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[Begin Tape 4545. Begin Session II.]

JENNIFER ABRAHAM CRAMER: Alright. So today is November sixth the year 2015, and this is Jennifer Abraham Cramer with the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History with LSU [Louisiana State University] Libraries in partnership with the Imperial Calcasieu Museum. And today we're here with Butch Lemelle . . . Edward Butch Lemelle, and this is interview number two. We're session number two. The first interview that we did was at oral history day, so it was about half an hour or so. And we're here today to do a longer interview and to pick up kind of where we left off. So . . . [phone rings] we'll let that ring. That's no problem. Is that your phone right there?

EDWARD BUTCH LEMELLE JR: **[00:57]** I was supposed to turn it off, and I didn't. I'm cutting my camera off. Y'all just say excuse me on the interview, I'm cutting my phone off. I never cut it off because I never know if I'm having an emergency.

CRAMER: Yeah.

LEMELLE: Or my pastor's wife, but I'll call her back.

CRAMER: Oh okay. I mean, you can take . . .

LEMELLE: Oh no, I'm good. I'm just cutting it off. Cutting it down low. That's on camera?

CRAMER: It's okay. It's a . . .

LEMELLE: You're going to cut that out.

CRAMER: Yeah. So we got a pretty good family tree last time from you with your father's family, and your mother's family, and that sort of thing. And there were a couple of things that I wanted to see if I could get some additional information on in regards to your grandfather on your mother's side and also . . . Okay, so your grandfather on your mother's side you said he was the son of a former slave, and that . . . you said he took the name of the former slave owner, but we didn't catch his name.

LEMELLE: [02:01] T-O-W-N-E-R.

CRAMER: Okay.

LEMELLE: His father, my great grandfather, the father of David Duff Towner, his name was Israel. And somewhere . . . I'm trying to get the name. I know my grandfather's . . . My great grandfather was Israel Towner, but prior to that there was another family name. But from what we gather, that Israel, my great grandfather, taken the Towner name from a slave owner. And that went down through generations. Later on my grandfather and his sisters and brothers found out through history that they were Ilses. Their name was Ilses before . . . One of the great-great-

great grandfathers, he was an Ilses. When you get with Ms. Lenoria, she has a lot of history because we're cousins. And this is the understanding, that I gather, that it was the Ilses family and that name was changed to Towner. So when . . . Later on, this is why up around DeRidder, [Louisiana] part of DeRidder, there was some people we met that were Ilses and found out that we were relatives through the Ilses family. And he's a minister. So this is the part that I was talking about. My grandfather, his father, was a slave. And that made my great-great grandfather a slave and taken the name Towner from what I understand.

LEONA LEMELLE: So actually, y'all don't have no Towner blood in there.

LEMELLE: Yes.

LEONA LEMELLE: The Ilseses.

LEMELLE: The only thing is the name changed. We still have my grandfather's blood, and we go by Towner because that's what he was called, a Towner.

CRAMER: How do you spell Ilses?

LEMELLE: [04:30] I-L-S-E-S I think. I-L-S-E-S, Ilses.

CRAMER: Is that French?

LEONA LEMELLE: It's not French.

CRAMER: What is it?

LEMELLE: I think . . .

LEONA LEMELLE: I don't know.

CRAMER: Spanish, maybe?

LEMELLE: I think Ilse is more of a . . .

LEONA LEMELLE: Italian?

LEMELLE: [04:51] No. Whenever . . . Just make you a note. When you're talking to Lenoria Ambrose she has a lot of history, too.

CRAMER: Okay.

LEMELLE: And we tie all this in together.

CRAMER: Okay. That's very interesting.

LEMELLE: Now my grandfather's wife, my grandmother, she was a Pots. And we did a little bit of talking about my grandmother with her beautiful green eyes. She was a Pots by birth. And her mother was a slave.

LEONA LEMELLE: Grandma's mother?

LEMELLE: [05:36] My grandmother's . . . My grandmother Pots, her mother was a slave. We did a little touch-up on it because my wife remembered I had an aunty named [Etter?] that my wife know and love that you dare ask questions . . .

LEONA LEMELLE: Yeah.

LEMELLE: . . . about my grandmother, of why she was so fair and why she had green eyes and all these things. As kids we wondered. But being a slave, her mother knew you had to do, what you did, what they said do or whatever. And, you know, I'm telling you what happened. Because if you'd seen pictures of my grandmother's mother and her brother who was . . . his name was [Elic?] Pots and he was really a dark skinned man taken from his mother and his father. But my grandmother had more the genes of her biological slave-owning father. Put it that way. But we dare talked about that because it was more of a . . .

LEONA LEMELLE: I'd say a secret. It was [holding back?].

LEMELLE: It wasn't a secret, but it was something shameful.

LEONA LEMELLE: Yeah, shameful.

LEMELLE: [07:08] More shameful, because my grandmother always looked at it being a terrible thing to have happened to her mother. And I did tell you about my grandfather, and I think we . . . if I can remember correctly too, I said more self-employed, but he did do work besides what I told you. He did go out and do private work in private homes . . . private maintenance in . . . Just called it private duty. He did homes and yard work, whatever was necessary to do to make a living. But most of his was doing for himself and his family.

CRAMER: You said he had carpentry skills . . .

LEMELLE: No.

CRAMER: . . . and sold coal? No, your grandmother had carpentry skills.

LEMELLE: He had the skills of . . . He was more like one that . . . He made coals, but my grandmother had the carpenter skills. Grandmother.

CRAMER: And he sold the coal. He did the coal selling.

LEMELLE: [08:20] He made coal from burning of different type wood. And he . . . Once it was cold, he'd cool it. He sold coal.

CRAMER: He was the gardener, right?

LEMELLE: He was the gardener. He could grow. They used to tease him. They said if he planted four tires he would grow an automobile. He taught my father a lot, too. A lot of those things that when my father came into the family, my grandfather taught him a lot of things in gardening and raising children.

CRAMER: So how long did your grandfather live? How old did he live to be about?

LEMELLE: My grandfather lived to be in his eighties.

CRAMER: Okay.

LEMELLE: [09:13] Yes. Well, somewhere in his early eighties. The reason I say early eighties is because I was six years old when they had their fifty-year anniversary. So I'm saying if he was like in his twenties . . . fifty, and he lived like at least ten year prior to their fifty-year anniversary. So I'm giving him somewhere . . . I think my grandfather . . . It's all out there. I had it on my camera because I'd go out and take pictures of the graves and stuff. And all that's on that . . . We went to Mount Zion [Baptist Church]. All that's on the headstones is his birthdate and his death. But I think he was in his eighties.

CRAMER: So is there anything else that you want to add about your family that came before you before we move on? Any stories that they told you or passed down to you that you want to

make sure gets on the record for your own grandchildren and children?

LEMELLE: You mean from my grandmother and grandfather?

CRAMER: Sure.

