

Interview with Ms. Linda Frances featuring PG Watkins

**Total Runtime: 2:02:54**

[[00:00:00]] MS. LINDA FRANCES: That's when they (*indistinguishable*).

PG WATKINS: Yeah, yeah, we cool, though. Mm-hmm.

MS. LINDA FRANCES: Um... and-and since I... she... that picture appeared in the paper -- I'm going to say three to four years ago when she found those items in the basement of the museum...

PG WATKINS: Mm-hmm.

MS. LINDA FRANCES: And one of the photographs that appeared was my great-grandmother's entryway directly across the street from our beautiful church. And that's how I got in touch with her. I wrote her about that.

PG WATKINS: Oh, wow! That's beautiful.

MS. LINDA FRANCES: Mm-hmm. Which they then...

PG WATKINS (*overlap*): And then you said the...

PG WATKINS: You said it was on Maple Street, right?

MS. LINDA FRANCES: Yes, but-- No, no. That picture is Mullett and St. Aubin's. If you go in-- because I didn't know how readily, erm... how readily accessible the picture was, but if you just type "Mullett" and "St. Aubin's" in Google, a picture will come up with a square apartment building, with about three Black men, nattily dressed, standing around outside of the drug store on the corner. And on the side of that building you see one, two, three doorways. And one of those doorways is the entryway to my great-grandmother's apartment. I had never seen that picture.

PG WATKINS: Oh, wow, that's beautiful. Were you ever able to see the exhibit in person, when it was at the library.

MS. LINDA FRANCES: Heavens, yes. I stood up on the chair when no one else was there so I could take my picture next to where it says 1951, the year of my birth.

PG WATKINS: (*laughs*) Oh, on the-- on the map.

MS. LINDA FRANCES: Right, right. Right on the--- on the big sign, on the side. Right, right. It was the map of the neighborhood...

PG WATKINS: Mm-hmm.

MS. LINDA FRANCES: Because the actual, the actual blocks created did not encompass like, my house.

PG WATKINS: Oh, OK, OK. Where did you live?

MS. LINDA FRANCES (*overlap*): But, but on...

MS. LINDA FRANCES: I lived on Maple between Joseph Campau and Chene.

PG WATKINS: Oh, OK, right. Mm-hmm.

MS. LINDA FRANCES: And so I... I... I went through everything. I'm -- I'm a figure skater. And it just so happens, although I don't know if I wanted to come anyway, but January of 2019, the US Figureskating Championships were held in Detroit, so I was there to watch.

PG WATKINS: Oh, wow.

MS. LINDA FRANCES: And during that time, I had the opportunity to go to the library and see that beautiful exhibit.

PG WATKINS: Yes, awesome. OK, good. I'm so glad you got to see it in person. That's so special.

MS. LINDA FRANCES: Oh, yes, it was beautiful. I even took a picture -- I have a picture, corner of Lafayette and... I forgot what the other... I... 'cause I had to send it to someone last night, 'cause they didn't actually live on, um, Black Bottom. I met them when we moved to the East Side. So I was telling them about the Black Bottom (laughs) Project, and they said, "I thought we were the East Side. I didn't know that was Black Bottom." And I'm like, "It was at the time."

PG WATKINS: (*laughs*)

MS. LINDA FRANCES: So I sent her a picture of the bottom of the display, the way you had the box set up, at the bottom was the streets written...

PG WATKINS: Right, right...

MS. LINDA FRANCES: So I sent her a picture of that. Mm-hmm.

[[00:03:00]] PG: Oh, wow. That's awesome. So, erm... Where did you say you moved to after y'all left Black Bottom, or the Black Bottom area?

LF: Moved to Holcomb and Vernor.

PG: Holcomb and...

LF: ...which is farther out east. Holcomb and Vernor.

PG: Mm-hmm. OK, yeah, that's... OK, cool. I'm so excited to hear more about what you want to share. I, so... I guess just to formally start us off, I just wanna say... Again, my name is PG Watkins. I co-founded and am currently the director of Black Bottom Archives. Erm... and... I appreciate you taking the time to do this interview. There's just a little bit of kinda, like, information I gotta say at the top of the interview. Erm... just for the record-- Like, it's gonna be transcribed. And so I just need to make sure it's OK.

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: So my name is PG Watkins, your name is Linda Frances. Correct?

LF: Yes, "Frances" with an "e". F-R-A-N-C-E-S.

PG: OK. Um... And the... today is May 23rd, 2020, and we are doing this interview over the phone, or really over Zoom. But you're calling--

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: And I'm ... on the computer.

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: Um, and though... If we were in person, I would have you sign this release form, um, and, I'm going to send it to you. I meant to send it to you, um, in my email yesterday.

LF: In the email.

PG: Yeah.

LF: You... Feel free to do that. I get these type of things all the time with my figure skating.

PG: OK, awesome. So yes, I'll definitely send you, um, a copy of the release form...

LF (*overlap*): Mm-hmm.

PG: ...and essentially, but essentially what it says is that we're gonna be using this as a part of our collection, historical collection about Black Bottom. And it'll be used maybe for research purposes or for educational purposes through the website. Um... as I said, it's being recorded and it'll be transcribed... um... and we'll only use... It'll only be used by Black Bottom Archives, and if it's used by anyone else it'll be through us, like, through the Digital Archive and maybe, for other purposes if it's research, educational.

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: So...

LF (*overlap*): Which you approve, then.

PG: Right, exactly. Exactly. Yep. And, and, so, essentially, er... Like I said, I'm gonna send it to you so you could read it. But it's... That's really what it is, and it's just getting your consent to being interviewed and being recorded, and for the information you share to be used in that way.

LF: OK.

PG: And so if I could... I mean, I... wonder... Do you feel like you're able to give verbal consent right now or would you like to review the form before--

LF: I'm... I'm... I'm.... At the same time I'm talking to you, I'm trying (*indistinguishable*) Trying to get into my computer at the same time. I think I'm OK giving verbal consent conditional if I read it and find anything I can't sign. I don't know if that works for you.

PG: That, that works just fine. And, erm...

LF: OK.

PG: I definitely do, you know... wanna....

LF: How do you say that? "Contingent... contingent on approval", yeah.

PG: Right. OK, cool. That's fine by me. I definitely, erm...

[[00:06:00]] PG: Er... am open to you, you know, reading it and deciding that you don't wanna share, or even, you know...

LF: Mm-hmm...

PG: If you're reading it and just deciding, you know, actually, "I'd rather not..." you know, "I said some things I didn't want to be shared," or whatever it is. Um, and any time throughout this conversation you can also feel free just to ... to stop us, um, and, you know...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: We'll do what we need to do. As I shared, um, if... So usually I do these in person, and so, you know, when you're together with someone, you... conversation can easily go, you know, couple of hours. Um, and that might not be the case--

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: --uh, on the phone here today. We might not be able to talk for as long as, er, was originally the idea. And that's fine as well. Like, you know, whenever you're done, we can stop.

LF: Oh, no, it's... it's fine with me 'cause you told me what time you needed and I, and I set it -- made sure I set aside that time... if... if you need something you need to discuss.

PG: OK, awesome, so... great. So, yeah, we'll see... we'll see where the conversation takes us.

LF: Mm-hmm...

PG: Um, again, thank you so much for your time, so, um... You've already been sharing some... dropping some gems about just, you know, your relationship to Black Bottom, um, where you lived, and I would just love to know more about, er... just your, what... Yeah, how did you... Like, where did you live? Did you live with your parents? Did you live with your grandmother? We'd love to just know about your experience there. Um, and, you know, as you talk, I'm gonna ask follow-up questions but we'd just love to just hear about...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: ...how you experienced Black Bottom, when you were there, and how old were you?

LF: I was born on Chestnut Street between Joseph Campau and Chene in 1951. I don't remember that, but that's where I was born. And, well, my first memories are exactly one block over on Maple Street between Kercheval -- pardon me, I'm saying Kercheval. Er... It was Chestnut between Chene and Joseph Campau. And then my grandmother moved. I lived in my grandmother's home, and she moved one block over... over toward Jefferson, so... whatever direction that is. She moved one block over to Maple street and my memories are all on Maple street, between Joseph Campau and Chene.

PG: Oh, sorry, I... I muted myself. Um, OK, thank you. So, uh... When did you all move from Black Bottom? So how long did you live there?

LF: I ... I ... I can... I have a... I moved from Black Bottom in 1960. In the... somewhere between, probably the summer of 1960, I left Black Bottom...

PG: Mm. OK. And-- And, erm...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: I'm always just curious, erm... Did you... when you saw the map, did you agree with where kind of Black Bottom -- the neighborhood -- was, or -- ? Where did you -- ?

LF: Well, you have to remember that, as, as a child... erm...

[[00:09:00]] LF: Now they have something there called, what, what was it -- Paradise Valley or something like that?

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: I totally agree. I lived right in the heart of Black Bottom. People would point out that Joe Louis lived there, Mayor Young lived there. I lived right in the heart of that area. And my life was defined by... my... my family life, my church, and my school, and everything is smack in the middle of Black Bottom. And it was a heartbreaking experience because, um, in 1960 when -- I had always lived there. And in 1960 I moved to the East Side. And my church continued on, so I still would visit there on the weekends to go to church. But my... but living there, going to school there-- Actually, it came at a unique break, because right on my street-- Has anyone mentioned to you Brownson elementary school?

PG: Bronson?

LF: B-R-O-W-N-S-O-N.

PG: Erm... no. No they haven't.

LF: Brownson Elementary School was a school from grade kindergarten to the third grade, and it was on Maple Street between Joseph Campau and Chene. And it was directly in the middle of the block, direct-- almost directly in front of my home. So, at the time-- 1960 marked when I graduated from the third grade. So if... at that time, I would've normally moved on to Dustville

School, also in the Black Bottom, but at that time, I left the neighborhood. So all my memories would end and all... Most of my time in the neighborhood ended when I started-- completed that school?

PG: Oh, OK. Where did you end up going to school, um, when you moved to the East Side?

LF: Scripps.

PG: Oh, OK. Mm-hmm.

LF: That's not Black Bottom.

PG: No, no.

LF (*overlap*): That's East Side.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: That's East Side. Never lived in the Black Bottom again. Never went to school in the Black Bottom again.

PG: Erm... what was the name of your church?

LF: Greater Macedonia Baptist Church.

PG: Oh, OK. Are you -- Do you still -- Are you still a member there? Is that -- ?

LF: No, no. No. I have not lived in Detroit for over forty years.

PG: Oh! Wow, OK. Where do you live?

LF: I live... I'm five miles from Times' Square. I live in New Jersey.

PG: (*laughs*) Oh, wow. OK. I did notice you said, er... when you were visiting Detroit for the figure skating competition...

LF: For the figure skating-- yes.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: And I... and I come there usually every February, and I -- and I chose this event so I would have a chance to come there in February. I graduated from Cass Tech.

PG: Oh, wow!

LF: I graduated from East-- Eastern Michigan... And then I, erm, worked there some years, then I moved to the east coast. I always visited New York. I liked New York from the time I was a little girl...

**[[00:12:00]]** LF: but I -- Detroit is my home. But I've always visited there, and every February in Wyandotte, Michigan, is an adult figure-skating competition at the Benjamin Yack arena. So...

PG (*overlap*): Mm-hmm.

LF: I come back for that every year to visit my friends and the few family members I have remaining here. Mm-hmm.

PG: Wow! OK, yeah. I went to Cass Tech too... (*laughs*)

LF: Mm-hmm. But I bet you it was the new one. The new one or old one?

PG: No, yeah, the new one, but the--

LF: Yeah, I went to the old one.

PG: Yeah, the old one was still standing, erm, when I went, but it... it got--

LF: Did they take it down, say, 2016?

PG: Yes. Er... yeah... I'll look at my...

LF (*overlap*): Is that when they took it down?

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: Because I did the Detroit half-marathon... Wait, I'm gonna go... Yeah, that would be about right. I did... '17... '18... I did the Detroit half-marathon in 2015. 'Cause I never had a chance to know who walked across Ambassador Bridge and through the tunnel back to Detroit.

