARSENEAULT: Oh that's your son? Is this Gerald?

WASHINGTON: No, that's [George?].

ARSENEAULT: Okay. Is this the one that went to Vietnam?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: George Kelly, [Bugmen?], Adam, and Lionel.

WASHINGTON: [1:19:25] George. That's Kelly right there.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: That's Kelly, that's Adams, and that's Goodwin.

ARSENEAULT: Oh so this is your brother or your son-in-law right?

WASHINGTON: He still the same.

ARSENEAULT: Let's see here. Who's this?

WASHINGTON: That's Goodwin.

ARSENEAULT: He's handsome. Are any of these your children?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [1:19:58] You recognize your children on that picture?

WASHINGTON: Let me see. Oh that's you [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: Oh that's Mary.

WASHINGTON: That's Kelly.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: No, that's George. George Kelly.

WASHINGTON: I haven't seen him for a long time.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: And [Goodwin?] Adams in the center and Lionel's on the

end.

ARSENEAULT: [1:20:24] So none of your brothers?

WASHINGTON: That's you, but I don't know who.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Lionel.

WASHINGTON: He was skinny that time. That's him right there.

ARSENEAULT: Tall.

WASHINGTON: I didn't see this book at all. I don't believe. The Mossville club. But I visit them. I didn't live . . . miss nothing where they had to go play ball. I went with them. And they say, "How you did that?" I say, "When my children gone somewhere I'm there with them." Yeah. I didn't miss none of them things. I don't care where it was. My husband got me a car and I went with my kids. I follow them.

ARSENEAULT: When did you learn how to drive?

WASHINGTON: [1:21:24] It took me a while to learn how to drive, but I learned. I don't remember what year that was, but he got me my own little Ford.

ARSENEAULT: It was a Ford?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees]

ARSENEAULT: It was your first car. Is this Mary?

WASHINGTON: That's Mary Louise.

ARSENEAULT: Were you prom queen or something?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Debutant.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: My introduction to society.

ARSENEAULT: Debutant, yes. Oh look.

WASHINGTON: [1:22:02] And she caught asthma when she was . . .

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Mom, that's not Mary Louise that's me.

WAHSINGTON: No, Mary Louise caught asthma, my oldest one, when she was just six

years old. When she [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: Did you raise . . . Were your kids all born in Westlake? Or was your first one born in Carencro?

WASHINGTON: No, they were born in Lafayette. Mary Louise and [Mary Lou?] born in Lafayette.

ARSENEAULT: Did you have them all at home? Did you have them at home?

WASHINGTON: [1:22:40] Yes ma'am.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember your midwife? Did you have a midwife?

WASHINGTON: Well them was not a midwife. In one way it was a midwife. I know her name Aunt [T?]. That's all I know, but she lived in Carencro. You know, for my two girls. They were born out there. And then here they born here. And that was the lady stay in Mossville. That was midwife.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It was Aunt Panky?

WASHINGTON: Aunt Panky for [. . .?]. And the Aunt Panky couldn't [. . .?] Ms. [Adeline?]. She had another girl she had to go see about. And then the two last ones, they born at

Saint Pat hospital. And Lord did I cry for Kathy.

ARSENEAULT: [1:23:57] Was that your last one? Your baby?

WASHINGTON: Yeah, yeah. I didn't mind my other ones. I didn't cry for them. But when they told me I got pregnant, oh my mama, I had just lost my mama. And she took sick suddenly. She wasn't sick. She cook for all of us. We all was married. She cooked for all of us. We just had to go eat. Then she start coughing and we didn't know why he was coughing. She wasn't coughing before. So after we finished eating I said, "Mom, if you don't mind, let's go to the doctor. And on the hospital. Let them check you and see why you coughing." She didn't want to go, but I begged her and she went. And that was the end of her. She died from that.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: She was allergic to penicillin.

WASHINGTON: Maybe something she ate or what but . . . And she went in a coma and then they said she was a diabetic. And she didn't regain the conscious. She died from that.

ARSENEAULT: Do you remember how old she was?

WASHINGTON: [1:25:22] Fifty-three.

ARSENEAULT: So you were young?