LEMELLE: [10:37] Well, Ira Pots Towner . . . Man, there's so many stories that I could tell you about our grandmother. And I guess the things that mostly we remember . . . I remember about her more than anything, was because she was always a homebound person. You never did see her going out too much. She did a little . . . When we were small she did a lot of things outside with my grandfather: building chicken coops and helping him repair the hog pen. But then in her latter days, grandmother was more of a homebound person. She stayed more like to herself in her room. I don't care what time of day you went, she always had her radio on listening to some type of gospel preacher, someone reading scripture, explaining scripture. And she had scripture, and if you went to spend the night with her you had to read scripture or listen to scripture. Sometimes we would, my cousin and I Rogers, we would play like we were asleep so we wouldn't have to read. That's just the way she was.

And what I remember about her was anytime you went, even when our son was a little boy, you bring the kids over and she'd always have a little chair for them to sit in and tell you a story. She always had stories, and most of them were biblical. She didn't talk about anything else but God. That was her . . . God and family, that was her thing. I think I told someone, at least I told my pastor, we learned from my grandmother and grandfather. It was a life . . . If we lived according to what she taught us it would be very few errors that we would make. It would be

very few arguments with your spouse. That's something I never heard my grandmother and grandfather cross-talk each other. It was . . . If they did, it was behind closed doors. And they always seemed to be two people that was like two peas in a pod.

[13:26] It's one thing that always stuck with me. I told you the story about my grandfather and the trees, but my grandmother . . . One of the first scriptures I learned was in the book of Proverbs when Solomon . . . The word that Grandmother taught us was that, "I've never seen the righteous forsaken nor her seed beg bread." This was one of her favorite things she would tell us. And she said, "Long as you trust and believe in God and live right . . . I never seen the righteous forsaken nor the seed beg bread." We used to always think it as being . . . when you say bread the first thing we thought was eating. And as we got older she would explain it differently. That if you are righteous, she said, "Forget about material bread. What I'm speaking about is the bread of life through Christ Jesus. If you're righteous, God won't forsake you with the bread of feeding your souls."

I'm trying to think how many years ago it's been that the property was owned by Kim and she donated for the church. This is a real true story, and I can take you there now and show you where the home was. And it was so . . . I'm going to use the word . . . it was so spiritually divine. The property was so, to me, was so holy because that's all my grandmother and grandfather ever did was live a holy life. They preached it; they lived it. Preached an example. If my grandmother told you something . . . If the girls . . . If you shouldn't do this, you'd never see her doing it. Grandfather, if he told you, you'd never seen him doing it.

When we got ready, when my pastor who's still my pastor, Lionel Thierry, started the demolition. I'm going to call it the demolition of the old home. And it was to be hauled off. And he paced and paced and he was praying. He told me, "Uncle Butch, I prayed and I prayed." And

he said, "For some reason it's hard for me to destroy this home." He said, "I wouldn't dare destroy it and haul it away." They had some trucks that was supposed to . . . They were going to load it up and take it, my grandmother's home. He refused to let them take it. He dug a hole on the property behind the house, tore it down himself, and buried every piece. And if we go there now you can see where over time it's sinking. He put it right behind the church that he was going to build. And over a period of time . . . I went to look yesterday, I think I went back there, just me. And I used to tell my pastor, "See my grandmother used to say that this place would always be a place for the bread." And, oh man, I tell people, "My grandmother . . . she was a woman. A true, true woman." You remember Grandmother, baby. I don't know what else I can say about my grandmother.

CRAMER: [17:41] What's going to happen to that property?

LEMELLE: The property belongs to Sasol [South Africa Synthetic Oil Liquid] now. What they going to do? I have no idea. But I do know that there have been quite a few souls saved, baptized in Jesus' name there. Whatever Sasol is going to do I feel like God has already done what he said he would do. The other peculiar . . . because we are peculiar people. The other thing that stood out to me was once the church was erected and was ready for fellowship . . . If you would have gone there I could show you that when you walk into the entrance of the building, which we call a lobby or foyer, when you walk into it, it was almost like walking into my grandmother's front door of her house. When you would . . . Oh geez. I can't do it.

LEONA LEMELLE: [. . . ?]

LEMELLE: Baby . . . I guess what's so unique when you came in, when you would take a right turn after coming into the church foyer you come in, and when you would turn right that was about where my pastor's office was that he bring in for counseling or teaching, was within two or three foot from where my grandmother's bedroom was. She had us . . . It was all just so unique that particular spot and was where she had us constantly . . . Because that was the only part of the house that . . . unless she would go in the kitchen to fix toast or something. It was so unique that this particular spot would be the place where he chose to be, like one-on-one teacher or one-on-one conversation. That's the way my grandmother had one-on-one with us or conversation with several of us.

[20:35] And the other peculiar, not peculiar, the other . . . I call it spiritual. God just . . . I think God put everything in place when . . . I told you the story about the trees and the burrs. When you would go into the sanctuary and where my grandfather used to sit and we had the trees, where my grandfather used to sit and teach us and talk is exactly where my pastor ended up putting the pulpit that he stands at the pulpit and teach and we down below looking at him. And I just always thought that was amazing the way it ended up, that my grandmother's words yet still goes on.

The church itself was named Mossville Truth. Even though we moved to Lake Charles, guess what the church's name is? Mossville Truth. That's why I'm a truth seeker. So I got so many stories. But that's one of the main things I can remember about my grandmother. She was so sweet. And I'm a . . . I want to say she loved all of us very dearly. But I still believe I had a special, special place in my grandmother's heart.

I was working. At that time, I was working at Conoco and my grandmother . . . My wife called me. I think you the one that called me when my grandmother . . . My wife's memory is not

like it used to be. But called and told me that my grandmother was at home and she was real sick. She was ill for some reason. And my supervisor came and got me, and I came home and went straight to her house to see about her. And my aunty and I, we loaded up in my car and brought her to the hospital. When we brought her in, they rushed and rushed and they had her in the bed. It was me and my [?] niece and she told the nurse she wanted to see me if I was there. And so I went in her room. I'm the last person that kissed her and the last person she hugged, me and my aunty. I've never seen death come so easy, and so relaxed. I never heard her moan. I never heard her groan. All she did was when I hugged her and told her, "Grandmother, I love you." She said, "I love you." And she did like that, closed her little eyes. Just as peaceful as we're sitting in here. Quiet and peaceful. And that was the first time they ever actually seen . . . that I actually ever seen death, and it wasn't no something to be afraid of or hollered. It was just peaceful. She closed her eyes, and that was it. That was my grandmother.

[24:19] And the same thing, I guess, happened with my mother when she passed. I was at the hospital and she was worrying and worrying and when we . . . my sister Della and I was there. And when I got to her bed and I said, reminded me a lot of her mother. And I told her, I said, "Mama, if you trying to hang on here for us, we going to be fine. You just go on home and meet Jesus." And my little mother did the same thing. She took a deep breath and closed her, her eyes was already closed. So I just think it's all because of the life that they lived. That's why I said, if we . . . if I, one of her grandsons, my mother's only son, if I would have lived my life the way they taught us . . .

LEONA LEMELLE: You'd be alright.