PG (*overlap*): (*chuckles*)

LF: So that's why I did the half-marathon. And I do recall when I did it, I -- the only place -- I knew the park and walked down to the Fort area where the race started -- was around Cass Tech Masonic Temple. So I parked the area I knew. And then when I came out of the tunnel, I wanted to turn right 'cause I had left Detroit living on East Jefferson on the Waterfront. Before it was all built up down there, I lived in one of the buildings there. And the man said, "Excuse me, miss, where're you going?" I said, "I'm going to my home. It's--" He said, "You're half-marathon. The other direction, please." And I said to myself...

PG (*overlap*): Ooh! (*laughs*)

LF: "That's OK. I'll be back." So the next year I came back as a FULL marathon runner in 2017... 2016? ... 2017, and they had torn down Cass Tech.

PG: Yes. Mm-hmm...

LF: I was so shocked. When I went over there to park -- I parked where, my same little place, on one of those streets between Cass and Masonic Temple. And, but... the... the School building was gone. Somewhere in those years, the building was gone.

PG: Yeah... it was out there for...

LF (*overlap*): I went to Cass Tech.

PG: Yeah, they tore it down after I graduated...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: Erm... but yeah, that's... I mean, it's a small world... (*laughs*) It's a small... erm...

LF: Yes, it is a very small world. So I -- I've always visited there. My Maple Brown -- and when you write to me, it's Maple Brown 1. That means, "Maple Street, Brownson Elementary, my first school.

PG: Oh, wow! OK. I didn't know that...

LF (*overlap*): It's not as --

LF: Mm-hmm...

PG: OK. Erm...

LF: It's not as ... It's not as some man asked me, "Is that your skin color?"

PG: (*laughs*)

LF: No.

PG: Wow. Erm... what... So you went to Brownson Elementary School. Erm... What do you remember doing for fun? Do you have memories of what you would, like, where you would play...?

LF (*overlap*): Well, on the side of Brownson...

LF: On the side of Brownson, closest to Chene, was a swing set.

[[00:15:00.01]] LF: They had swings and, and... Actually, that's why my house was too close to the school yard because we'd go over and swing and pump those swings and you know when the chain would jump when the swing went too high?

PG: (*laughs*)

LF: We had the little sets, we were in the big girl sets 'cause we were eight or -- seven or eight and when those chains would jerk I would hear a yell across from the street to slow down.

PG: (*laughs*)

LF: And-- and the other thing, the thing I did, is -- if you walked up Chene, and I wanna say toward Mullett, walked up Chene on Maple toward Mullett, there was a penny candy store. We



spent a lotta time walking from home to church, church on Mullett and St. Aubin, and a lotta times I get penny candy in that little penny candy store on Chene, probably Chene and Shine -- Chene near... Shine street. Um, I had a little friend, and there were no hills in that neighborhood, but I can remember a million days that I would -- it felt like a million days that I would be outside in the snow either pulling my sled up and down the street in the winter or my red wagon up and down the street up and down the street in the summer.

PG: *(laughs)* Mm-hmm. Uh--

LF: And something unique -- go ahead, you were going to ask something.

PG: No, no, please, go ahead.

LF: Something unique we used to do in the summer -- my grandmother, um, would take leaves, we had had tons of leaves. In our backyard, we had a great arbor. We had a great arbor that you could move into on the side of, that you could sit on, you could walk underneath it, but next door the neighbors had an apple tree, and that was my number one way to get in trouble, is that, um, the neighbor would call and say, "She's on the fence trying to get into the apple tree" 'cause we had to put one foot on the fence first.

PG: *(laughs)*

LF: So we loved the apple tree -- it was *our* apple tree, but you really needed a little hoist up on the next door neighbor's fence. And both their-- their yard and our -- the yard from the arch was just really quite sensational. And they were a si-- an older, single couple. They were very, you know -- They were, had a beautiful yard, and in our backyard, we had our fruits and things, and it was just very nice. But what we -- I'm saying that because the backyard was so leafy that my grandmother would take a long -- what looked to be like a switch, and we'd sit on the porch with my friends and take all of the leaves off of them and put them in a basket. Then you get a thin branch, and you put two leaves almost together and so you'd stick that branch, a little piece of that branch through, so that they hooked. You know what I'm talking about? Like you -- like you make a needle, uh, needle-thread loop in. And we'd end up with long strings of leaves hooked together by these pieces of, um, thin branch, and we'd put 'em around our necks and walk up and down the streets pretending we had a little fashion show.

PG: *(laughs)* That's cute...

LF: So I did that.

[[00:18:00]] LF: And we visited with friends. We used to -- the neighbors next door, they really didn't keep a good lawn, but they kept a clean yard, and we used to get there and try to learn to do the cha-cha-cha, all of us in the front yard, trying to do the cha-cha-cha, to those old, you know, those old Sam Cooke and those old records in the fifties...

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: ...type o' thing. I spent a lot of time listening to music. We had, um, Dinah Washington, Dakota Staton, Frank Sinatra, Pajama Game -- all those old types, all that type of music and things, I spent a lot of time, a lot of time listening to. And I think one of the traditions in the Black neighborhood, was as you got ready for church on Sunday morning, there would be music

on the radio, um, you know, like the [Six Feet Hummingbirds?], people like that singing spiritual. And I always remember listening to that while I was getting my hair fixed for -- for church on Sundays.

PG: *(laughs)*

LF: Shine those patent-leather shoes with the old biscuit. I don't know why that was what was done, but it was.

PG: With the old biscuit?

LF: Yeah! It's a piece of biscuit, you'd shine the -- you, you'd really shine up those patent-leather shoes for church.

PG: Oh, wow! OK.

LF: I don't know why.

PG: *(laughs)* Um--

LF *(overlap)*: I also recall--

LF: Oh, go ahead, I'm--

PG: No, please. I love this. Continue.

LF *(overlap)*: With -- one more thing--

LF: With Christmas, back then, one of the things that-- you know, I-- this year, I'm-- I was-- I'm 68 last year, I'll be 69 at the end of -- WAY at the end of this year. But 68. And it's just-- you know... We had such a wonderful Black community, you didn't really think about anything else. We knew-- we knew white people. My grandmother was a domestic worker. She did various other-- a lot of other interesting things too. Um, Senator Bristol Bryant was on the radio then, and she was one of his supporters. And that was a nice group of women who, you know, we, um, supported him, went to meetings -- very politically active with Jer-- Mayor Jerry Kavanaugh. I'm still politically active, and that's probably due to my upbringing. She was a precinct delegate-- she was always involved in things like that: Eastern star... um, you know, at our church we had all types of people: Um, people... domestics, um, doctors, lawyers. Um... There was a plane that went down when I moved to New York. I... I moved to Boston first, then New York. In '84 a plane went down flying... some- I think to Seoul. And eventually I think it came up the Russians went up there and shot that plane down. They thought they were spying. And they called me from Detroit to tell me that the woman I know since I lived on Maple street, Judge Jessie Slaton, was on that plane. ... I couldn't believe it. I went out to the garbage and got the newspaper.

[[00:21:00]] LF: She was flying... they had her flying to Korea, for some type of award she was getting. But...

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: That was the type o' church that we had. It was such a center of Black community that you had *everybody* there.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: All sorts of people were part, so you had an opportunity growing up to... to see *all* possibilities.

PG: Yes.

LF: You know, your factories and things were so vibrant then... you had a good job working at the factory. Heck, you were middle-class, you lived beautifully. So... so there was, er... so much, the neighborhood was so rich. The people you met... one of my schoolteachers, um, Mrs. Russell... She was a lady from my church. She was a substitute teacher, she'd come and substitute sometimes. 'Cause... so, you couldn't be bad at school, 'cause Mrs. Russell was there. But, then... just... You was so surrounded by people in your community, like the way -- a lot of times, the way we look at things now, we see that outsiders come into our community... We always wanna thank everyone for helping us, but sometimes their motives are questioned, and sometimes they're not quite as inspirational as we'd like them to be.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: But during that time, because you saw all types of people... Black -- I had Black teachers at that school, white teachers at that school, people from my church, people I knew came to give booster shots at the school when we needed them. You were just always surrounded by people that you knew.

PG: Wow, yeah, that... um... I hear that when I, when I talk to folks about Black Bottom, just about how tight-knit it was and how...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: Just like, what you're talking about, you know, the folks you went to church with are the same folks you see at school and that you hang out with.

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: Um, what about -- ? I mean, where -- OK, so I have a couple of different questions... but, one of the...

LF: OK. Mm-hmm.

PG: Um, where... What was your relationship to other parts of the city while you were living in Black Bottom? Like, did y'all ever go other places or did you find everything you needed in the neighborhood?

LF: I'm... I'm... I'm letting my mind scurry over, and... because... When I was born... my memory goes back pretty far, but I was born '51. I could read and write before I went to school, so that means before '56 I was quite vibrant... and I probably didn't go to school 'til '57, 'cause my birthday was after the time they do the cutoff for the year. And I say that because we had a

variety of things there... On the corner of Maple and Chene, we had a grocery store, Mr. Weber's grocery store. Every type of grocery you could want was in there. But the way people purchased at that time was different. For instance, there-- like... You have drawers in a desk, there were these drawers that came-- Not... not sliding out like this, but more like, eh, um... at an angle, coming out... not coming...

[[00:24:00]] LF: ...out straight but coming out at an angle. You could go and buy a bag of sugar, open it up and take a little, take a little, erm... I-- I-- it's not a shovel, you know? The scooper. You get a bag of sugar, you get a bag of flour, what-- like that if you needed it, emergency. Everything you needed in Mr. Weber's store on the corner of Maple and Chene. But if you went to Joseph Campau and walked up a few blocks to Jay, I think around Joseph Campau and Jay, you'd have the Big Three Market. Big Three Market was like going to like, a... well, I can't say Target, because they didn't have... It was a food store. But I-- like, I got my first hula hoops in the Big Three Store.

PG: Mm-hmm. Not...

LF: Oh, yes? So now... and... and I'm hesitating because a lot of the furnishings were already in the house. And I don't remember any new furnishing coming in other than -- originally, when I was a tiny girl, we literally had an icebox.

PG: Mm-hmm..

LF: A tall, wooden box and a place they could put a piece of ice. And the man would come and I don't think we had this very long in our home, but I remember when the truck used to come down the street, and he had these big -- they weren't tongs, but big things, like picks, and they caught the ice block on each side and they'd bring it into your house or whatever and I guess that-- that-- that was the meaning of the ice box, because one of the two things I remember coming into our home was a refrigerator and a dryer. But when you ask me where those things came from, I don't know -- they-- they could've been local furnishing stores, there could've been, you know, local stores like [Getaround?], you know -- some things are on the fringe of the Black Bottom, or I should say the fringe of the Black Bottom, because... There were people we would visit and we would-- when-- when we went out that way, when I got off the bus, we went by the Superior Potato Chip Factory. So.. so... the Wonder Bread, Wonder Bread Factory was there. So yes, there were factories, and I think there were furnishing stores on the big street not far from us, so I think there were places in that area where you could buy things.

PG: Mm-hmm. And you mostly, I mean... your experience and what you remember is mostly just walking to get what you needed, like walking to the store...

LF: Oh, yeah, walking to the store, that's... No... no one... I may have been the first female in my family to drive, no one really drove. And you didn't need any driving... We- we brought all our groceries home... That-- That's not quite right. My grandmother had a boyfriend, and maybe they brought -- went and got a lot of groceries and brought them home and I just don't remember that. But the supermarket was, walk-- it was like, walking distance. But maybe, you know, maybe we drove and brought those-- those items home at that time, but I was too small to remember that, 'cause I was outta there by the time I was about eight-and-a-half.

PG: Right.

LF: I no longer lived in the Black...

[[00:27:00]] LF: ...Bottom.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: But, and-- and I-- I definitely remember clothes.