WASHINGTON: [1:25:28] Yeah. It was young. And she had never been sick. You have them children and she was up the next day. They took her somewhere. We didn't stay home. My daddy would bring us to our auntie. But you wouldn't stay for nothing. I never see my mama big.

ARSENEAULT: Bake?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Big.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, big.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Right.

WASHINGTON: You know.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: She always wear big clothes and she was fat already.

ARSENEAULT: So when she got pregnant . . . When she was about to have the baby y'all went to your auntie's? Okay.

WASHINGTON: [1:26:07] [Agrees] They took us. All of us. We was big here. And I never see like a lady showing pregnant. Not my mama.

ARSENEAULT: She kept herself covered up. You couldn't tell.

WASHINGTON: And seemed like it's not real.

ARSENEAULT: You don't know what's going on, then there's a baby. Just got there magically.

WASHINGTON: Yeah, and they would tell us different things. We was big. We was not . . . This one . . . It wasn't a cabbage. It lied to us.

ARSENEAULT: It came out of a cabbage? [laughs] Is that where you thought babies came from?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [1:26:56] From the cabbage patch.

WASHINGTON: No, we sure didn't know. We can't see we saw our own mama pregnant. I can't say I saw my mama kissing my daddy.

ARSENEAULT: It was different back then I guess.

WASHINGTON: Oh yes, and look like that's not true. But she wear big clothes. She wore a long dress. A mumu [nightgown]. She never show us anything. And my daddy would take us to my aunt. "I'll come get y'all after a while." After while didn't come. Then the next day he come

got us. Didn't even let us stay home. And I'm not lying. That's really true.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: What else you got [in your notes here?].

ARSENEAULT: Let's see. Here, okay. Top graduates. [LeBree?].

WASHINGTON: This is Mary Louise right there.

ARSENEAULT: This is your daughter? Top graduates, Mary Lou Washington.

WASHINGTON: [1:28:15] Oh yeah. Oh she look like Mary Louise.

ARSENEAULT: That's your oldest, Mary Lou? Your oldest daughter?

WASHINGTON: No, no, Mary Louise is the oldest one.

ARSENEAULT: Oh okay. This is you.

WASHINGTON: School teacher . . . at school.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, Mary Louise is a school teacher? Okay. Does she teach at Mossville?

WASHINGTON: [1:28:38] Yes, but when it integrated the children . . . They put her in

white school at Moss Bluff [Louisiana].

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: And she was having trouble with the children. They didn't want to listen to her. You know, from the beginning when she went there.

ARSENEAULT: Because they were white?

WASHINGTON: Because she was black teacher, you know, they were white children. I say one day, I said, "Mary Louise, if . . . What you did with a boy in Mossville when they didn't listen to you?" She said, "I sent them to the principal." But I said, "Why you don't send them white boys to the principal when they don't listen to you?" I said, "You did it do it to the black. Do it to them." And she said, "I don't know if they'll listen." I said, "Well just take them and go bring them to the principal. Don't fuss with them." I said, "Bring them to the principal." And then she did that, and she said, "Well Mom, you was right. Yeah." And I said, "Yeah." I said, "You can't control them anyway. Take them to somebody that control them." And we went to Moss Bluff around Christmas. And she said . . . I said, "There's not one boy you taught?" She said, "Yes, that's one of them." I say, "Holler at him." And she did, and that boy was so happy. He said, "You know, you may be the best teacher in the world."

ARSENEAULT: What did she teach at Mossville?

WASHINGTON: [1:30:31] High School.

ARSENEAULT: High School. Physics? She went to McNeese?

WASHINGTON: Yeah. She graduated from McNeese. Yeah, she was a good teacher, but she didn't want to correct them too much and that's because they were white I guess. And I said, "Well treat them right and just report them."

ARSENEAULT: Is this Coach LaSalle? Oh, I've never seen his younger pictures.

WASHINGTON: That's Coach Williams, right there.

ARSENEAULT: [1:31:10] I've only seen him recently. He looks different. Yeah.

WASHINGTON: Coach Williams.

ARSENEAULT: Coach Williams, yeah.

WASHINGTON: I ain't seen him since school . . . since our school . . . out of there. I ain't seen him.