LEMELLE: . . . I'd be skipping to scooby-dooby-doo. I'd be all right. Would have been all right a long time ago.

LEONA LEMELLE: Yes, Lord.

LEMELLE: [25:22] We've made errors. I'll never say I never made an error or did things wrong, but I tried so hard to straighten everything. Some things you do, like you can't ever pay it back. If I lived every day of my life now, I could never live enough to pay back. But my pastor tell me all the time he say, "Uncle Butch"—everybody calls me Uncle Butch – "Uncle Butch, you have to just let all that go and live for your life now."

CRAMER: Well I bet there are people in your life who probably feel the same way about you that you do with your mom and your . . .

LEMELLE: I hope so. Least some of them say they do. I don't know if they mean it. Some of them says they do.

CRAMER: I bet they mean it. So where exactly was the house where you grew up? What was the address of it? Where is it in relation to where we are right now?

LEMELLE: In relationship to where we are now, if you were in the city it's about two and a half blocks away to the west of here on the Old Spanish Trail.

LEONA LEMELLE: Right down the street.

LEMELLE: It's just the first house when you pass Prater Road. It still yet stands. You've passed it several times. I think you went to it. You went there.

CRAMER: I went to your mom's house . . . where you grew up at in your mom's house.

LEMELLE: Where I grew up at.

CRAMER: That's right.

LEMELLE: [26:55] And across the street was where my grandmother's house was. It's no longer there.

CRAMER: It's exactly . . . it's on Old Spanish Trail.

LEMELLE: Right.

CRAMER: Right. So can you tell us a little bit about Old Spanish Trail? I mean, it's got such a history. It goes all over the United States. What about . . . Because when you were . . . It's probably changed a lot since you . . .

LEMELLE: Oh my god, yes.

CRAMER: Right? Yeah.

LEMELLE: Let's say the Old Spanish Trail. Of course, when I got big enough to be turned loose down there, the Old Spanish Trail, it was a small gravel road. Later on . . . Because they say it used to be a brick road. I can't remember that being brick. I remember like a rock and gravel road. And I guess somewhere in the early '50s is when they kind of start redoing it, making a little asphalt. And as time passed the roads got wider and wider. But the Old Spanish Trail was probably one of the main travel roads through here. Before Highway 90 it was the Old Spanish Trail.

LEONA LEMELLE: It would go all the way up into Houston [Texas], California. I think it go all the way up into California.

LEMELLE: OST. Because some places you'll see . . . Even in Houston, you'll see OST.

LEONA LEMELLE: Yeah.

LEMELLE: And that was part of the Old Spanish Trail.

CRAMER: It goes all the way to Florida.

LEMELLE: [28:53] It goes all the way to Florida.

LEONA LEMELLE: I think about the wagon train came through here, the Indians. [Talk about?] dead bones all up under there in this place.

LEMELLE: You're not going to get to the gypsies. But it was a main travel. And I toot the horn for my parents and grandparents because this . . . Well the community itself, that's the way they were. This was the main place, the main place to pass. Strangers passed through. If they needed help, they would help them. Give them a place, something to eat. Campout in their yard. Things of that nature.

I can actually remember, probably when I was about nine, eight or nine years old, they used to have the wagons pass through, and we were all frightened. There was two things that we were afraid of: what they call a hobo and gypsies. You could hear the wagon coming and it would be some little bells. And that was time for us to scatter because we didn't know. And this was gypsies passing through . . . actually gypsies. They'd have their wagon, and they'd have some kind of bells hanging on the wagon that would just be [makes bell noise] ding-a-ling-a-ling.

[30:28] And my grandmother and them used to say that was to let you know that they wasn't trying to slip up on you, that they were harmless. They were just people travelling from the east because everyone one was saying, "Go west. Go west." Gold. People left going looking for gold going out west. I can't tell you how many wagons passed through here that probably ended up out toward California. But the gypsies' wagons would be like loaded, man. And they'd be making a little ding-a-ling-a-ling. And they'd go so far some of the people would tell them, "Okay, you can camp out here for the night," whatever, and give them food.

We have a joke about my sister Julia. [Laughs] I'll let her tell you about that one. Julia

say they have some gypsies came . . . They used to say that the gypsies or someone had treasures buried in certain places, and right next door . . . right out front by my mother's house they claimed that there was some treasures buried. And someone was trying to dig up the treasures and they heard [black?]. These people will tell you all kinds of old stories, but Julia say they had a gypsy one time came and she saw the gypsy go up in the tree and it never did come out. I said, "Wow." The gypsy . . . [Laughs] Take this off the record. I told them, "Julia was such a terrible girl and she's totally . . ." Now, I'm not going to say that about my sister because I don't know. I told my sister Della. I say, "Julia saw a gypsy go up in the tree and didn't come back." I said, "I know what happened now." Della say, "What?" I said, "I really believe that gypsy was her mama and throwed her little bad butt away." [Laughs] And my mother just felt sorry for her and raised her.

[32:41] But the Old Spanish Trail seriously was . . . well from history and a little part I remember, this was the main drag because people, business people, lumber, different thing. You would see them come through with their wagons headed towards Sulphur [Louisiana] to sulfur mines. A lot of construction went through here and they built it up and called it Brimstone, which was another pathway to kind of ease the traffic, I guess. And the wagons stopped traveling here and more automobiles started. They used to travel back in the back . . . just a little piece back here about a hundred yards in an old place called the Brimstone, and it ran from here all the way to Sulphur. The Brimstone.

LEONA LEMELLE: That go all the way to Texas, huh?

LEMELLE: [33:30] And it . . . I'm not sure how far it goes, but it goes up to the old part of

Sulphur to the sulfur mines. The Brimstone runs to the sulfur mines. There was a lot of construction for sulfur mines, so to eliminate OST they built the right of way and they call it the Brimstone. It goes . . . oh, Lord. I know it's about a hundred yards behind here. But nice, all pipelined and everything. And business in Westlake [Louisiana] used this, and also families here used the OST to go back and forth to Westlake Grocery because Prater Road was named from my mother's sister's husband, [Earthy?] Prater. Mr. [Amara?] Prater's father, he started building a road, a right of way, and I guess with the work that he did putting down and making a right of way from Old Spanish Trail up to Highway 90 when they started it, they changed that . . .

LEONA LEMELLE: I didn't know that.

LEMELLE: [34:53] That's how Prater Road got its name because of Earthy Prater was the man that started right of way for access to go to . . . Because once they built Highway 90, the Old Spanish Trail wasn't as busy, but you still needed a way to get to Maplewood where their jobs were. So he started building a right of way, again I say, Earthy Prater, our uncle. And then people in the community fell in and helped him.

LEONA LEMELLE: Okay.

LEMELLE: And eventually what happened, I guess, eventually the parish or whomever got involved in it and actually made a . . . Because they saw then that it was a big help to get back and forth to Cities Service, to the refineries. All that area.

CRAMER: So he probably had to cut down the trees and . . .

LEMELLE: Oh, yes. He had to do a lot of work.