PG: You remember what?

LF: Going down... Clothes. Going down to, like, Hudson's. I have pictures with Santa in Hudson's, and clothes from Crowley's. Crowley's and Hudson's were big stores all the way through my high school years.

PG: Mm.

LF: So I, yes. I always had clothes from stores. Like, I remember at nine, having the clothes for -- clothes from [Shufflehawks?]. I don't think -- I don't have to say I don't think -- I know that doesn't exist anymore. 'Cause when I was there for figure skating, I stayed at St. Regis, over by the General Motors building.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: You know where I'm talking about?

PG: Yeah, downtown.

LF: No, that's not downtown...

PG: Oh, the... St. Regis is on Grand--

LF: Grand River and Woodward.

PG: Right, Grand Boulevard. Yeah.

LF: Great, thank you. Grand Boulevard. And for the life of me... You know the parking lot there by-- by the St. Regis, that parking lot on Woodward...

PG: Yes.

LF: And the Boulevard? Stevie Wonder married his first wife in a fabulous wedding in a fabulous restaurant where that parking lot stood.

PG: (*chuckles*)

LF: I couldn't make anybody believe me. And when I was waiting for your little trolley-car that would take me from the Boulevard down to-- uh, is it Caesar's Arena, where the figure-skating was?

PG: Uh, OK, yeah.

LF: What's that called?

PG: It's-- The new one is called--

LF: The Little Caesar's?

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: The Little Caesar's, that's where the figure-skating was. A old man was at that stop. I was asking some people-- ladies, from the neighborhood... what was there. Nobody could think of what was there. And he gave me the name of the restaurant: He said, "That was the Mauna Loa."

PG: Oh...

LF: I think that was the-- huh?

PG: I was just saying, "Wow, that's..." You see, that's... It's so easy how history gets lost and it has to be remembered, like, OK...

LF: Yeah, I mean, now, nobody... No one ever knew anything had stood there, because it's a... it's a parking lot. But that-- so-- I-- so-- I can-- so-- All of the things... Stevie Wonder used to come and visit people in... in the neigh-- He knew someone in the neighborhood, you know, not so far from us... But I'm just saying we-- That's not--That's not quite right. That's more East Side. That's not true. That was after I left the Black Bottom. But, um-- Ev- Everything we needed... And remember, when people are domestics and things like that, a lot of times, things they bring home are things they got from work or things they got through work...

PG: Mm-hmm...

LF: So I-- So I-- you know, I can't tell you, you know-- I know there was a hardware store-- now my memory goes to that. As we walked up Chene toward Mullett to go to church, there was a hardware store-- store that sold everything up through bicycles, probably, you know, th- that's what I would say up to, 'cause I was a kid. But probably pots, pans, a- anything anybody wanted. They might walk around that way.

[[00:30:00]] LF: There were restaurants. I used to-- you know, regularly go to a local drug store, and- and- have a, um, be treated to a milkshake there. But-- but you knew everybody, all the big-- Well, not all the business were run from-- by Black people. Mr. Weber was not Black. I don't think the person who owned the, um, [Landis Peters?] was Black, but there was a mixture, all of 'em, which-- You knew everybody.

PG: Mm-hmm. Yeah, um... I would love to hear more about your family. I heard you, I mean, you talked a bit about your grandmother and the work that she did. Would love to hear more about her, about the other folks in your family who you lived with or were around.

LF: Well, I, you know, I tend to cling to the fact that I lived with my grandmother, because I'm just going to say-- and I'm not that... I'm trying to think of what part of this belongs to history. At the time I was born, my mother was not married, and that's how I came to live with my

grandmother. And that was the fifties. And that was not a -- um, that wasn't something that was done as readily as it is today.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: As a matter of fact, no relation to what is done today. When my mother became pregnant, she went to the church-- we used to have church meetings, that was a big part of my childhood. I would hide in the room and listen-- overhear-- listen, try to overhear what-- what they had argued about at the church meeting that night. Because you had covenants at the church... and they would argue about the different rules... It was huge! It was huge... It was like watching a political convention, to me, as a child. And my understanding is that when my mother became pregnant with me, she went to the church meeting and apologized to the church that this had happened. But I was always embraced at the church... But there were not many children at the church who were not with their mother and father, who were married, because back in the fifties, that is what was done.

PG: Mm-hmm... Mm-hmm... Yeah, it was much more traditional-- like, strict... roles around--

LF: It was-- It was-- It was-- Yeah, you-- you-- you said the word right. I can't even imagine going before chu-- church boards, and-- but it was very strict, and I will tell you my mother... My-- my-- my grandmother came east first. My mother stayed down south with my grandmother's parents. And so, when she came east-- when she came up north... I'm trying to think how to say this... When-- When they all came up north, my mother was the only child in the family who was sixteen years-- at least sixteen years. I'm gon-- I'm... I'm gonna put that... I'm gonna say that number, I hope that's about right. She was the only child in the family for that long, because the reason they came up north... Some worked as domestics for people out in the...

[[00:33:00]] LF: ...Grosse Pointe area, some worked in the airplane factory. We had one child: She had everything. She had-- She went to Wayne State University for a little while back in the day. And she was one of the first people to have a really good job-- a (*indistinguishable*) job with the city of Detroit, and she continued working for the city and the state in some capacity until her retirement.

PG: Oh, wow. Hmm... (*pause*) Erm...

LF: But I'm -- but-- but I'm just saying, that's the way it worked back in the day...

PG (*overlap*): Right.

LF: They did-- you know-- and, and, bec-- I think because... her mo-- my grandmother was so respected. Uh, her mother came up, my great-grandmother. They were all, all of these people, so much a part of the community... I think that's why there was never a problem, you know? I continued on a very strong path, as she had, and that's just-- you know-- that's just the way it was...

PG: Mm-hmm...

LF: Now, I'll-- I'll say this: I'm an attorney now, but one of the things, I think, that led me in this direction... and this is an interesting fact about Black-- at least to me, you may already know

this-- This reminds of when, in law school, I wanted to join the Jane-- I met someone in the Jane Austen Society. I don't know if you ever read Jane Austen?

PG: Yeah!

LF: But in the book, the things that happened, you know-- They couldn't leave the-- They couldn't leave the land to the daughter, it had to go to the son. So when I got ready to join Jane Austen, they said, "Oh, my God, we need you to write an article for our newspaper." I said, "OK, I'm gonna write about this and that." And you know what they said? "Uh, please don't write about that. We've heard that a thousand times." So I may be telling you things that you already know, but they seem new to me. Um... So many people, as I told you, they came up from down south. They made good money. They did well. But-- when they began to hit age 65 and need that social security, they didn't have any paperwork. My great-grandmother was very smart. Uh, she went to school down south, and she continued her education and graduated from Eastern Michigan... pardon me... yeah! From Eastern High School in the sixties. I can't tell exactly when, but she graduated from Eastern-- Eastern at that-- er-- at that time. And I'm saying that... I gotta-- I gotta really focus on whether she finished eighth grade or the full twelve. She was very well-read, very well-travelled... One of the things that led her to go back to school is that... I... I write a whole lot, and my write-- handwriting is -- It's very scribbled... I'm not the best writer. She says, "You need to learn to type." So she went to Eastern and took a typing class, and back then, you had to learn to type, not looking at the comp-- not look-- We didn't have computers... not looking at the typewriter. When you see the old spindle pull, they're all-- all their eyes are over the side looking at what the person wrote, and their hands are clearly typing without looking at the keys.

[[00:36:00]] LF: She went back to Eastern High School, and as she learned that, she taught that to me.

PG: Oh, wow, OK. Um, where did she move from? Like, I'm always curious about... in terms of migration, like, where folks fro-- in the south...

LF: My-- my grandmother on Mullett and St. Aubin... Fir-- first, before Mullett and St. Aubin, she actually lived on St. Aubin. When Greater Macedonia Church was on the corner of St. Aubin and Mullett, she lived on that street, in what had been at one time a funeral home. *(pause)* So that meant... You know how you go into a funeral home, and you got people on the left, people on the right...? Our home on that first floor, and I had to be *very*, very small then... I'm gonna say three. She lived on-- her-- her house was... You walked around the back-- You could-- You-- House like a "U". A "U". It was like a "U". And someone else lived-- we-- she lived there for a while, but then she got the apartment on Mullett, and the picture you see on Mullett... I was focusing on this today... I'm gonna say it had to be a cold-water flat, 'cause I remember heating water, heating, um, buckets of water to put in the bathtub, and I know I used to hear the word "cold-water flat". Maybe I'm wrong... maybe that was just one... something that happened one day. But -- but-- that-- She had a nice house there, and sometimes I-- when I got a little old enough to walk, I would walk with my girlfriend and we'd walk over to her place on Mullett. And she was a very, like I say, well-travelled, from down south... By the time she moved up north, my great-grandmother [Constance?] had passed away, so she was a single lady, and she-- she felt very strongly about her church, her community... I went to a lot of funerals at Greater Macedonia Baptist Church. And back then, the Black-- well, I don't wanna say the Black funeral director of choice, 'cause I don't wanna leave-- leave out Swanson, but I don't remember Swanson when I was a little girl. With-- at our church, the funeral undertaker was CW Morris --



M-O-R-R-I-S -- and he was a very tall, big man, like a-- like a basketball player 20 years later with a little more weight. And his wife was equally as tall, a light-complexioned woman, hair pulled back in a bun, and they would walk down that aisle with a look on their face like, "We could not be more sorry for what has happened here today." And those were the undertakers everyone chose. And my great-grandmother felt strongly -- when someone in the community died, you honored them by going to see the family, going to the wake, or going to the funeral. So as a result, I went to a (*laughs*) lot of funerals with her, and it had to be before I started school. 'Cause that's what-- I would stay with her. My grandmother was a domestic, and I (*indistinguishable*) somewhere, pulled somewhere, and I would, during the day, if I was with my great- ... great-grandmother...

[[00:39:00]] LF: I'd at- attend the funerals and things with her.

PG: Oh, wow, yeah, that's, erm... I definitely resonate with that. I... grew up... er... with a family that... er... Well, most of my family is fr- ... lives in Tennessee, but my parents moved, er... to Detroit, when they got married, and...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: Um, I-- I remember just spending a lot of time in church, at funerals, and...

LF: May I ask how old are you?

PG: I'm... I mean, I'm... (*laughs*) I'm 28.

LF: Oh, OK, so... you're... then this--- You mean your parents just came up north?

PG: They came up north in 1980... I had older parents...

LF: OK.

PG: Erm... they were... My mom was, um, thirty- ... thirty-something when she had ... when she had us. Er...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: But yeah, they moved up in 1980. So, you know, we-- I don't really have... Well, what I-- you know... I don't have, uh, generations of family history in Detroit-- erm...

LF: See my mother went to-- You know Duffield?

PG: Yes.

LF: My mother went to Duffield... and she graduated from Mill--

PG (*overlap*): Oh, wow.

LF: She graduated from Miller High School.

PG: So... was your grandmother or great-grandmother moved to Detroit?

LF: My grandmother moved to Detroit first.

PG: OK. Then wha-- was she--?

LF (*overlap*): Then -- she--

LF: Then my mother came up to live with her.

PG: Where did she live-- ?

LF (*overlap*): But that's...

(*Pause*)

PG: --in the south?

LF (*overlap*): Pardon me?

PG: Where in the South di-- ?

LF (*overlap*): Pardon me.

(*Pause*)

PG: Where in the south did she live before moved to Detroit?

LF: They came from Milan, Tennessee.

PG: Oh!

LF: But I'm gonna tell you-- Is that where your family's from?

PG: Well, my family's from Columbia, Tennessee. More-

LF: I know nothing about the south, and I'm going to the south for three things: Figure-skating, tennis, and golf. And then I am back on the plane. We never went down south. I will not go down there now unless it's figure-skating, tennis, or golf.

PG: Understood.

LF: I know nothing about the south.

PG: What did you-- ? Um... When-- when did you start skating?