ARSENEAULT: All the kids . . . or everyone I talk to . . . He . . .

WASHINGTON: Coach Williams.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah, he . . . I definitely want a picture of that. That's Williams. He came to Mossville at the age of six. That's right. He was adopted by Arthur and Agnes Williams. Wow. Did you ever get to meet his wife?

WASHINGTON: [1:31:53] Hmm?

ARSENEAULT: Did you ever meet his wife?

WASHINGTON: Oh yeah. I met all of them. I used to visit. I used to be a PTA for them.

ARSENEAULT: Take a picture.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You can have that. There are two.

ARSENEAULT: Oh, thank you. Thank you very much.

WASHINGTON: I ain't seen Coach since the school closed, but one time.

ARSENEAULT: Is this the copy?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It's the copy.

ARSENEAULT: Okay I don't want to take . . . We can take a picture of it. That way you can keep it.

WASHINGTON: She doesn't need it.

ARSENEAULT: [1:32:22] That's her. Alright, let's see. What's this right here? Mossville High School. Oh that's the graduation ceremony. Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Graduation. In '62. We graduated in '62.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

WASHINGTON: Yeah and I never miss nothing. She was cheerleader you know.

ARSENEAULT: Oh is that what that . . .?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I was a majorette.

ARSENEAULT: Majorette, okay. Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Drum major for the band.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Used to [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: Okay, wow. Is this your debutant ceremony?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: No, no.

ARSENEAULT: No this was prom.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: It was at Mossville.

ARSENEAULT: Wow. Was that your husband?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: That's one of our classmates, John Smith.

ARSENEAULT: [1:33:22] Oh okay. All the names. Get pictures of all of this. Were you valedictorian?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Oh wow. Look, okay, is that your brother? Wait no, is that your . . .?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: John Comeaux.

ARSENEAULT: Oh that's your cousin.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yeah.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. John Comeaux. I've read a lot about him in the papers. Was he just a big man? Is that why he was so athletic?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: He was strong. About six four.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. That's really tall.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Good basketball player.

ARSENEAULT: [1:33:59] Got you.

WASHINGTON: This is my nephew right there. John Comeaux.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

WASHINGTON: [1:34:06] Throw the ball.

ARSENEUALT: Yeah.

WASHINGTON: That breaks. Right there [. . .?]. Had to [. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: Oh he's still alive?

WASHINGTON: [Agrees]

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Deceased.

WASHINGTON: [. . .?] you know. [John Kelly?], he's still alive?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [1:34:32] No, he's dead.

WASHINGTON: No, he's alive.[. . .?].

ARSENEAULT: Is this Vera Payne now? Oh, I didn't know she was a Vincent. Okay. Let's see. Senior class, McNeese, so this was moving on to McNeese. Pirates. Is that Johnny Comeaux right there?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: That's Goodwin.

ARSENEAULT: Oh okay.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: They were the Goodwin brothers, the Adams brothers, and

the Kelly brothers.

ARSENEAULT: [1:35:30] Okay, and Lionel was your husband. Okay, I see. And the brothers were all good athletes?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: All good athletes.

ARSENEAULT: Like Mossville has a serious brother athletes. The Paynes.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: The Paynes, yeah.

WASHINGTON: I believe that's how they come to mix the schools. The black boy was tough. They would play good.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: The others is of my wedding.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. [laughs] This is Mossville. It's right there. What were their colors?
What were the Mossville colors?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Maroon and gold.

ARSENEUALT: [1:36:14] That's right. So the top was maroon or something.

WASHINGTON: They play good. They was good.

ARSENEAULT: That's right. That's right. I think the rest are her wedding pictures.

WASHINGTON: You don't want to put it on there? [laughs]

ARSENEAULT: I was going to ask you about your wedding. What do you remember about your wedding?

WASHINGTON: [1:36:47] My wedding was a quiet little wedding. I didn't know the boy, you know.

ARSENEAULT: Right.

WASHINGTON: I didn't know.

ARSENEAULT: Were you scared?