CRAMER: How do you . . . What kind of equipment did he use to do that? Saw? What about mules or . . .?

LEMELLE: [35:58] He had . . . I never forget. My uncle had a horse named Silver. Wagon. Old Silver. But this was before my time, about the road. But I know he had . . . What's that old man's name . . . Mr. Ben Hartman was a neighbor. And those old men, they would get out work and they had the horses. I can't remember a mule, but they had horses and they had wagons and they had another thing they called a sled, I think . . . a sled. They put a lot of things on there and the horse. And that's how they hauled a lot of . . . And then a lot of the timber went to my grandfather. He cut it up. He'd burn it. He had coal. So they was all in cahoots to how to . . . I call it survival. A lot of the timber that Earthy and them cut, they loaded it up on the wagon or the sled and brought it to my grandfather. At that time my grandfather was living up on Evergreen [Road], and that's where he did a lot of his work, up on Evergreen. And then when his home burnt down up on Evergreen, this is when he moved up on the Old Spanish Trail. But a lot of his work . . . Can you imagine hauling timber from Old Prater Road all the way up there by horse?

LEONA LEMELLE: And didn't they come from Sugartown?

LEMELLE: [37:41] Yeah.

LEONA LEMELLE: And it would take so many days to get here.

LEMELLE: In Sugartown . . . Sugartown is just . . .

LEONA LEMELLE: For a horse . . .

LEMELLE: Just before you get to Deridder.

LEONA LEMELLE: They had a horse and a wagon, I guess.

LEMELLE: [37:54] That's how my mother came here with her father.

LEONA LEMELLE: It would take a long time to get here.

LEMELLE: She remembers camping out under the stars. Traveling what takes me thirty, forty-five minutes.

LEONA LEMELLE: [Want me to talk about Paw-Paw?]

LEMELLE: Forty-five minutes. When she ask for something, baby.

CRAMER: Okay, talk about Paw-Paw.

LEMELLE: It's fine.

CRAMER: What about Paw-Paw?

LEMELLE: It's fine. Who was Paw-Paw?

LEONA LEMELLE: His daddy.

LEMELLE: [38:15] We on my grandparents now.

CRAMER: Well . . .

LEMELLE: All I can remember that . . . Again, now my grandmother, Ira Pots Thomas, she had one brother that I knew of and his name was Elic Pots. And he treated us all like . . . What's better than gold?

LEONA LEMELLE: Where he live?

LEMELLE: Uncle Pots.

LEONA LEMELLE: Oh, in Texas.

LEMELLE: No, no. He lived down the road where Margie's place was at. Uncle Pots and Aunt Lily.

CRAMER: [38:53] How did you spell his name? E-L-I-C-H or . . .?

LEMELLE: Who?

CRAMER: You said Uncle Elic.

LEMELLE: Elic. E-F- . . . Now wait a minute now. Elic. E-L-I-C or E-L-I-K. Elic.

CRAMER: Okay.

LEMELLE: Elic Pots was my grandmother's brother, and he was one that loved his nieces. He didn't care for any kids, but every niece and nephew he treat us like we were gold because he loved all of his sister's grandkids. And my wife remembered the other brother and sisters that my grandfather . . . They lived up in Houston [Texas]. One was named Gibson Towner.

LEONA LEMELLE: That's your daddy people or your mama people?

LEMELLE: [39:38] We on my grandfather.

LEONA LEMELLE: Grandpa. I mean, grandma. That's what I was trying to say.

LEMELLE: No. We're on Grandpa Duff, baby.

LEONA LEMELLE: Okay.

LEMELLE: Towner.

LEONA LEMELLE: I didn't know him, sorry.

LEMELLE: Yeah.

CRAMER: Now how do you spell Earthy Prater? How do you spell that? Do you know?

LEMELLE: E . . . Erthy[?] . . . E-R-T-H-Y, I guess [spelled Earthy].

CRAMER: Okay.

LEMELLE: I could get my phone and find out, but Earthy Prater. And you going to get that

. . . You'll probably talk to . . . Who from that family we was trying to get? Tommy Prater?

LEONA LEMELLE: That other one.

CRAMER: [40:15] Morris?

LEMELLE: We was trying to get Morris and Tommy, but neither one of them won't come. Now Vera . . . But I probably know as much about them as Vera would.

CRAMER: So you mentioned the sulfur mines. Do you have memories of the sulfur mines, or was that before your time?

LEMELLE: It was more like before my time.

CRAMER: But you heard about them I'd guess.

LEMELLE: Oh yes.

CRAMER: Tell us about how close those were. And were people in Mossville working at the sulfur mines?

LEMELLE: [40:44] Now that part I'm not really sure. Most likely some of the people did. But back to Earthy Prater, he was commended greatly for that work that he did. And this gave them access to getting across and getting out to where the refineries, such as Cities Service, Firestone started construction of those back in the '30s, which my father, different ones like Uncle Earthy, they worked. Uncle Earthy ended up with a good job back in them days because he went to work first construction. Then Uncle Earthy worked at Firestone, which was . . . back then that was a great job for a person, you know. But the sulfur mines, I don't know of anyone personally that I could really do to say and be honest that I knew worked there.

CRAMER: Because I think that was, if my memory serves me correctly, around the turn of the 20th century.

LEMELLE: It was back then.

CRAMER: And didn't last long.

LEMELLE: Didn't last long.

CRAMER: I guess lumber had already . . .

LEMELLE: Right.

CRAMER: . . . happened. But there was a sawmill for a little while though, right?

LEMELLE: Yeah, they had a sawmill. Now they had several people here that had sawmills. But that's a little . . . Some of that's a little before my time.

CRAMER: [42:26] Because it was mostly . . . I mean, after World War II we had lots of industries come up in Mossville.

LEMELLE: Right, right.

CRAMER: So what were some of those industries? I mean, I know you were a kid. You were just one, but . . .

LEMELLE: [42:36] Okay, I have papers where my father worked for . . . I'm trying to think of the name of these companies. Like, construction . . . Kellogg. I remember my dad talking about Kellogg Construction Company that was when they started to build Cities Service and Conoco in the thirties. And that's when Earthy Prater built . . . I can know this, that when he came from the stories they told us that Uncle Earthy started that road, and that gave them access to get easier down to Bayou D'Inde, all that area. So . . .

CRAMER: Now that road, is it the same exact road today, or has it been shortened or changed?

LEMELLE: It has been . . . Prater Road, I would say, is extended because it used to go to Highway 90. Then they made it access all the way over to Bayou D'Inde, and you could take Prater Road. They named the south side of Prater Road . . . of Highway 90, they named it Prater Road and there are subdivision homes. And you continue, you can take Prater Road down and hit [Apisay?] . . not [?].

LEONA LEMELLE: You just said it not long ago.

LEMELLE: [44:06] You can get to [Interstate] 210 from Prater Road. But all that Prater Road on this side was started by Earthy Prater.

CRAMER: It starts right here, right? At the intersection of . . .

LEMELLE: [44:17] At the intersection of OST.