LF: I didn't start skating until '88. Debi Thom- I never even really watched it. Debi Thomas was on-- in the Olympics. I lived in New York City at that time, and on the front of the paper, Debi had saved a beautiful short program, as I now know it to be called. And you know how tacky these New York papers are: They divided it down to tabloid space-- Well, you know, they're daily-- They divided it down the center. There was Debi in one of her poses from her program

pointing to the left, and on the other side was Katerina Witt, in her khaki costume. She had too many feathers and the panties were too tiny-- they made her add a few more feathers. Debi was skating in that one-piece, tight black thing that they outlawed after that for many, many years, and -- and the New York paper said, Debi said, "I got something for you." And on Katerina-- her -- her-- they caught her pointing back...

[[00:42:00.01]] LF: ...saying, "I got something for you too." And I'm like, "I gotta watch this." And that was '88, and I watched the Olympics, and -- and-- the next-- then after that, the guy I dated, I said, every time he wanted to do something on Saturday, I'm li-- "Uh, uh... excuse me. Skating's comin' on. I can't go anywhere now." And he finally got tired of it. In '88 he said, "Look. Here. Four lessons on the fi-- figure-skating. Go meet some of the same people, 'cause I'm not gonna be watching this all the time." And that's how I got involved with skating.

PG: Oh, wow! Wow...

LF: I knew no- I knew nothing about-- I knew nothing about-- Are you at your computer?

PG: I am.

LF: OK. I knew nothing about, um, the skating, um, short program. I -- I went to that rink. The per-- I never had-- I had never had figure-skate-- er-- figure-skates for my feet. One time. Now my friends would go, but I didn't go because I had very long feet, and I did not feel that they would have skates that fit my feet. Only the signed-off or real skaters-- their skates are always much smaller than the shoe size, because they have to fit very tightly and snugly when we jump and do things. So anyway, that's how I got involved with skating. And-- and-- and, for instance, I skated, for many years, labor-day weekend, I'd skate-- I would fly to Atlanta and skate in Duluth, outside of Atlanta, Georgia.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: I-- I'm-- You know, I go down south for the figure-skating thing. South Carolina, we used to increase [?] -- I think it's-- No, probably North Carolina. Greensboro or something like that. I would-- I would go down there and skate and things like that. But, um, I don't-- I-- To visit... My first real visit, last year... One of my friends passed away in Huntsville, Alabama, and I went down to, um... We had a luncheon, friends' luncheon, for her. I was actually supposed to do their marathon la-- at the end of-- last fall. And I cancelled because she had passed away. *(pause)* Now, are you one of these four pictures I'm looking at? "Watch: The Power of Storytelling"?

PG: Erm... Yes, I am.

LF: You are? Which one?

PG: I am... Well, I dunno what picture you're looking at, but I had, er... have... probably had my hair in a bun, and had on a black t-shirt, sitting in front of a window.

LF: No, no... I -- The only person here with a black t-shirt on, [broken ladies have lots?], and it says, "Watch: The Power of St--" Oh! It say-- Oh! Wait a minute. You don't have on sunglasses, do you?

PG: No.

LF: No, I'm not-- These things are not-- These are not you. I'm looking at-- I'm looking at that email you sent to me. Er... are you at hello@blackbottomarchives? Is that you?

PG: Um, yeah! That's -- that's our-- That is our email and so I-- Hold on, I'm gonna pull it up, I know what email you're talking about. I am-- I'm on that picture, though.

LF: You are?

PG: Yeah. Erm... on this "Relived: The Power of Storytelling" newsletter?

LF: Wait a minute...

*(from [[00:45:00]] to [[00:46:28]] is a tangent about emails)*

LF: I have not one iota of interest in family history. Absolutely none. My whole world is and remains my grandmother.

PG: Mmm.

LF: And I can tell you that part of that time period is the way the telephones was set up. She had family down south, so by the time I was born, her immediate family all lived up north in Detroit.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: But her brother and his wife would come to my grandmother's house. Her sister lived maybe three miles from us. And they would call the operator at our house and the operator would arrange for all of them to be on the phone speaking to somebody down in Tennessee. So they would do that about once a month or so.

PG: Oh, OK. Yeah. I was interested in what you were sharing about your church and how much time you spent there, about the church meeting, and just curious about how you understand the church's relationship to Black Bottom.

[[00:48:00]] PG: Like, did it do things--?

LF: The church was the main social society in the Black Bottom, and most of the people, as I moved out to the east, a lot of the people who earned more money and moved farther out, they still came to Greater Macedonia Baptist Church. And that church still stands on the corner of Mack and Maxwell. I think if you drive by now the Greater Macedonia Church sign is still there but it has not been in use as a church for many, many years, this is my understanding. On Mack and Maxwell-- that's where they moved from Mullett and St. Aubin. They moved to that area. But the church, it was a social, it was for social engagements of all sorts. One of the people in our church, one of the deacons there, his wife was related to Reverend Martin Luther King. So whenever Reverend Martin Luther King came to church in the sixties -- by that time we were on Mack and Maxwell -- he always came and spoke at our church when he came there.

PG: Oh, wow, that's really cool.

LF: Everyone in the family knew Reverend Franklin and Aretha.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: When I was a little girl, there was one little album, I don't think she had started recording yet, she sang "Precious Lord" on it, and I think everybody wore that album out. Every-- people knew each other. The pianist at my church, Eddie May -- I'm going to guess, Eddie May might be ten years older than I am, because Eddie May at some point worked over at Motown playing once a session. Her aunt was a secretary over there. Everything in the community was related. I had heard my birth mother say they used to go to casinos in Canada, and as part of that party, they might go to see Dinah Washington. They might know Dinah Washington and Brook Benton. Everybody knew each other.

PG: Wow, that's so interesting... 'cuase you just think about the ways that we don't have that type of connection now --

LF: Well, right now, in all fairness, I have to check myself. I still work, I'm not retired, I still work -- I've not retired. You told me you were 28?

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: I work with people who are, like, 40, and they're, like, millennials, and a friend and I -- she's my age -- we were talking the other night about Johnnie Mathis. Well, see, back then, you didn't have all the distractions. Any given night, you and I can take our phone -- we don't even have to go into a computer -- we can take our phone and entertain ourselves for the next six months.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: And never one time see the same show, hear the same song, read the same newspaper or article.

PG: Yeah.

LF: Never even share our points of view, whereas back in the day, you did not have that many TV channels. TVs were new. We had a TV on Maple street.

[[00:51:00]] LF: On Sunday night, *everybody* watched Ed Sullivan, and what my friend and I were talking about is with the Coronavirus, they cancelled Johnny Mathis's concert here. I've never seen Johnny Mathis, but I've loved him since high school. And she was talking about going to see Johnny Mathis, and we were talking about that, and we both remembered when Johnny Mathis, the night he sang "Misty" and he walked out of, like, crowds on Ed Sullivan... This was a big thing. But then, before I was thinking about talking to you, I remember Sunday night-- there would be people who were, like, they were jugglers of some kind. And one of the big things you'd see-- I don't know-- if you had a broom, a pencil, like, six feet tall. They would have plates -- they would literally have glass plates -- circling around. That would be entertainment on a primetime show.

PG: (laughs)

LF: Nobody come to watchin' that now.

PG: Mm-hmm. *(laughs)*

LF: Everybody watched it then-- there was nothing else to watch. When I went through my memory yesterday, I cannot tell you how many times I saw people introduced and that was what they did. They'd be all dressed up in their tuxedos and things, and they'd come out with these sticks, and they'd have things up in the air going round and round and round-- things that you wouldn't even consider to BE entertainment.

PG: *(laughs)*

LF: And they would've been on national *(laughs)* TV! So you know, we all saw when, you know, Richard Kiley was a singer back then, not an actor, we all saw Richard Kiley come on and sing *Man of La Mancha*. We all saw Barbra Streisand of course-- there was nothing else to see! Friday night, there was a wrestling show, everybody looked at wrestling. So to really have some of the views we do about the younger people, not always quite fair, because you have... more options than we ever knew existed.

PG: Mm-hmm. Yeah...

LF: There wasn't -- there was no computer. Even when I got out of college -- I graduated from Eastern in December '73 -- I remember working in the advertising field. And when someone got mad at another person, when I had a program to go into the computer, I would put all my stuff together, send it over -- They'd send me back a stack of cards with little punch-holes on -- Have you ever seen these?

PG: Yeah, I see them at... archives! *(laughs)*

LF: *(laughs)* Well, this is what I'm saying-- you'd have these cards. Those cards were HOLY. Because if they got out of order and one was missing, it was like someone turned off the lights of the east coast. That's what we had. It was different. Everything was different. And I think my interests were shaped by both my birth mother and birth father.

[[00:54:00]] LF: They were in the community, they were very well-educated, they had good jobs, they liked good clothes, you know-- They said, "If you can only buy one pair of shoes-- " I remember being given a little money as a teenager -- we'd moved out of the Black Bottom by then, still in the Black community -- but I had just waste [?] down to Crowley's and bought these beautiful purple leather -- oh, my God, they were so freaky. And my father told me, "Those are nice shoes, but shoes that color are for people who already have ten pair." So I had to take those back and I got the same shoes that were ten. ... Many people in the Black Bottom were so rich in spirit, about their education, about how they presented themselves, about how they presented the community, about how they acted in their community. It was just so rich.

PG: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

LF: I think a lot of my thoughts are shaped by that. And what I was gonna say, that I got away from somehow, what I was telling you about is people turned sixty-five and needed social security. This is what made me realize my interest in law years later. My great-grandmother -- and that's why I was mentioning her education -- she could read, write... When I went to college, Eastern Michigan, and I had to take Spanish class, my Spanish dictionary had a stamp. She used to have-- not stationaries, but she had stamps made from which she'd send envelopes -- she'd

stamp it in the corner with her name and address, so it'd look like a stationary but, you know, she'd done that herself.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: My Spanish-to-English dictionary was a dictionary she had at one of her first homes in Detroit, before I even was born. And nobody knows why she had that -- they said she used to travel to California, nobody knew where she went, but at any rate, when the people in the church, all these prominent people with the fox fur around the collar, a fancy hat, very well-spoken, beautiful home either in the Black Bottom or elsewhere -- When they turned sixty-five, they had no papers to get their social security, and my grandmother and my great-grandmother would talk with people -- I didn't realize then what it was, but later they did confirm to me... They kept the confidence of many people and wrote on their behalf down south to get the documents they needed to get their benefit. 'Cause who wants to tell everyone, "I don't write that well"?

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: "I don't do this that well, I never did that..." And that is what they did, and they did it with complete confidence. And I think when I became older, I was always impressed by that.

PG: Wow, yes. Erm... that made me-- I had a question in my mind and then you made me think about something else... but... erm...

LF: See, now you're...

[[00:57:00]] LF: like me when I'm at the office. I don't mean to feel like an old lady, but when I have something down, I have to scribble it on the paper, because then somebody comes by and it's gone.

PG: Yeah (*laughs*) Yes...

LF: It's gone...

(*Tangent about note-taking from [[00:57:13.07]] to [[00:57:30.27]].*)

LF: I was gonna tell you something else that probably happened commonly with people. My grandmother's sister-- she lived a little farther back in the Black Bottom. She lived on Illinois between Chene and St. Aubin, which would be the next street over. We were between Joseph Campau and Chene, she was between Chene and St. Aubin, and that's-- I loved to travel, and my great-grandmother loves to travel, and I always liked to say the way they taught me to travel is my grandmother walked me to the corner of Maple and put me on the bus and by myself sitting on the front seat by the driver, and he drove up -- it couldn't have been more than three miles. And my aunt was waiting for me there and I got off the bus, and that was my first little trip by myself. But on Illinois, she had a *huge* house. On the first floor, she had a big master bedroom -- she and her husband -- with a walk-in closet. Then they had three smaller bedrooms downstairs, then they had three bedrooms upstairs and one of them was a large one 'cause it was above their master bedroom and it had twin beds in it. And the importance of that house to me-- Well, she came up from the north, she and her husband came up from the north, with white people, to work as domestics, drivers, or whatever, with that family. And those people helped her-- because I don't know how you went about buying property back in that time. Through these interviews you

may know more about that than I did. But they helped her. She saved her money. She purchased that home, and she used it. She had roomers all my life as a little girl. She had a large dining room, she had dinner, they all worked at the factory -- you know, single men. They all had their homes -- I don't know if they still had family down south, 'cause one by one they moved away to other places. And that was the way-- a lot of people had roomers if people came up from the south.