WASHINGTON: Well, he was good to me. He never was a bad boy. I know, he was really good. And it wouldn't dare it to see his kin. You wanted them to have education. You know, when he born his mother died. And his daddy got married with another girl. Other lady. And the other lady didn't want the children. Just wanted the man. So his daddy give them away. Anybody that want them. He had five children, and he give them away. And I don't know who took care of

my husband when he was little. I don't know. And he didn't know it either, who take care of him. But he was the baby boy. There was five children. Two girls . . . Three girls and two boys. And [Julien?] was the oldest one. And him, he was the last child. And he don't know who raised him from the beginning, but he remember his sister taking care of him and one of his aunts. And then he went stayed with the Montgomerys when he was a teenage.

ARSENEAULT: With who?

WASHINGTON: [1:38:32] The Mongomerys.

ARSENEAULT: Montgomery.

WASHINGTON: The old man died now, but they would take children and take care of them. And they did a good job with him because they raised him well. He was well raised. I didn't know him. Didn't know the boy. First time I saw the boy.

ARSENEAULT: It was love at first sight.

WASHINGTON: I didn't love him but I don't know. [laughs] I don't know what about it. He was quiet, and I like the quiet boy. And he didn't meet with me. He didn't talk with me. I didn't know his name. I didn't know where he was from, but when I saw him at the door it was some black fellow but they were light complexion. They wanted to come in there. To pay to go in the dance. And I saw him and my neighbors, we were two girls. They were two, and I was one. And

we was always together. And I said, "Oh I saw the boy I want." I said, "Look, he at the door right now." I said, "That black one." Like I was a white. They told me [she dead and her sister too is dead?]. I find out lately when I went with my cousin. Hundred year's birthday.

ARSENEAULT: [1:40:12] So you had a Catholic wedding? It was a Catholic ceremony?
Was he Catholic?

WASHINGTON: Yeah. He went to church in Lafayette at Paul [Breux?]. Saint Paul Church.

ARSENEAULT: Did you do anything after, like a reception or . . .?

WASHINGTON: After the wedding? No, we went to the sister house. You know, he didn't have no mama no daddy. And the oldest girl wanted us to go there. And we stayed there. [And I took her from my mom?]. And I would tell you the rest of the part for right now. But I got sick. Seven days . . . My wedding. So I told that lady I didn't know. And she said, "Don't worry. Just don't worry." She talked to us.

ARSENEAULT: Did you have a dress? A wedding dress.

WASHINGTON: [1:41:21] Yeah. I got one picture.

ARSENEAULT: You got pictures?

WASHINGTON: Yeah my wedding pictures. Under the coffee table.

ARSENEAULT: Who made the dress?

WASHINGTON: Oh I bought it at the [Hymones?].

ARSENEAULT: Where?

WASHINGTON: [Hymones?] Store in Lafayette.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: [1:41:40] And it was ten dollars. They had a trail. And I had the veil. I cut my dress, the bottom, and made my first little child button dress. Baptized.

ARSENEAULT: Oh the first, yeah.

WASHINGTON: I used to sew.

ARSENEAULT: Guidry . . . Ms. Sheryl . . . That's you? That's Sharon right there. That's your youngest? Sharon?

WASHINGTON: No, Cathy is the baby.

ARSENEAULT: Oh that's right.

WASHINGTON: Sharon . . . I cried so much I had four and I thought that was all the children I was going to have.

ARSENEAULT: You thought you were done. Yeah. She's number five?

WASHINGTON: [1:42:37] And . . . She number five.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: And I was forty-two.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: For Sharon, when I got pregnant.

ARSENEAULT: Okay, you were the surprise. You were the surprise.

WASHINGTON: And I cried for that.

ARSENEAULT: [1:42:51] I know, she was a surprise.

WASHINGTON: And then God punish me. I got pregnant again. I shouldn't have said that, but that's the truth. I stand by it. My mama had died and I stayed with her, and I come back home I was really sick.

ARSENEAULT: Joe Comeaux? That's not Johnny? Oh never mind. Okay. No, I didn't know Mr. Johnny had a brother. Got an impressive bicep.

WASHINGTON: Sharon [. . .?]

ARSENEAULT: Oh wow. It's like the two older cars there.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yeah. That's the same car.

ARSENEAULT: Same cars. No way. Wow. You have a picture of that.

WASHINGTON: Antique.

ARSENEAULT: They're antique now. Same cars.