CRAMER: So what are the geographic boundaries of Mossville? Or what were they when you were growing up?

LEMELLE: When I was growing up the boundaries of Mossville, even though they had . . . In other words, some people say, "Well I'm not from Mossville. I'm from Bel Air." But that's part of Mossville. It's the same thing. If you were living in Lake Charles and say, "Well I live in Gasport," you're still part of Lake Charles. So the boundaries when I was coming up for Mossville was the first . . . the last family to the west of us was the LaTours, and next door to the LaTours was my mother's oldest brother, Arthur Towner. That was our boundaries in this time with the Mosses and all of those people. They built from there. But our boundaries, believe it or not, used to go all the way up to Conoco. Part of Conoco's tank farm used to be Mossville. A lot of their construction sites used to be Mossville.

CRAMER: [45:37] What do you mean by "used to be Mossville"? Like there used to be houses there?

LEMELLE: Yes. There were homes. I can name some of the homes that was . . . If you leave here and go to Conoco Philips or Sasol . . . the tank farm where they keep all the crude oil, which would be the tanks that you see that's silver, that's to keep the heat, all of that used to be homes.

It was the Scotts, the Sullivans, and on down the old Trousdale before they closed, before companies like Conoco and Sasol purchased it, there was another Trousdale that had, Lord, I don't know, it had families there. When I was coming up there was a church, Philadelphia Church, which is now back here. They moved the church.

[46:38] We had clubs. We had ball parks that we would go down and watch ball games on Sunday evening. You met Kenny Lee? His father played on the team and was a ball player. So all that used to be part of Mossville. And across the road from Conoco, where it's now Sasol, was part of Mossville. They had homes there. When I was a kid, being a segregated place, they had a beautiful park . . .

LEONA LEMELLE: [Mossville Conoco Park?].

LEMELLE: They had a beautiful park. And we had a little bitty park across from . . . I'm just being honest. That's the way segregation was. But due to the fact that they had people here worked for Conoco, well Conoco said, "We going to give y'all a park." So they built a little small park for the blacks. And all that now is closed, and it's all tank farm or whatever area. But we had the little park we could go to and have fun. Mr. Prater, he would take us down there and we'd cook and barbeque at the park, Conoco Park. Which we never did perceive it being nothing so drastically wrong. We had ours, and I think somewhere like in 1960 . . . it was before anybody else was integrated, Conoco integrated the parks, and we were allowed to go. But all that at one time was homes. They had families there.

CRAMER: [48:29] So how did they go from being homes to being owned by the

companies?

LEMELLE: The same thing that's going on now with Sasol. Except Sasol is being a little bit more, to me, lenient. Giving you a different opportunity than what they did in the past.

CRAMER: So what did they do in the past?

LEMELLE: [48:53] I'm going to tell you what really happened. I'm too old to go to jail, so if they sue me for telling the truth, oh well. What happened to a lot of people when Conoco got ready to purchase land from them, they offered them X amount of dollars to move. The way it was determined what you were worth was through the tax office. One hundred and ten percent of people live here was tax exempt, which meant your property was only worth X amount of dollars, well below what it was worth. So this is what they offered.

Even the last community, Bel Air, they had people back there had a hundred and something thousand dollar homes but they were . . . Because, say, seventy-five dollars . . . if you had anything over seventy-five thousand dollars, you had to pay tax. So to keep from paying tax you signed up . . . you're exempt. So the exemption says that if you exempt whatever your property has to be less than seventy-five. So this is what we going to offer you. We going to offer you fifty-five thousand dollars, you can take it or leave it. We coming anyway. And they would begin to expand. One person move, well if a person move, the first thing that company would do was go fence their property and start doing something crazy on it. So the neighbors say, "Well if they gone . . . " I think Mr. Ernest Smith was one of the first people to leave Bel Air. And once he left, the neighbors say, "Well it's time for us to go."

LEONA LEMELLE: Ernest Smith?

LEMELLE: [Pardon]?

LEONA LEMELLE: Ernest Smith.

LEMELLE: Thibodaux.

LEONA LEMELLE: Thibodaux.

CRAMER: [50:43] So people started leaving Mossville a while ago?

LEMELLE: We had a community of, I say, twelve, fifteen years ago. Bel Air was . . . we call it Bel Air Subdivision. I would say that to make up Mossville it was well over three quarters of Mossville. When we lost that little subdivision, we lost three quarters of our community.

CRAMER: So it was about 2000 . . . year 2000? Right around in there.

LEMELLE: Yeah. Somewhere in that neighborhood.

CRAMER: So where'd everybody go? Just around about?

LEMELLE: Just around about Lake Charles. Some moved to Lake Charles. Some moved out

. . . What's the name of that place out where Brown and them is at? Your friend, Cynthia Brown and them? Manchester?

LEONA LEMELLE: Manchester.

LEMELLE: [51:40] But it's all local Lake Charles area. And some probably went west to Sulphur. Carlyss. But majority, I would say, moved to Lake Charles area.

CRAMER: So I'm going to take you back to 1946 when you were born . . . right around that time.

LEMELLE: Okay.

CRAMER: Were any . . . Who did you know that was in the military who served in World War II in your community? Like when you were growing up, that you heard stories about.

LEMELLE: They're still living or deceased?

CRAMER: No, that you just . . . Whether it was your father, your uncle, or neighbors, or relatives.

LEMELLE: [52:23] Well I have Mr. Morris Prater, which is my first cousin. He was in the army. I'll never forget certain times of the month, whenever, when Grandmother would call for

prayer for the service men. We all prayed for our service men. And I had . . . my grandmother had a son, by the name of George Towner. He was in World War, but he's deceased now. And we used to pray. That was just part of my grandmother's thing that you prayed for . . . So in my family I know there was Mr. Morris Prater. My Uncle George Frederick Towner, he was a service man. You're putting me on the spot because I can't think. Kenny Lee's father, back in those days when he was a service man. My sister that's deceased, her husband was a serviceman. His name was Alvin Simmons. All these was the World War II vets that I can remember back in the '40s. So that's four I know.

[53:50] And my dad had a brother. He was an air force man. He had just got in when he had to go off to war, but they ended up coming back to Lake Charles. He didn't get a chance to go because he was young. And he ended up at the Chennault Air Force . . . Chennault Air Force Base, and he used to come here. And eventually Uncle Johnny Lemelle, he moved here. Who else I know who went in the service? Oh, my sister Julia's husband, Dewey Gordwin. He was a World War II vet from here. So in my family . . . I can't think of anybody else. The more I think about and see their pictures I remember.

CRAMER: So it's a number of men who served in World War II who came back to the community.

LEMELLE: Right.

CRAMER: How did that affect . . . How did their service and their experience in the war . . . Did people talk about it? Did they come back and have some civic leadership aspects to their . . .

I guess I'm just curious about how their service and their involvement in the war changed things.