PG: Mmm. Mm-hmm... I was curious if you remember when they started building the freeway through.

LF: That's why we moved out of our home.

PG: Oh, OK.

[[01:00:00]] LF: That is what our area was demolished for.

PG: Oh, wow, OK.

LF: And Maple and Chene to this -- as a matter of fact, I'm gonna say as late as... ten years ago? I could still drive through there -- my best friend continues to live in Detroit -- and I found a Maple street sign. That area stood vacant for years. I'm talkin' about twenty years, thirty years -- where I lived, my home, all the people moved out, before-- That is where our church, and our home were, and I didn't see the things actually built, and I'll be interested if you find anyone who *did* see the things actually built, because we all had to move somewhere else-- either West side, East side, somewhere.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: 'Cause the area became vacant and I never went there anymore after everyone moved away. I visited a friend there, maybe once or twice, but eventually everyone moved away, and that's where the I-75, you know-- or Chrysler. All those beautiful homes over there, um, you know, er... Rivard, all over there.

PG: Mm-hmm...

LF: All those beautiful homes and things. That's where all that was built. We were not there anymore.

PG: Oh, wow. OK. Yeah, I had a sense about where the freeway was in proximity to the streets you were naming, but I wasn't sure about the timeline...

LF: A nice simple piece of property in that corner in that area is Elmwood Cemetery. You know where Elmwood Cemetery is?

PG: Right, yep, I do.

LF: If you go to Elm-- You know how the side of Elmwood Cemetery that faces Jefferson?

PG: Yes.



LF: If you go to the other-- if you would walk along the street, along Mt Elliott, and come to the side of Elmwood Cemetery, farthest from Jefferson, and put your back to Mt. Elliott, stand by the cemetery, all back over in there is where the Black Bottom was.

PG: Oh, so the cemetery wasn't there at the time.

LF: Oh, yes the cemetery was there. A lot of famous people are buried in that cemetery. My father's buried in that cemetery. That cemetery was there.

PG: OK, but yeah, you're saying that that cemetery was the Black--

LF: Elmwood cemetery. I'm just saying if you're trying to think of where the Black Bottom was, that was one of the cornerstones of the Black Bottom area.

PG: Oh, OK. OK. I understand. OK. Yeah, thank you.

LF: And I don't know if -- was Joe Muer still there when you moved to Detroit?

PG: Joe Muer was-- Where, downtown?

LF: Yeah, it was like about Gratiot, Chene, in there somewhere. I think he must have been gone probably when you came up north.

**[[01:03:00]]** PG: Oh, Gratiot and Chene... Yeah, no. I don't remember that. I remember Joe Muer downtown.

LF: Joe Muer's was a separate building on an island. We're not talking about the same place, are we?

PG: OK, no. We're not.

LF: Now I'm looking at Elmwood Cemetery. It was established in 1851. So it was a cornerstone-- it was one of the corner-stones... There's Lewis Cass buried in... I didn't even realize-- Coleman Young is buried in there...

PG: Oh, wow. Yeah, I've been in there couple of times with--

LF: That was the cornerstone of the Black community. Mm-hmm. Why were you in there?

PG: Well, there's a -- I'm on the Board of the James and Grace Lee Boggs Center on the East Side of Detroit, and--

LF: What is it called?

PG: The James and Grace Lee Boggs Center.

LF: Uh-huh...

PG: And, er... It's... We do tours because JAMES and Grace Lee Boggs were philosophers and organizers, like labor organizers, within the Black Power Movement. And so we do tours around

the East Side, just... any significant locations to talk just about the history of the city, the history of James and Grace Lee's relation-- and like, the movements they were a part of. And so one of the stops on there IS Elmwood because of what you're saying, just because of it being a staple in the community. I knew famous people were buried there, and yeah, so it's just a place we talk-- 'cause also... The creek that runs through there, er... which I can't think of--

LF: I don't know the creek. I never went inside living in Detroit as a child.

PG: Oh...

LF: When my-- I never went in there, wasn't a place we really went to. And I'm even curious as to when so many Black people began to be buried there, I do not recall any Black people being buried there when I lived there. But I do know that when-- I know somebody--Young who was buried there, my father was buried there, and it's just, you know... It was one of the cornerstones...

PG: Very.

LF: Of the Black community. Now how old are these-- I don't even know these names, James and Grace Lee Boggs.

PG: James and Grace Lee Boggs-- Well, Grace died in 2015 and she was 100 years old.

LF: Uh-huh.

PG: And James died in 1992 or 1993.

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: I think '92, 'cause that's the year I was born. (*chuckles*)

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: And they were both... Well, James came from...

[[01:06:00]] PG: ...Alabama, moved to Detroit, worked in the factories. Grace was from a Chinese-American immigrant household, lived in New York--

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: --and Chicago, I believe, and then Detroit. But they lived in Detroit on the East Side for decades-- about sixty years...

LF: Where on the East Side did they live?

PG: They lived on Field Street, so... It's right south of Mack and--

LF: Connor area?

PG: No, Grand Boulevard.

LF: See, I-- I'm not familiar. I'm looking at her story now. Holcomb is-- ... Mack does cross Holcomb. I'm trying to think of-- OK. You know where the [Manoogian?] mansion is?

PG: ...Yes, uh-huh.

LF: That's my old neighborhood.

PG: OK.

LF: That's on one side of Jefferson, and as a matter of fact, if you go over there, the river Houze, the Jeffersonian-- all of that is around Holcomb and Jefferson. And I-- That mansion is on one side of Jefferson, and we lived on the other side of Jefferson. That's where we moved to from the Black Bottom.

PG: Yeah.

LF: Um, Rooster Tail I think is still over there.

PG: Rooster Tail is where we had-- (*chuckles*)

LF: That-- Where you had what?

PG: Prom. Our prom.

LF: (*laughs*) Rooster Tail is actually probably one block over from the-- You see, all over there, that's where we moved to from the Black Bottom. And as a matter of fact, I'm not so sure-- My grandmother was a domestic for people who lived over by the Mayor's mansion, and I don't know why we didn't wind up living out there in that area.

PG: Mmm.

LF: But that's where we moved to, so no... They were a little-- Were they farther off from there?

PG: Yeah, they were just a little bit... Like, you know, they were up at Mack, so, you know, it was just a little--

LF: Right, they're at Mack, so that's farther over than we were.

PG: Right, exactly. It's, I think, further north, because y'all were closer to the river.

LF: I've always lived close to the river. And as I moved, first to Boston-- I lived in Back Bay because I was close to the river. And where I am now, if I walk to the corner, I'm looking down on the Hudson River and can see the fireworks over Manhattan. I've always-- wherever I've lived, I've always sought to be as close to the water as possible.

PG: Why? Do you do that on purpose, or--?

LF: Oh, yes! Because I've always lived near the water. So when I moved to Boston, I didn't know much about it, but I'm like, "In what way-- ?" They were like, "Well, Back Bay, but Back Bay is

very expensive," but then I went over there and found me someplace to live and I was maybe two blocks from the Charles River. I was just-- when you were at MIT and you'd see they'd have that bridge across the Charles River. I lived right by there. But, erm... and then here, again, I live very close. Like I said, I'm five miles from Times Square. I can...

[[01:09:00]] LF: ... I just go out the house, turn left, left, then go a tunnel into Manhattan.

PG: (*chuckles*) Wow, yeah, erm... Yeah, well, the Boggs's lived there for a while and their house is still there, and it's now a center, a community center.

LF: Oh, see... when I lived in Detroit, the big revolutionary, the person everyone knew was Rosa Parks.

PG: Rosa Parks, yes. Erm... well, they helped to organize when Martin Luther King came and did the march down Woodward. They were there for that and were part of--

LF: Uh-huh.

PG: --part of the organizing around that, and I know they also worked--

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: They did a lot of labor organizing with folks in the factories...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: Uh, General Baker...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: ... and the lead to the...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: ... Black revolutionary workers. Erm... so yeah, they...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: They were deeply involved in community work locally, but I-- I didn't know about them until I started working at the James and Grace Lee Boggs School which is a new--

LF: I-- uh-huh...

PG: ...school on the East Side...

LF: What type of school is this?

PG: I was saying it's a new school, it's a newer school. It just opened about--

LF: Uh-huh.

PG: --less than ten years ago, and--

LF: Uh-huh.

PG: --it's K through 8.

LF: Uh-huh.

PG: And, erm, I worked there for a few years.

LF: And where is that located?

PG: That's on Mitchell street, and that's right at... McDougal, I--? No...

LF: Mitchell-- All of these streets you're speaking, are they on the opposite side of Gratiot?

PG: Yes, they're... so...

LF: See, that was a different community than mine.

PG: Exactly, exactly. It's-- They're all-- Yep, 'cause, Mitchell, they're right on the other side of Gratiot. And, like, McDougal, I think, and, you know-- er... yeah, I think McDougal, I think that's right.

LF: But McDougal crosses over into the site that goes down into Jefferson, right?

PG: Right, yes.

LF: That's why I know the name. I know McDougal.

PG: Yeah, but it is on the other side of that, so it is a different area.

LF: Mm-hmm. But I would bet you if the people who raised me were alive, they'd probably know these names, but they were not as part of -- I do not recall them being a part of our church. I know they were not a part of our church. And as I said, Reverend King... erm, his sister, his aunt... She was his aunt. So she must... She was a sister to either his mother or father, and he was always there speaking, but that was in the sixties.

PG: *(pause)* Yep, they were in Detroit in the sixties... They, erm...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: They were writing books, and...

[[01:12:00]] LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: All types of stuff, but yeah, it's... One of the things I love about Detroit that makes me so proud to be here, happy to be here, erm, and like, things I-- I just love how much I continue to learn about the city, you know what I mean? I feel like there's just such a rich history here,

there's such a, um, amazing folks who have been here, just, like... You know. Even hearing about you and your figure-skating, I think about, just, like, "Wow, that's... that's really... awesome!" You know what I mean? I... I didn't realize that you were someone who did these, like, national figure-skating competitions, and, erm... you know...

LF: These are all-- these are the adult-- They have the adult things. But so many of the things that I do now I started doing here in New York City...

PG: Right.

LF: ...with so much of the confidence I have now, if not all, comes from being raised in Detroit, because when I came to the East coast, I remember when I moved to Boston... One of my friends I met there, her father was a fireman, and he went to a firemen's convention in Detroit, and that had be early eighties. And they went out to... what's that place called "Forest"? Not Sherwood Forest... Something Forest... Forest Park, it's a beautiful home...

PG: Sherwood Forest is a thing, or Palmer Woods?

LF: No. What... Oh, God... What--? Say that next... Where does Judge Wendy Baxter live? Do you know who I'm talking about?

PG: I don't... No... (*chuckles*) I'm not...

LF: She, OK... Wendy and I went to school together. She was a big-- I'm gonna put it in here, 'cause I saw somethin' about her here the other day. We went to school together, and she was a judge. She just recently retired in Detroit. And I know they were saying they went to some party in her house in this area, but these people, they were-- Palmer Park!

PG: Palmer Park.

LF: Palmer Park... All the beautiful homes Black people had. You could live anywhere in Detroit from a shack to a 1300 Volvian Den with-- or 1300 Lafayette, was a swanky place, mixed community, all the community down around there, out on the West side. Black people lived everywhere, every class imaginable, and when I came to the East Coast, they didn't have that. So when they went to Detroit for this fireman's convention, they went to some Black person's home-- I've been in Black homes and-- Palmer Park where they had a swimming pool off the living room or whatever. And a Black man opened the door in a tuxedo and they went, "Oh my God, we didn't dress right." They had a (*indistinguishable*). They were not used to Black people living in this manner. And I've always found when I moved to the East coast, they had a -- it was-- You know plenty of Black people living in Manhattan, you know this...