WASHINGTON: [1:43:55] Sharon went to white school.

ARSENEAULT: The white school?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [Only until it integrated?].

ARSENEAULT: Went to Moss Bluff . . . Westlake High. Well we're almost at two hours.
Are you getting a little tired? We can stop there and . . .

WASHINGTON: That's alright.

ARSENEAULT: [1:44:22] Did you want to kind of say anything . . . I know you could
probably talk a while about your life. I would hate to tire you out though. I don't . . .

WASHINGTON: Well that's all . . . That's the only problem. Then my husband got sick. I
didn't know he was sick. He worked. He drank himself some coffee. He worked, Olin Chemical.

ARSENEAULT: For Olin.

WASHINGTON: He drive the truck.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: But he was a good man to me and to his children. He wanted them to
make sure they get their school because he didn't have no school.

ARSENEAULT: He didn't have any? Could he read?

WASHINGTON: [1:45:10] I show him how to write his name. He learned how to write it good too. Better than me. That's right.

ARSENEAULT: Did he speak French? He did. Did he learn English?

WASHINGTON: Yeah, learned English.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

WASHINGTON: He drive for Olin, you know. They had to send the truck somewhere, they send it with him. He went as far as St. Louis, Missouri.

ARSENEAULT: Oh wow.

WASHINGTON: [1:45:45] And I always wonder how he did it, you know, without no education. And he did it and never had a ticket from a policeman.

ARSENEAULT: Wow. How did he read the signs? He just knew how to get there?

WASHINGTON: Just read the signs.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

WASHINGTON: And he could drive good, too.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

WASHINGTON: He went some places by himself. Come back, he never had a ticket.

ARSENEAULT: Wow.

WASHINGTON: [1:46:20] And the day he got sick. He drank some coffee. Sat right there. And he turned around and he said, "Are you running around on me?" And I said, "What?"

ARSENEAULT: He asked you that?

WASHINGTON: Yes. "What?" He said that again. I came close to him, he could have slapped me, you know. I said, "Are you coming crazy?" He just kept on talking. You know, I said, "Oh no. Something wrong with you. You crazy." I got on the phone and I called Doctor White, and he said, "Bring him right now. Bring him straight to the hospital." And I said, "Well Doctor White said for you to go. Let's go." And he didn't [argue?]. He wasn't a person to [. . .?]. I took him over there and he said, "We'll be waiting for you at the door." And he was right there. And drove him over there. He examine him and check him. First the nurse came and he said, "Give your hand." And she took his blood and told the pressures. And he didn't say nothing. Didn't say a word. And then he said, "You can't go back home. You can't go home. You got to stay for check-up." Examine him. They couldn't find nothing that was wrong with him. Just

talking out of his head. Just all of a sudden. And never come back home. He died from that. They say he can go home but put him in the nursing home.

ARSENEAULT: [1:48:43] What was . . . ?

WASHINGTON: He say little one. They thought he had Alzheimer's disease. You know, but the damage in his brain. Maybe a blood clot or something.

ARSENEAULT: That was . . .

WASHINGTON: 1991.

ARSENEAULT: Ninety-one.

WASHINGTON: But I can't say nothing. Say he was mean to me. He'd go to work. He'd bring his check home. He'd say, "Go put what you want to put in the bank. Pay the bills first." Make sure I had to pay the bills, and the rest what I don't need put it in the bank. And I did that. And he would take what he wanted. I said, "Take what you want." Said, "I take just what I need." Never argued me for money for nothing. Nothing at all. Just said, "Don't let the account cut my bills. I don't want my bills to be cut." Paid the bills, and I sure do that. I'd go to the bank. Yeah. For a boy that was raised without the daddy . . .

ARSENEAULT: [1:50:24] That was pretty . . . For that time.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yeah. Yeah. Mom, didn't they teach you about being an old maid?

WASHINGTON: Him?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: You. The other girls.

WASHINGTON: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I didn't care.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Mama didn't dance with a broom or something?

WASHINGTON: They make me dance with the, you know, take off your stockings and dance with just one leg in the stocking. And that's why I decided I'm going to marry somebody.