LEMELLE: [55:02] I think really, Jennifer, it was the same that you hear now that you heard from veterans that came from Vietnam War. You go off and fight for your country, and you come back and you can't even get a decent job in the community or an area like Lake Charles, as large as we are. How many veterans have to travel from here to Houston? Morris Prater goes to Houston probably twice . . . once or twice a month.

LEONA LEMELLE: [55:35] Some go up to Shreveport.

LEMELLE: Some go to Alexandria [Louisiana]. Some goes to Shreveport. But what I'm saying, like my Uncle Frederick . . . I can remember them saying . . . like, they used some words that we don't like to use, "Dammit to hell. I been off fighting in the war; I come home, y'all don't even let me go to the front gate of Cities Service because I'm black. But it was okay for me to go over there and get on the front line and take bullets." It's the same thing that you heard then is what you hear now. A veteran got no privileges. Well you couldn't even get a decent job so what we do, what we did is we go on what we learn from our mother. My uncles were some of the greatest carpenters in the world. So Fredrick came on back from the war and he took up carpentry. Got with his brothers and they did carpentry work. That's all he ever did, but it's the first to say that he should have been able to go with his brother-in-law Earthy Prater and have a job that paid at least three dollars an hour instead of having to hammer nails until his hands is like that because he was a veteran.

[56:59] So you heard the same thing then that you hear now. People went off to the war,

went on the front line and come back to the community and you find the same thing. You come back from the war that you fought for somebody else's rights, and you come home and your children or your nieces and nephews is going to a little small school with ten year-old books. And it was really frustrating. I tell you, that part I know. Because in '46, and after '46 the years passed, I ended up . . . Eventually I had to get up and go to school. But it was the same then. Most people that . . . men that went off to the war that came back home that came back with a different attitude, but with the same results: "I know a lot more than I did three years ago when I was a kid going off into Uncle Sam's army. I'm eighteen years old. I come back. I'm twenty-three years old and the same thing I'm getting now is what I got when I was a kid. You're not giving me anything different."

My Uncle Fredrick, he was actually . . . I'm going to call it anger. Sometimes . . . And you see the same thing that's going on with people that's been in Vietnam or whatever. They come home with some anger or some hurt. And he always was one that . . . He always talked about it. He used to tell us, "If you can, don't go in the army. If you can, stay out of the army. You don't need to go to the army. If you can make it without going in the army, don't go. Because all they did is made it bad for me."

LEONA LEMELLE: [58:57] Yeah, remember Murphy used to write us some letters.

LEMELLE: Yeah.

LEONA LEMELLE: And Kenny used to tell us, too, about the army . . . or war.

LEMELLE: Yeah. So I'm saying the same stories I heard then, I turn around and I hear it 1945 to 1970, '71, he heard the same stories. Kenny Lee went off, and he's sick now . . . Vietnam. I had another friend who used to write us all the time, we cried and prayed for. He was a classmate, and he come back home. Things change.

LEONA LEMELLE: They got [delivered?] was what happened.

LEMELLE: [59:35] Things change over the years. Now the younger guys, they come back with this attitude, but through changes they have a better opportunity than the man did, the veteran did, twenty years prior to him. Forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, thirty years later things have changed. So you have an opportunity now because of the blood-sweat that your ancestors went through that you can go up to Cities Service and say, "Okay, I'm coming to apply for a job. This is my resume. I've been to the service. I'm a veteran. I could pass this test."

But a lot of our people's held back not form their skills, because they always had great minds, but this is what killed them. When you sit down . . . I had a teacher, she was Ms. P.M. Washington, and 1960 she became as our interim principal because the principal that was there messed up so bad and that she was the teacher that taught here when there was a school here. She told us, and we laughed, she got up, called the school into the auditorium for her to talk to her kids three days after she became principal. And she said, "I want to tell all of my students that I love you, and I really want you to take and learn. We have teachers here that's going to give to you freely, not going to cost you anything. The only thing it cost you is paying attention, and putting forth an effort." She said that, and we laughed. She said, "There's going to come a time that you going to need an education to wash dishes."

LEONA LEMELLE: That's right.

LEMELLE: [1:01:43] You going to need an education to put in an application. You going to get an education to wash dishes? Anybody can wash dishes. But at this day and time, people want a job at Walmart but they can even put in an application. You go to a big, big restaurant, you apply and say, "Well I don't have it, but I'm a dishwasher." Can you read? You can't read how to even operate the dishwasher. So the things that she told us was so true, but we couldn't see it then. That was one of these stories that some things happen in your life, you just never forget. Like I keep saying, my Uncle Frederick, he had a lot of anger in him, and a lot of it was from the war.

CRAMER: Where did he serve when he was in the war?

LEMELLE: Wherever it was at because he did one term somewhere overseas, and he came back . . . cut. And to keep from going back, he beat up one of his sergeants. It was like the day he found out they were supposed to be shipped off going back overseas somewhere. So what he did, he got up in the middle of the evening and had a brawl-out fight with his sergeant, or whoever was in command of him. And with this, they say he beat this man up so bad they put him in what they call stockade. They put him in stockade for so many days. He said it was the happiest day of his life because he didn't have to board and go back overseas.

CRAMER: [1:03:36] And that was during World War II, right?

LEMELLE: That was World War II.

CRAMER: So he came back? Did he come back because of an injury, or did they just . . .?

LEMELLE: [1:03:42] No, he just got discharged. He came home, but he came home with a lot a lot of animosity, anger. Anger and hurt can . . . you don't know which way to take it if you just hurt . . .

CRAMER: Yeah.

LEMELLE: . . . or if you have a lot of anger. It was a thin line. And another thing that hurt a lot of the veterans then, they didn't have any place for them to go.

CRAMER: Right.

LEMELLE: Where do you go and who do you tell your problems to? Well I don't have anyone to tell them. Take it out on your wife. Take your anger out on somebody. Take it out. So he said a lot of times what he take his anger out on was a hammer and a nail. He said, "I can beat this nail and it ain't going to do me nothing back. Nobody can't do me nothing about it." I said, "I'm going to fetch it." And he . . . Poor thing, when he died, from holding a hammer, his hand was like that. But he said, "I could take this hammer and a nail and I could beat it on anything I can beat it and it's not going to cause me no problems."

CRAMER: So he was angry, I'm guessing, at how he was being treated, the lack of opportunity. I mean, because there was rampant, at that time in the late '40s or early '50s, with fighting . . .

LEMELLE: It was bad.

CRAMER: [1:04:58] . . . with Jim Crow laws and that sort of thing. That's what he was angry about?

LEONA LEMELLE: When Uncle Ferdinand, he went to that war and he came back fighting and cussing.

LEMELLE: She had an uncle like that, and he just had a lot of anger and hurt and anger.

LEONA LEMELLE: And was so intelligent [up here?].

CRAMER: So what do people do about it? I mean, were there any civil rights activists in the community who were fighting for anything or . . .?

LEMELLE: Not in that time that I know of. In a community like this, we had leaders that . . . It was one thing I can say, Mossville at one time we were always one-hundred percent. Whatever was going on as far as elections, who you needed in office, the elders would get together and they would all be on one accord. There was a man here by the name of . . . I don't know if you

met Della Dotson yet.