**[[01:15:00]]** LF: ... it's not what I'm trying to say-- But they're not visibly together. You can't walk down the neighborhood and say "Look at how we're living over here." I mean, you had neighborhoods like that, mixed ones or what-have-you. They were not as apparent here, and to me, I had a wider -- I had a greater view of my possibilities.

PG: Mm. Mm-hmm...

LF: And I think that that is what I treasure from Detroit, is that Detroit-- growing up in Detroit in the fifties, sixties, gave me a view of my possibility. Black people did everything. And it was like, if you didn't do that, you didn't *want* to do that.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: And if you wanted to do it, and you work hard enough, you could. And I don't mean to say anybody was ignorant. You had to be well-versed in all of the negatives about being a Black person in America. I'm not saying I didn't know all of that. But I'm not gonna get up and put on that hat every day. I'm gonna get up, I'm gonna put on a happy hat. And that is the way I was raised. The first time I went downtown Detroit, by myself, I was the little Black girl with rows in my hair, and probably had on dirty pedal-pushers, and I was asked why I was not working on my junior high school paper. And I said because the book wasn't in the library. They said, "Well, comb your hair, put on your pedal-pushers, get off the bus at Crowley's, cross the street to Hudson's--" I think my mouth was hanging open, I had never been downtown by myself... "Cross the street to Hudson's, go on the mezzanine--" That's the book department, "and ask the lady for the book and just buy it." And those are the type people I knew in Detroit, that's the type family I had there, and that's the way we were raised at that time. There was no limit.

PG: Yeah, that's so real... I feel like that's...

LF: And that's what I like about Detroit. I think -- I don't have to say I think my first real concert, I hate to say, was Sonny and Cher. And the same thing. So I was, er... probably in Junior high school (*laughs*), and I always listened to them on the radio and stuff. And you, back then you know, the radio-- you didn't have anything like you have. You'd write to them, you'd send an envelope to the radio, they would send you a little black-and-white photograph-- That was the equivalent of somebody sending you a personal DVD these days.

PG: Really?

LF: We all wanted-- "Oh, look at that, Sonny and Cher." I said, "Didn't we have Sonny and Cher perform here at the Masonic temple?" "Yeah, you wanna go?" I'm like, "What?" And they said, "This is what you do. Take the bus -- have you bought a ticket? OK -- Take the bus. Go over. When you come out it'll be dark. If a taxi's in front, get a taxi home."

[[01:18:00]] LF: And I just-- that is the way, you know, you-- I was raised to, if you wanted to do things, that is what you did.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: And all of those things I envision as-- that is what Detroit is to me.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: What makes me very sad, when I go there now, I worry for Detroit's possibilities. I love it. Every time I hear all the things that are happening in Detroit, all the people I meet here, and all the people who are in art or work over here-- Christies, I think it's different houses. And all they can talk about is "D.I.A., D.I.A., D.I.A.." We didn't have "D.I.A." when I went there. It was the "Detroit Institute of Arts".

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: We went to the museum, they'd send Fellini Festival on the weekend. I did-- I took advantage of everything they had. They used to have, erm... What was the place with the mus-- What was that place where all the dance companies came? I know it's gone now. Music Hall, wherever, The Opera House, the Detroit Opera Stage...

PG: Oh, the Detroit Opera House is still there, downtown.

LF: No, no... That Detroit Opera House, they had built a few blocks off of Woodward, that's something new. The Opera used to be over at Masonic Temple.

PG: Oh, OK.

LF: Are you talking about the opera house that's right across the street from, like, an Italian restaurant?

PG: Er... is it an Italian restaurant there? I don't know if it's an Italian restaurant. It's like downtown near the baseball field and football field.

LF: Yeah, yeah, that's new. That's something brand-new.

PG: Oh.

LF: The Detroit-- The Opera used to be over in Masonic Temple.

PG: OK, and another place I was thinking about was the music hall, the Detroit Symphony Orchestra building on Woodward.

LF: OK, now, there was the Detroit Symphony on Woodward, on the Waterfront. Is that what you're talking about?

PG: Oh, no...!

LF: Do you know where the Detroit-- that statue of Detroit holds up his hands, in front of City Hall?

PG: Yes, uh-huh.

LF: You put your back to that and cross Jefferson-- *That* is where the Detroit Symphony Opera was.

PG: *Oh!* Wow...

LF: The Detroit Symphony *Orchestra* was. That was a huge opera-- pardon me-- orchestra house. That is where we would go down there every year to see the Detroit Symphony Opera-- pardon me, Orchestra.

PG: Yeah, but that, like, what happ--...?



LF: And I think that's gone now. That's adjacent or *is* Hart Plaza.

PG: Right, yeah, that's... yeah.

LF: Over *there* is where Detroit Symphony Hall was. On that-- across Jefferson from City Hall, down over in there. That's where the symphony was, when I lived in Detroit. I was a little girl there.

[[01:21:00]] PG: Wow. OK, yeah... I didn't know that. I knew that they, erm... I dunno. I just know that they talk about their history like, a hundred years, they're celebrating their hundredth year anniversary this year, but I didn't realize about the move.

LF: Well, I'm trying to think, where are they now?

PG: They're by DS-- you know where Detroit School of Art is? On Wood--

LF: Up Woodward!

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: Yeah... no, that was not... The Symphony, you would drive down Woodward, and if you could cross over into the water, between the water and Jefferson, THAT is where the symphony was.

PG: Wow. Yeah...

LF: When I was a little girl. We'd go down there by-- Even Diana Ross performed down there, big performances were there and everything.

PG: Wow. That's really special... I...

LF: I'm seeing here, now... Wait a minute, I'm trying to look at what they're showing here. They're showing something at 37-- No, no, no! We're somehow talkin' about something different. Because what you-- 3711 Woodward Avenue in Midtown, Detroit. It says, "This was opened in 1919." But that's not where we used to go. We went down on the other side of Jefferson. Now I gotta-- is that on Woodward? Is that what they're trying to say? This what you're talking about is not on East Jefferson, is it?

PG: No, no. This is... that's not at East Jefferson. But I wonder if it's... yeah... I dunno, 'cause this is what I was talking about was Orchestra Hall, but you were talking about... something else...

LF: If it's where the Detroit Symphony used to play... I gotta look this up, because what you're talking about is obviously always been there, because I'm looking at exactly what you're saying. "Tour of Orchestra Hall"-- Detroit Symphony Orchestra, hundredth anniversary.

PG: Open up... You know it used to be called the Paradise Theatre. Did you know it as the Paradise Theatre? 'Cause that... Orchestra Hall?

LF: No I did not know it. I only knew it as Symphony Hall. But that is definitely...

PG: It's not the same thing that you've been talking about, though...

LF: Well, I'm just... now I gotta figure out what was that that I used to go to?

PG: Well, are you talking about the Amphitheatre?

LF: The what?

PG: The Amphitheatre?

LF: No, there was no Amphitheatre when I grew up in Detroit. Are you talking about all down near Hart Plaza and all that?

PG: Well, no, no, no. I know what you're talking about by the Coleman Young-- the City Building and Hart Plaza, but what it made me think about was the Amphitheatre that's right on the river, that used to be--

LF: Isn't that an open thing?

PG: Yeah, yep, and now it's--

LF: Yeah, none of that existed when I lived in Detroit.

PG: OK.

**[[01:24:00]]** LF: I left Detroit in '79. None of that existed at all, and I think what you're referring to as this Detroit Symphony Hall-- that is exactly where our orchestras... where the opera and everything used to... where... operas from other cities, ballet companies... I think that is exactly what... I was calling it Music Hall, but that's exact-- It's part of the max... Yeah. That is what I was trying to reference. When people, when they used to come from out of town, and do little shows and things... And I'll look that up too. I'll have to look that up too and send you something. But I'm looking at the picture of it, it's on the corner there.

PG: Yep, it's--

LF: Yeah, I'm looking at that. "And it sat there. But Hall became celebrated jazz... For a time it was known as Paradise Jazz Theatre." That's what you're talking about and that was probably before my time. "The Hall became a celebrated jazz venue... it's part of the max..." Oh, wait just a... OK, yeah, I'm gonna have to look that up. I'm gonna have to find out what it was that, where all the schoolchildren... everybody went. Everybody went on East Jefferson. But what this is is where-- I even worked-- I used to do volunteer work at this particular place, before I left Detroit.

PG: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I definitely... I'm curious about that place on Jefferson, for sure.

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: That's... I would love to learn about that history, 'cause now I'm just looking like, "OK, yeah, that's..." Erm, they used to, I guess, they also used to share space at the Masonic Temple.

LF: Yeah, they bought the Masonic Temple too. Mm-hmm.

PG: Yeah, er... Well... I'm wondering if there are any other, just like, memories you have of the place of that time that you wanted to share with me?

LF: Well, I can't really (*indistinguishable*)-- If there's anything you can think that you want... You know, the school was wonderful, the church was a huge part of our community...

PG: Well, a question I do have is... I wonder, so... you know... In this work, we're uplifting the history of Black Bottom because, you know, the freeway was built over it, there's a way that history is erased... You know, for young folks like me, who... erm... are trying to learn more about the history of this place. And... I guess I'm curious about what you might say the legacy of Black Bottom is. I know you talked about just the spirit of people, them being rich in spirit, and about some of the close-knit ties of...

[[01:27:00]] PG: ...that community, but I'm curious if you have any other things to say about just like the legacy of Black Bottom and the importance of Black Bottom *now* for people...

LF: I think that... (*sigh*)... See, that takes me back to what I had started to say about what I feel when I go to Detroit now. And I go to my home where I used to live. It still stays there, 'cause eventually, we moved to our nicest home on the East Side, which is closer to the Rooster Tail. It's a four-family terrace, everyone had a downstairs-upstairs basement, a full backyard, and a garage-- there were two garages, where everyone-- One, two, three, four garages, big backyards, and what have you. When I go there now, on the block, there may be-- I never counted-- maybe a hundred homes stood on that Block. There may now be ten. And that is very sad for me. And for someone who lived in Detroit when there was a J.O. Hudson's downtown, where it was vibrant with people, your neighborhoods were vibrant. My question is, how do you provide utilities to a town that has lost its tax base? Do you realize that-- you know how you see Macy's Day parade on TV? There used to be two. J.O. Hudson's and Macy's. J.O. Hudson's and Macy's were the two largest department stores in the country.

PG: Mmm...

LF: And they are just parts of Detroit... that-- These are things that don't even exist anymore!

PG: Right.

LF: And I'm so hopeful when I hear people like yourself, and like, erm... Been using my phone for a few hours, running out of batteries, but... But when I hear people talk about their hopes for Detroit, my question remains, Where is the tax base? But I am so happy to see that hope. You cannot ask people who lived where we live, took care of their homes, owned their homes, and now they're the only home on that side of the street? You can't ask that person to move and give up something they've worked for and invested in, and now they're at a retirement age and they want to stay there. I'm sure you've seen these type of things all the time. A lot of these people are people who grew up in the Black Bottom, and to move to the places they did, farther east or whatever-- Both were wonderful times. But I think the legacy of the Black Bottom for me is that-- It taught me every possibility for a Black person. I don't think I have learned *one* possibility-- Like, people are surprised-- I even-- Why should a white man work with me at the law firm? He didn't go to the best...

[[01:30:00]] LF: ...law school, and he was always a little angry by things his family had not exposed him to. As a matter of fact, if I put him in a closet and closed the door you'd think there was a Black man yelling.

PG: (*chuckles*)

LF: "I never had a chance to meet a lawyer, I never had a... this... I never knew about this, I never knew about that." And I'm thinking to myself, "I knew all those things on Maple street."