ARSENEAULT: Oh they were shaming you? They were embarrassing you?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [1:51:07] She was twenty-seven years old.

WASHINGTON: Yeah I was thirty-five.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Twenty-seven.

WASHINGTON: I was twenty-five, yes. Yes indeed. I had it happen a lot.

ARSENEAULT: You didn't need a man.

WASHINGTON: I didn't need no man.

ARSENEAULT: You didn't need one.

WASHINGTON: [1:51:21] I know I didn't need one.

ARSENEAULT: [laughs]

WASHINGTON: I was happy with kids. I would take care of little white kids, and they was crazy about me. I don't know what it is about me. The children love me.

ARSENEAULT: I didn't know they made you dance with one stocking. That must be an old tradition.

WASHINGTON: Yeah, one stocking.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: When they got married.

WASHINGTON: Oh yeah. But I didn't quite take the stocking off and I said, "Y'all not

going to fool me no more." [laughs] I'm going to find me somebody that I wanted and I saw that man. That black boy. Yeah, like I was white and I'm black as him. But I had the happiest life. They didn't let us go nowhere. My daddy would bring us or my mama would. We wouldn't go with different people, you know.

ARSENEAULT: They kept y'all safe.

WASHINGTON: [1:52:35] Yeah.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: 1962.

ARSENEAULT: Oh wow. Is this you?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: That's her.

ARSENEAULT: Little pretty dress. Is that Mr. Wayne now? Look, so sweet.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: We've been married forty-nine years.

ARSENEAULT: Wow, congrats. Look how pretty your children are.

WASHINGTON: [1:53:00] And you saw my picture when I got married?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: No, I didn't see it on the coffee table.

WASHINGTON: It's right there.

ARSENEUALT: [1:53:11] Oh wait let me get your . . . You're all hooked up.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: I looked mom. I couldn't see it.

WASHINGTON: [What y'all did with it?].

ARSENEAULT: Is there anything else you want to say for the record? We're almost at two hours.

WASHINGTON: I can't tell you. [I can wait?]

ARSENEAULT: Anything else? I was going to ask you just, I was curious, did you know anything about the buyouts in Mossville? Did you ever hear anything about that?

WASHINGTON: Yeah, they told me but I went visit to see. My daughters already live out there you know.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

WASHINGTON: But they broke her house down.

ARSENEAULT: Mary lived there?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [1:53:51] Mary.

WASHINGTON: Mary LaDoux.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. So you went to go visit over there.

WASHINGTON: And it's so pitiful like this. It looks like it's the end of the world because they got everything down.

ARSENEAULT: What did Mossville used to look like?

WASHINGTON: [1:54:07] It was a nice little city, and the people that lived there . . . I think that was their own place, you know. It was their own place. They all lived there.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: All gone.

WASHINGTON: And Mossville was a little city with the people. It was all family, but they was nice. They get along nice with all the people, you know. Because I went to school for the PTA, the secretary. And I pick up money for them. And I brought it to the bank. And when they

closed the school I said, "I wonder if they went down there and got the money." And it's on Mossville School PTA.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: This is Mary LaDoux.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: The first one.

ARSENEAULT: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: [1:55:12] The one that taught at Mossville.

ARSENEAULT: Oh she taught at Sam Houston too?

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Yeah. When they integrated.

ARSENEAULT: Oh she married a LaDoux who worked at Olin. Is that where your husband works? That's where he worked, at Olin? Wow. Is she still alive? Yeah. I wonder if we've interviewed her. Mary LaDoux. I don't know.

WASHINGTON: Mary took all the LaDoux.

ARSENEAULT: I think we have a LaDoux that we've interviewed. I don't remember who.

WASHINGTON: [1:55:47] I never had trouble with my kids. I raised them, I ain't had no many trouble.

ARSENEAULT: Okay. Oh this is your anniversary picture.

WASHINGTON: Forty years.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Fifty.

WASHINGTON: But I believe it was forty.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Fifty years.

ARSENEAULT: Yeah. Stop it . . . yeah. We're going to stop the recording. I just want to thank you for the record and say thank you so much for sharing your time and your stories. We can keep talking.

WASHINGTON: Got a lot of stories.

[1:56:20]

[End Tape 4549. End Session I.]