CRAMER: I think I interviewed Della.

LEMELLE: [1:06:08] Her father was . . . I'm going to call him a leader here in the community. And what they would do, these men would get together and discuss who was to be your sheriff for Calcasieu Parish, who was to be this, that for the parish. And Mount Zion and different churches they would all get together. The men would get together, and most of the time what it was, was at Mr. Josh Rigmaiden's place. And we called him the mayor.

CRAMER: Okay.

LEMELLE: That was the mayor of Mossville. But at that time . . . I showed you that picture, baby.

LEONA LEMELLE: This it?

REBECCA COOPER: Can I take a picture of it?

LEMELLE: If you can. It's kind of . . . When we went to see your friend Lola I got this picture off from hers.

LEONA LEMELLE: [1:07:07] Oh yeah, at her house. I remember now.

LEMELLE: And for some reason the light hit it.

LEONA LEMELLE: That was Paw-Paw, huh?

LEMELLE: [1:07:16] It was her daddy, Lola's daddy. Lola's father. Want me to hold it up?

This was our mayor, what we considered the mayor of Mossville. A lot of things that we did accomplish in the community was because of this man and other leaders. So eventually, eventually, eventually as time passed, you eventually got things that you really needed. I can't say about men that went to the war or what happened to them, if it ever changed for them. Some got lucky, some got a break, and some didn't.

Like my sister Julia, her husband end up going . . . he was a veteran but end up working for Cities Service. Uncle Frederick never did. But Morris Prater ended up working . . . Where did Morris . . . ? He worked at one of the plants. So some of them got a good break, but it was through the efforts of people like Josh Rigmaiden that talked . . . Back then, it was a family thing, you know. If you got lucky and got a break, not just veterans, but . . . I'm going to use the name Mr. Audrey Prater, an old resident here. He was the cousin of Earthy. Well, Audrey went to work at Conoco as a young man. And with him being working at Conoco he had other friends that came to the community such as Valery Montgomery. He would say, "Well I got a friend." Mr. Josh Rigmaiden would go and say, "I got a young man here in Mossville. He need a job because he got a family. He got four kids. Y'all try to help him."

[1:09:31] So eventually . . . And the old saying, "You scratch my back I'll scratch yours." But a lot of people won't admit a lot of things happened simply because of leadership that you followed. When politicians saw that you were on one accord, that was power. You had

power when you were all together. And they used to tell us if we stick together . . . They used to demonstrate. At present time, my poor little hands . . . I can't think of carrying this because it's all together. But if I take a sheet at a time, I can. So they believed then, and that's one thing we lost in this community that probably wouldn't have happened to a lot of people, because we lost leadership. Things wouldn't have happened if we had people that had voice to go up and talk for you.

CRAMER: And negotiate.

LEMELLE: [1:10:41] Negotiate.

CRAMER: And probably could offer block voting and that sort of thing.

LEMELLE: They had . . . I'm serious. If you were a kid here, a young man or woman or whoever from this community, and something happened . . . if you got in a wreck, got in a brawl, or got whatever, got into trouble that they had to say, "We going to arrest you and bring you to jail," you called Josh Rigmaiden. Josh Rigmaiden would call Ham Reed and say, "That's one of my boys. Don't you lock him up no further than where he's at. I'll be there to get him." That was a done deal.

CRAMER: Who's Ham Reed?

LEMELLE: He used to be the . . . That's right, you not from here. Ham Reed was the sheriff

of Calcasieu Parish for years. And Mr. Frank Salter was at that time back in the day was the . . .

What was Frank Salter? District attorney. But people respected Josh Rigmaiden. If Josh Rigmaiden said, "You have Mr. Lemelle's son up there?" Just using it as an example. "Yeah."

"This is Josh Rigmaiden from Mossville. Be there in a minute. Don't lock him up." "Yes, sir."

And they saw a community that was together. Simple as that. And everybody went. They would talk it over. Who's going to be your next sheriff? Who's going to be the district attorney? And at that time you had, in the parish, if you had extra 2,000 votes, that was a lot for you. Five hundred votes, man I want those five hundred votes.

CRAMER: Yep.

LEMELLE: So that's the way I can remember things for the community.

CRAMER: Voting is power.

LEMELLE: [1:12:40] Voting is power.

CRAMER: So Josh Rigmaiden, after he was gone, who kind of replaced him as the de facto mayor of Mossville?

LEMELLE: Well, we had other leaders, but I wouldn't say they were as effective.

CRAMER: What made him so effective?

LEMELLE: [1:13:06] What made him so effective? Unity.

CRAMER: And his ability to get everybody . . . ?

LEMELLE: [1:13:18] His ability to get everybody together and the unity. And I don't know, I'm just saying they didn't fear him, but he was a man that had the right words. He had a way of having people to follow him. He was business. He had a little business, a little store and this, that and the other. Mr. Josh was, to us, a powerful man. He had a nephew by the name of James Rigmaiden who, in the later years, became an adult, and he was a voice but he didn't have the unity that Josh Rigmaiden had. He had a great voice, but of course he no longer had a Ham Reed and he no longer had a Frank Salter during the time they had a big thing with the Jupiter Plant. A lot of things happened with unions . . . changeover in government. So this made Mossville not as effective as they were in the '40s and '50s . . . or in the '50s, so somewhere in the early '60s it began to change because of government change was one thing.

Later on as we began to see the schools, they no longer . . . Trying to find the word to keep from hurting. We no longer had followers that was so . . . Use the word . . . I don't want to use the wrong word. But some things you can't get from being radical. I'm going to use that word. You had more people that wanted to just take things over in a radical way than a way of words and wisdom and understanding.

CRAMER: Like a gentle . . .

LEMELLE: [1:16:13] A gentleness. Even the Bible speak that a soft answer turns away

wrath. So some things you didn't accomplish because you had the attitude that I'm the man and you're going to . . . No, it doesn't work that way. If my wife and I get into it, just because I'm the male factor that don't mean I can just buffalo her. You know? This is the way . . . You have a change in government, you have a change in people's attitude, and your attitude is a big thing. Josh Rigmaiden was a friend of people in higher places. And what made him effective because when they asked the question, "I got nine men out here and they all is on the same page with me. I got 300 families out here, and they all saying that this is what we going to do, this is what we want." So it was a lot easier. But people, people change.

[1:17:19] Younger generations are always more radical. More just want to knock the door down, and all you got to do is wait till they unlock it and open easy. That's the generation I came through. I never was a . . . I was a thug, but I wasn't radical when it came to it. When I didn't go through the . . . I was before the integration, but I always had doors open for me because when I was younger . . . from the eighth grade I lived here and I went to live in Boulder, Colorado. And that was like leaving a dark room, going into one that is wide open of light. I came from a small community, one hundred percent black, and an all-black school from first grade to eighth grade. I left here and went to Boulder, Colorado.