PG: Mmm!

LF: And just, our minister, Reverend Holispheal H. Coleman... you can look him up on Wikipedia! We were surrounded by wonderful people, and Black Bottom gave me a strength of myself, it enabled me to-- At the time I went to Cass it was primarily a white school, the Black people who were there were rich. I thought most of them were rich, and I thought, you know, "Oh, all Black people--" "No, not all Black people together. All *rich* people together, be they Black or white. Then the rest of you all-- Nice to know you. Over here." But coming from that area, I was ready for anything tossed my way. And that was the strength of the Black Bottom to me. There were things you could-- I think now, when my grandmother went to choir rehearsal on Thursday night, I stayed down the street, and one of the-- it was a family of children, you know, the whole family was there-- but I'd sit out on the porch, one of the teenage boys I'd be with and stuff like that. These are things you wouldn't even do today, but it was a smaller time. It's hard to compare, and I'm not gonna judge and say things were better then-- We didn't have any options. You had to be good on the street. One day I walked down the street and I must've been in a little mood or something, that was even high school when we moved out east. And I-- I didn't think anything of it. By the time I came home, there was a call. The (*indistinguishable*) said you walked down the street you weren't even speaking to people. You know? Those were ethics that came with us from the Black Bottom. We would have a street party on Maple Street. Everybody knew everybody.

PG: Yeah.

LF: They weren't afraid to say, GG [sic]... I had a little bit skirt, and "Your hem is so short. I'm gonna tell your mother."

PG: (*chuckles*)

LF: "I'm gonna tell your mother on you"-- that would be a common phrase. You would-- People don't wanna hear that now, 'cause when you go to tell anybody something about their child, you're probably gonna get smacked or (*laughs*) cursed out. But you know what I'm saying. Everybody knew each other and I think that that made for a strength. It made for a strength, I wasn't afraid, I felt very strong. But when I left there, fortunately for me, I was already completely formed by the time I left that school, that Brownson school, in June of 1960. I think that my character was pretty much formed.

PG: Mm.

LF: In terms of what...

[[01:33:00]] LF: ... I *could* do. Whatever I wanted to do. And that was the strength that I got from the people in my church, their accomplishments, the way they spoke. You ask about my religion with my great-grandmother. In our walks from the-- She came over to our house on Maple, we'd walk by her house on Mullett to the church. You know, you had your little "Sanctifieds", as you still sometimes do now. They have the little storefront churches. You know what I'm talking about.

PG: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

LF: And I remember making-- I remember laughing at their little tambourines and-- I was made to go there and sing a solo with one of the sanctified neighbors one time. "Behold the witness is knocking on your door every Saturday." I think I made a joke about them. They brought that salmon-colored *Paradise Speaks* or whatever book it is that they use. My great-grandmother made me go across the street, they had study at one of those Jehovah's Witnesses studies, one night every week. I had to study with that group for the summer.

PG: Mmm.

LF: You always respected-- It might not be *your* Religion, but it was somebody's religion and you respected it. I went to the Catholic-- my grandmother did not want me to go to Catholic Vacation Bible School. But my great-grandmother was-- she was the one who was more well-travelled, and had come up from, you know, they all came up from down south, but she was just more well-travelled. And she said, "Let her go over there, least she'll still be in church." And I went to that, I went to a Methodist... She just had such a-- Her view was expansive in terms of "Learn everything." I'm still a Baptist. I'll probably always be a Baptist. But there's nothing wrong with learning everything. You need to be exposed to many things. And that is what I learned in the Black Bottom. The people I met there-- before I started school, I learned to read and write. And we'd sit on the front porch and listen to, I think it was, "Aunt Bertha: Boys and Girls for Jesus" and write a little letter. "Hi Aunt Bertha, I like your show." And she'd send you a little letter back.

PG: (*chuckles*)

LF: You know, so... We didn't have anything else. You didn't have an iPod and a phone and 90 stations on the TV. TV went off. At a certain time of night, they played the national anthem and TV was done. (*laughs*)

PG: (*laughs*)

LF: Hopefully, to the next day, there weren't many shows where it wasn't done. So I can't blame... I'm not gonna be one... When you see people start telling you it was so much better, they didn't have any options, GG [sic]. I'm not saying it wasn't better, I'm just sayin'-- What else were you going to do? You didn't know anything else.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: You didn't have, you know, all the diversions.

PG: Yeah. I definitely--

LF: I don't want to appear judgmental. Huh?

PG: I love that. I just love so much that you are being mindful of just, like, "Yeah, it felt... The neighborhood felt this particular way, this is how everyone treated each other, and also, the conditions..."

[[01:36:00]] PG: "...were just different." You know, like, it was just a--

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: A different time. Um--

LF: It was a different time-- and I'm not saying that-- So I think there was a great respect; I don't ever wanna take away from that. But sometimes, we're a little bit down on today's people, even myself sometimes, but their options are different. You know, when I walk into the office now, I see heads down, and they're not looking at a computer screen. Everybody's looking at something on their phone. So they don't have time to interact and do this, and do that, and other-- Their facetime, they've been-- Everybody, the distractions are many more. And our community was small, and we were very interested in it. I'm not saying everybody loved each other, that wouldn't be quite right. You knew who didn't like each other, or this one thought they were all this, this one thought they were all that... But we all had to work together, even so.

PG: Yeah. Um, well, I guess one question I did have-- I meant to ask earlier on, was... Did you call it Black Bottom, or do you remember it being called Black Bottom while you lived there?

LF: I think I remember it being called Black Bottom after I moved *out* of there. I cannot-- I cannot even remember when, but I think when people like Mayor Coleman Young-- Joe Louis being a fighter. That was then, before I was born, and they would all talk about how they'd sit around the radio and listen to Joe Louis's fights, and you know, different things like that that they did. *That's* when I would hear the term Black Bottom. I don't know-- I cannot even-- I don't know if when I went to school it was called Black Bottom. That is-- you know Miller High School? Are you familiar with Miller High School?

PG: Yes, mm-hmm. I know of--

LF: You know, they still have a big, they still have their big annual thing. My mother was going to Venice and she passed away.

PG: You said your mother was?

LF: Yeah, 'cause my mother went to Duffield and then she graduated from Miller High School.

PG: Oh, wow, yep. They do, I know they have it every August.

LF: You know, they-- And she always went to that. And my father, my birth father, went to that school too. They have-- And that remained with them always. And they were *very* intelligent people growing up in the-- I never cared for history. They both were into clothes, and they knew history, and could recite those old points. And I never really got interested in history until I began to travel. Most of my history is from my travelling. And then I began to see things and I want to learn more about things, and that's how my interest came. But they were big buffs-- You

know, big-time school people and what-have-you and that's what they liked. And all of that was done in the Black Bottom.

PG: Mmm.

LF: And they knew people who were doctors, and-- You know, I'd hear about, you know, "So we-- I went to so-and-so's party..."

[[01:39:00]] LF: "...and it was all laid out in the Michigan Chronicle and --" you know, and things like that.

PG: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. OK, yeah.

LF: Also, a lot of-- I have pictures-- You could go downtown to Kresge's and Kresge's upstairs used to take (*laughs*) pictures of people. And sometimes, you know-- A lot of people go around the Kres-- to get little pictures taken and what have you. And I think they used to tint them with a paintbrush or something. So you had a lot of people-- I'm always interested-- I didn't have a lotta pictures collected, 'cause I grew up with older people, so that's why I'm always excited when I see older pictures. (*pause*) But no, I don't recall them-- I only heard "Black Bottom", I think, after I moved out of the Black Bottom.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: And as I told you, only when I went to college-- went to law school-- and I graduated from law school at age 50, it was my second career. And only in law school did I realize they had gone all the way to the Supreme Court to preserve that area from imminent domain, but they took it anyway to build those highways.

PG: Yeah.

LF: It didn't happen for years. They just let our neighborhood rot, and-- and just sit there-- I was always-- that left a mark on me. I can say I think that shocked me-- That shocked me so badly, that I don't know of anything else will ever really shock me the way that did. Nothing else-- I don't know if anything else will ever be as bad as when that neighborhood was destroyed, for me.

PG: Oh. Mmm. 'Cause you just-- you remember when it happened.

LF: I remember when it happened. I remember that it was my home. And then, from then on, I never had that type of-- by the time I went to my next school, I just finished growing up with my people. We graduated, we went as far as we could in that school, we're movin' to the next one, then I go over to another school with people I didn't even know. I still had my Sundays that I came back and worked in my church and my community, but it wasn't the same. Those people-- they had just moved from Black Bottom. The people I met out east had been out east a long time. A lot of people owned their homes and things like that. We were newer. They weren't. I didn't move to a area where a whole lotta people from Black Bottom moved. Where I moved, I don't know if anybody from the Black Bottom lived there. I think those people had always lived there, certainly a very long time, whereas we had always been downtown.

PG: Mmm.

LF: And they weren't that farther out to, you-- Do you-- If you were at Elmwood Cemetery where Kercheval runs into it?

PG: Yes.

[[01:42:00]] PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: And you go out, you know-- you get to Indian village, that area there? We were on the other side of that. But on the *other* side of Elmwood Cemetery was a whole-- That was the Black Bottom, 'cause it was a whole 'nother world. It was a whole different world.

PG: Yeah, wow. I-- I'm... I'm so happy I got to talk to you, I feel like... I know you kept saying, like "I might be telling you stuff you already know," and some of it I've heard before, but everyone's perspective is different... You know what I mean? And every--

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: Stories that everyone has about these different places, and--

LF: Have you ever spoken to anyone else from Maple Street?

PG: Erm... not that I can recall. I don't believe so... I actually kept...

LF: See, in my mind, Maple (*laughs*)... Maple Street is the (*laughs*)... is the only street, I think of that like a star, like, "Well, wouldn't everybody know Brownson School and Maple street?" and I think the answer to that question is "No, they would not all know that." But yeah, that was my little area, and it was just a wonderful, wonderful place to grow up in.

PG: Oh, yes. I've talked to someone whose uncle or cousins had an after-hours juke joint on Maple street, but I haven't talked to anyone who was...

LF: Now I wonder where was that because that wasn't in our block.

PG: Yeah.

LF: So that would have to be a part of Maple Street that extended, 'cause I remember when, how I told you within the past eight to ten years, my friend would drive me when I came there and I'd look for Maple street trying to take a picture.

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: That Maple street was over by Stroh's, one of the old Stroh's buildings, so I'm now aware that Maple Street wrapped around.

PG: OK.

LF: So I don't know where that was near-- 'cause I'm sure if there were a juke joint, we would definitely know about it. Or I wonder when that was? It must've been an older person.



PG: Yeah, I-- you know what? It's... I just looked up in my notes in my computer that I kind of take, but I didn't...

LF: Uh-huh.

PG: Kinda like the transcript, so I'm not sure about the details...

LF: Uh-huh.

PG: Little bit, some of the notes.

LF: That's interesting, 'cause I think some-- You know what I wanna do now? And you can tell me is it available? This is what I read when-- 'cause I was telling you I told several people-- And like I said, when I said "Black Bottom" to my friend, and we are within two years' age of each other, she didn't know what that was. She thought I was talkin' about out by the Rooster Tail where she grew up and where we grew up as teenagers.

PG: Mmm...

LF: 'Cause she said, "I didn't know there was a Black Bottom. I thought it was the East Side." I'm like, "This" (*laughs*) "is not the place I'm talking about." So she obviously didn't know that. So as you question the things like a silly question that you know but in her...

**[[01:45:00]]** LF: No, some people did not realize that there were other people living-- And also when we moved out east, and we had mixed communities. I don't think we had any white people living-- I don't wanna say the wrong thing-- I don't recall any white people actually living in our community. Um, we'd call stores and people we knew well, but I don't recall people actually living in our community, white people.

PG: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I think, um... especially by the fifties and sixties, I know that Black Bottom was an immigrant community for a while...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: Especially by the fifties and sixties, it was majority Black. Um...