My freshman year at Boulder High School was over 1,500 freshmen. Out of the entire freshman class there was four African American students. Can you imagine the change for a fifteen year-old kid that was totally surrounded by parents' love, attention? I was totally like, "Man, where am I? What am I doing here?" "Well it's because we want you to go and this is going to be a better opportunity. You going to get a better education." How can I get a better . . . All these things going through a fifteen year-old's mind. But it was like a total eclipse from me going from first grade through eighth grade. I looked to my left, there was my friend African

American. I looked to my right, I looked up there my instructor was an African American. I look all around me, that's all I ever saw. I go home in the afternoon, I saw my black mother, and my black father, my black sister, and my black nieces and nephews and here I'm looking like, what am I doing here. My God.

This is when I learned that it's not where you are, but it's what you desire to be. The same thing that I get here I could get at home. But it's such a big difference. This is one thing I learned, and I'm going to teach you something today. That if you ever had something that held you down, that you never want to go back to, anything in your life that triggers you to be wrong or whatever, the only thing that can carry you back to that is three things—what is the definition of a noun?

CRAMER: Person, place, or thing.

LEMELLE: [1:21:10] Okay. Things that was in my life. The first thing I learned about a noun: The definition is a person. That's the wrong person for you to be with. Okay, the place. Where did you go to get in that trouble? Don't go back there. The thing. Was it a smoke on a hit of marijuana? Was it an alcohol bottle? So I learn that. A person, place, or thing will cause you to go back to where you were, and you never want to go there. So if you eliminate the noun out of your life, you got it. So now Jennifer, you know. A person, place, or thing. You okay, my baby?

CRAMER: You want some water or a drink or something?

LEONA LEMELLE: Cold water.

LEMELLE: [1:22:04] I think I got some Sprite.

LEONA LEMELLE: I don't want no soda.

CRAMER: Okay. Becca's going to get you some water. I know we're about at . . . almost an hour and a half. And you know, of course, this is just part two, and there will be a part three, and probably a part four. And I have so many questions left to ask you and so many good things.

LEMELLE: [1:22:36] Well ask me quick. I won't talk so long next time.

CRAMER: No, it's beautiful. It's just there's so much there, and you're a great storyteller. So I appreciate, as does anybody who's going to be listening to this, all of the information that you're providing that a lot of people don't have. There's a perspective that you have that is unique and very informative and insightful. So as long as you'll keep talking to me, I'm going to keep . . . we're going to keep recording. So probably what I'll do is wrap it up here, so we can go to your mom's house . . .

LEMELLE: Okay.

CRAMER: . . . and video tape it.

LEMELLE: Alright.

CRAMER: And then when we come back, there's some other things that we can talk about. About life . . . general life in Mossville and also some specific points in history as well. We've already talked a little bit about it, but what I'll do is I'll get it transcribed. What we've just done, I'll get that transcribed, and I'll bring a copy of this audio back to you and a copy of this transcription. And before I come back I'll go through here and see if there's anything I want to tease out a little bit more, because you already answered a lot of questions about World War II. That's . . . I always think World War II has a huge impact on a community no matter what. And it seems like . . . and people as well. And we talked a little bit . . . we talked a lot about that and that's great. So next time we'll probably maybe try to get to various neighborhoods.

LEMELLE: I'll tell you something now, Jennifer.

CRAMER: Yes.

LEMELLE: It might be good for you, too, with the generations that you going to talk to along with the World War II . . .

CRAMER: Yes, sir.

LEMELLE: [1:24:19] Is Vietnam.

CRAMER: Oh yes. Some people won't talk. We'll hear from other people, for example, that so-and-so isn't comfortable talking about Vietnam or isn't comfortable talking about Korea or something like that. So we don't ever want to make somebody feel uncomfortable.

LEMELLE: Right.

CRAMER: But if somebody has something to share, we're definitely . . . Because you know, World War II is pretty well documented. But you know what isn't? Korea.

LEMELLE: [1:24:45] Korea.

CRAMER: Vietnam.

LEMELLE: Right.

CRAMER: So much of that is just not documented, and we'd love to get some of that on . . . recorded. So if you want to encourage some people to open up and kind of talk about that. And anything they're not comfortable talking about, we definitely won't broach. But even if it's just like, hey, what was it like to be in Korea? What was that like. And/or Vietnam. Were you drafted? What branch of service did you belong to?

LEMELLE: Right.

CRAMER: All that kind of stuff. When you and I return we're going to talk a little bit about entertainment, where young folks gathered. Ms. Marteel's Canteen, I think. Lula Lyons had a canteen. Music, movies, a public library, where that was, school.

LEMELLE: School, school, school.

CRAMER: [1:25:34] School, school, school. Some of the teachers that were influential in your life. I know, for example, Ms. Gloria Rogers was really important. Coach Williams, important in the community. We'll talk about that. We'll talk about medical treatment, because wasn't it your dad . . . Didn't your dad . . . Didn't Ms. Julia tell me that your dad had some home remedies and stuff like that? I feel like she did. I went back to the . . .

LEMELLE: I think my grandmother and them may have had some.

CRAMER: Okay.

LEMELLE: But I can't remember my daddy having that much of home remedies.

CRAMER: Okay. I might be wrong. Maybe it was . . .

LEMELLE: Now she might have had something that was done prior to me, because I'm the baby.

CRAMER: You're the baby. [Laughs]

LEMELLE: I went to the doctor a lot of times.

CRAMER: That's right.

LEMELLE: Except Christmas take castor oil. You okay, baby?

CRAMER: [1:26:23] We're wrapping it up.

LEONA LEMELLE: [. . . ?] working on the sewage or something on the thing. You all right?

LEMELLE: You know what, we going down to my mother's old place. I'll tell you what I would like to do. It won't take me more . . . Unless you want to go to my house. I want to get her back and let her get in her house and be comfortable.

CRAMER: Yes. I hear you.

LEMELLE: Because she might having some breathing problems.

CRAMER: Right.

LEMELLE: Or whatever.

CRAMER: Yes, sir. Let's do that. We'll wrap it up. Thank you so much for all the time that you have spent with us today, and thank you for sitting here with us. And we will wrap this up.

LEMELLE: And the day is not over.

CRAMER: The day is not over. Again, just on behalf of the center we really appreciate everything you have contributed.

LEMELLE: Thank you.

CRAMER: We appreciate you sitting here and helping jog some of his memories.

LEONA LEMELLE: [1:27:04] I enjoyed the history.

CRAMER: Yeah it's good stuff. He's a good storyteller. Alright.

LEMELLE: Thank you guys.

CRAMER: You doing okay? You're very welcome. Thank you for allowing us into your life and opening up. I also have asthma. You have asthma? I saw you doing an inhaler.

LEMELLE: COPD [Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease].

CRAMER: Oh yeah.

LEONA LEMELLE: Oh, I couldn't understand what she was saying.

CRAMER: Look, see? I got mine.

LEMELLE: Well . . .

COOPER: Yeah, Jen is it okay to turn it off?

CRAMER: Yes. I always have to have water on me at all times.

[1:27:35]

[End Tape 4545. End Session II.]