LF: Yes.

PG: Basically, all Black.

LF: Yeah, I only remember one white person in my school, I can say that, other than teachers, there were some teachers. And as I said, Black teachers. Mm-hmm.

PG: Um, OK. Well, I'm really grateful for the time we got to spend.

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: I'm curious, so... You did get-- Since you got to see the exhibit, you also got to see the map, and we have prints of that map. We have, like--

LF: I would love a print of that map.

PG: --poster-size prints. Yeah, I can, erm... When I email you the consent form, if you send me your address I can put it in the mail for you.

LF: OK, I would love to have that, but I-- I will-- If there's anything else you wanna ask me, and just drop an email or anything like that, I would be happy to send it to you. Do you have any colored pictures from down there?

PG: Not any colored pictures, no. The pictures that we have are the ones from the Burton Historical Collection that were taken in at the eminent domain process, those are the main pictures we have. And we--

LF: See, that's what I want-- That's what I wanted to ask you about. I read today that in preparation for tearing down all the buildings, I think it was the Standard Insurance Company, sent someone to take a picture of every single building...

PG: Yep.

LF: Home build-- I would like a picture of my house. I don't have one.

PG: Well, let's see... I mean, what is the address again? Could you remind me of the street-- the number on Maple Street?

LF: 2665 Maple Street.

PG: 26--

LF: They actually have that?

PG: So, what I'll say is that... the photos that Emily found... They don't have all of them, right? Because some of them were destroyed, you know, naturally destroyed, just weren't preserved well before they were found.

LF: Yes.

PG: And so I'm not sure if they have that particular house, but I'm gonna look and see...

LF: If you ever come across it, 'cause I know there's a lot of material, and the other thing that I think I would like for you to see and I'd love to have myself... When they tore down Greater Macedonia Baptist Church, which...

**[[01:48:00]]** LF: ... was in mint condition, our pool pit-- when you sat in the pews, listening to the ceremony... As you looked up, there was one-- you know, you walk up to one altar-- where the preacher... Then behind that was the pool where they baptized. It was deep in there. Then above that was the altar where our pastor preached every Sunday, and behind him, that whole wall was a mural of the Last Supper. So when they tore down the church, one of the newspapers had, on the cover of the newspaper, that Last Supper, with the ruins all around it. They hadn't torn down that wall yet.

PG: Wow, you're...

LF: And it has to be either the Free Press or the Detroit News, and I'm gonna say... somewhere in the 1960s. Somewhere in the nine- And I've never been able to find that. I may have to make a trip there when we're able, when they let people from the New York area go places again. *(From [[01:49:01.06]] to [[01:50:07.13]] is a tangent about the impact of COVID-19 plague in New York and Martha's Vineyard.)* Is it possible to go through the property records and see who owns these different homes and things there?

PG: Yes! So, actually, that's what we've been doing is digitizing city records...

LF: Really?

PG: City directories, yeah, we've been... 'Cause the goal for our site is that we're able to have as many of the pictures that we can that were taken during eminent domain, of all the...

LF: Yes, yeah...

PG: And then also to have, you know, these oral histories and maybe some photos, but then, additionally for folks to be able to search either by the address or by the family name to be able to see about ownership of different buildings.

LF: Is any of that available now?

PG: Erm... well, it's not available digitally. Erm... you'd have to go into the Burton Historical Collection...?

[[01:51:00]] LF: Physically go there?

PG: Yeah, yep. 'Cause there's a bunch of books. There's like, books of city directories, and we've been working on doing them for, like, the 1940s and 1950s.

LF: Is this a full-time job for you?

PG: For me, it's a full-time job. Erm... as... I'm the director of kinda the whole organization, but...

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: I have a couple of part-time staff who work on compiling... Like, doing the research and compiling the information.

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: Yeah, so it's a very small team.

LF: And this is just absolutely wonderful thing you're doing, but I want to send you, I think of the many people in the picture, but when we get off the phone, I want to send you-- Because I just see nothing vibrant. I say "vibrant" to me, because I know what the pictures are. But when I saw that picture of Emily in that paper, I asked-- Do you see her?

PG: Do I see Emily?

LF: Yes.

PG: Oh, yeah, we worked together on... Well, she's...

LF: OK.

PG: I don't know how much you know about her, but she's a professor, so she was teaching this school year in Buffalo but she's back in Michigan again, so...

LF: Uh-huh. Yeah, 'cause I think when I was in touch with her, I wanna say, whenever that was, three or four years ago-- And I had promised her this picture, but I'm gonna send it to you when we get off the phone. And directly across-- and I'll send that picture too-- this is the steps of the church, and these are the type o' people we were surrounded by. These are all women because it was probably a women's day celebration or something. And the pictures are-- The people are just so beautiful and so vibrant, and these are the people that we all looked up to, and all with their husbands and the families... It was just such a wonderful, wonderful place to grow up, I think.

PG: Wow, yeah... Would love to see that picture.

LF: And for all my fear of being down south, I often hear there's a lot of-- the growth-- growing up in down south, has a lot of those same things, because these people came from the south--

PG (*overlap*): Right.

LF: And this is what they brought with them.

PG: Exactly. And that's what I've always heard too, that it's very much... Like, even for my parents, you know, they're always like, it feels... So much about how Detroit feels like the small town they came from in Tennessee, because of--

LF: See, when I hear that, though, it upsets me because Detroit was not a country city.

PG: Right.

LF: Detroit was a Metropolis.

PG: Right.

LF: And I always think of down south as country.

PG: Yeah. That's true, and also-- I mean, well, letting my mom tell it, she wasn't raised in the country. She-- My dad, her and my dad grew up in towns next to each other, but her town was more of a city-- kind of like, you know... not really a city, but, you know what I mean? Like, you had a movie theater, the mall, all the stores and stuff like that...

[[01:54:00]] LF: But your mother's in her fifties, right?

PG: My mother is sixty.

LF: See, that's young. That's younger than me. I'm talking about real, real old people from down south. Real, real old people from down south. And those people are dead. They're all dead from down there, the ones I'm talking about, 'cause when I meet people now... I'll tell you this story: It reflects badly on me, I'll admit it. I was in the attorney's office and someone came to me and said, "That new attorney, she's from Detroit." "But she didn't comb her hair, Gigi." Her hair was always a mess. Detroit is one of the hair style capitals, used to be, in America. You know they always have those weird-- what-have-you. I mean, how is this girl from Detroit and her hair is not even combed. I would simply not speak to her. And it turns out she wasn't from Detroit, she was from Lansing. That's a country town.

PG: (*chuckles*)

LF: So somehow someone told her, "Linda's from Detroit." And she ran over to me, "Oh, did you know I'm from Detroit?" I said, "I thought you were from Lansing." (*laughs*) I wanted to say to her, "You are misrepresenting the city."

PG: Okay--!

LF: It is not a country town. Did you know when I was there for skating, I went to the Whole Foods off of Woodward, and got food for my hotel, and I bought a Whole Foods Detroit bag, and somebody at the New York Law Firm saw this in the refrigerator and said, "Who has Whole Foods Detroit?" I said, "That's mine." They said, "They have Whole Foods in Detroit?"

PG: (*laughs*)

LF: I'm like, "There's *nothing* they don't have in Detroit." Even though I haven't been there forty years, I get a little attitude when they start coming-- Your bus-driver there who died of Coronavirus?

PG: Mm-hmm.

LF: You know who I'm talking about-- that man, he was all the news in everything. And they start saying things about him, I'm like, "Just wait just a minute now." I found a picture of a big fat man right here in New York who died. I said, "Detroit is a city just like every other city." I said, "We have a lot of vacant blocks because the population-- our industry left, the population is not the same. But I'm not having this. I don't know where you-- Who do you think we're talking to? "We don't have Whole Foods in Detroit?" (*pause*) But some people have that view of Detroit. They've never been there, and that's-- You know, they don't know what Detroit is like, and to me, I don't want people to think it's too country. For that girl, I'm like, "Stay away from me 'cause you're misrepresenting the city."

PG: Yeah, I feel that. I feel you. It definitely... I feel like it has a lot of the sensibilities of a southern town but it's not, it's very much a metropolis, very much an urban city.

LF: Well, I never saw any sensibilities of any southern town, 'cause I've been down to those...

[[01:57:00]] LF: ... places, like Atlanta. Maybe I haven't stayed there long enough to have a fair view, but I never saw anything southern about Detroit. But I have to say, that that sense of

community that some of the southern towns had-- The Black Bottom was just, er-- You know, Mayor Coleman Young, Joe Louis, it just was just such a great place for people to grow up in.

PG: Yes, I hear that. Well, I am so grateful for your time this Saturday. I know it was just right in the middle of the afternoon, Saturday, so I appreciate you taking this time to talk to me. I don't have any other questions, and so--

LF: OK.

PG: I'll just ask: What other opportunity-- if there's anything else that you're like, "Oh, yeah, I wanted to say this and I didn't say it"?

LF: Oh, no, no. I probably don't, but I'm going to send you some pictures. I'm gonna put 'em on here, see if I can't do them now, of what it was like to live in Black Bottom and I'm gonna send you a picture of myself as well, finishing that marathon there.

PG: Awesome!

*(From [[01:58:10.29]] to [[01:58:59.26]] is a tangent involving the marathon and the picture.)*

LF: And OK, OK. The name of the auditorium of the Detroit Symphony just came to my mind. It was called Ford Auditorium.

PG: OK. Ford Auditorium.

LF: Is that still down there? I don't think it is. I think they-- Ford Auditorium Detroit. And they grazed it. Built in 1955, opened in 1956 on the Detroit River Front, and it was called Ford Auditorium.

PG: Mm.

LF: It served as home to the Detroit Symphony Orchestra for more than 33 years. And THAT'S the symphony. That's where we would go to the symphony. It just totally blew my mind. And then, here it is, the Demolition of Ford Auditorium. They have a picture here, and it looks like Dave Bing was the mayor, so it was just in two-thousand... Let's see when they...

PG: It says in 2011.

LF: 2011. You see it too, right?

PG: Yep.

LF: That's where we would go to hear the or-- I never even-- This hall you're talking about, I-- I--

**[[02:00:00]]** LF: I really didn't know it. Well, we would trek down to Ford Auditorium. And it says, "Served as home to the Detroit Symphony Orchestra."

PG: Yeah--

LF: But I don't know what this other place is...

PG: I, like-- now that I'm looking at pictures, I'm like, "Oh, I remember that being there. I remember--"

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: "being there." But it wasn't open...

LF: Mm-hmm. And that's all down by Hart Center, right?

PG: Yep, exactly, right next to the Renaissance Center.

LF: That's exactly right, because the Renaissance Center is farther east. That wasn't built-- Of course, none of that existed. But I see now. "Henry and Edsel Ford Memorial Auditorium was a historic venue located in Hart Plaza. It closed in the mid-90s." That's why it wasn't open when you were there.

PG: Right, exactly, but it was still up. I still remember the building...

LF: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

PG: I remember that we had the marquee, the marquee was still there.

LF: Mm-hmm.

PG: It would have some messages...

LF: I'm... I'm... "At 20 East Jefferson." I'm like, "Am I having a mind-warp here?" Because THIS is where we saw the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

PG: Yeah.

LF: We didn't go to that other location. This was our place. Diana Ross sang here, big concerts were held here... Aw.... OK. OK, then. If I can think of anything else, I'm gonna toss it in the email and send you to a link. *(laughs)*

PG: OK! *(laughs)* That would be--

LF: OK, and GG [sic]... GG, let me also say, Thank you so much for your work. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

PG: Ah, well, I'm honored to be doing-- I feel like I'm just, you know, a steward. I'm a steward of all these stories, I'm a steward of this history, so I'm honored to be doing this work.

LF: Well, I cannot tell you how very happy I am to know the work that you are doing there.

PG: Well, that... that... That really lights me up. I appreciate you saying that.

LF: OK. Mm-hmm.

PG: So, yes, I'm going to stop the recording now.

**END**