

190929_1454 Transcription

Voice 1: something you need to take a picture of, or something that would be helpful for you to copy? Like, are you photocopying things?

Voice 2: Yeah, but we're doing both because we're running, like trying to do it within...

Voice 1: So, do you want me to do this as a new thing?

Voice 2: Yeah

Voice 1: Since she's separating this from that.

Voice 2: Yeah, so start with J.

Voice 1: I think I wrote J on the last thing I gave you.

Voice 2: I thought it was I... and then you had J written on there?

Voice 1: They had I, so then we thought....

Interviewer: This is object 11, Kennedy Johnson.

[chatter]

Interviewer: We're currently recording her discussion of objects.

Participant: and these are from her family.

Participant 2: Wait, she was born on March 30th too, like Justin?

Participant: Uhuh.

Voice 2: And I don't need a name for everything, so I was just gonna do a sticky note for the folder, and like a sticky note for... this is a random one though so... a random piece. All of that is together.

Participant 2: Yeah. Grandma you dropped this, is this for me?

[lots of mumbling/ unintelligible chatter]

Participant 2: This is a death certificate

Voice 2: Okay, I'mma just like... so...

Participant 2: What... Grandma, what do you want me to put on these?

Voice 2: You don't have to [...], just put one sticky on all three of those and I'll take it together, so like the next letter will be for all 3 of those.

[There is a lot of talking here which is very hard to understand, and it seems like they are just figuring out the logistics of copying her stuff. I didn't transcribe all of it, but I can go back and do it if necessary]

Interviewer: Can I ask you some questions?

[more chatter about scanning items]

Interviewer: Alright, hi! So, I'm Kennedy.

Participant: You're Kennedy?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Participant: I have a great grand-son... daughter Kennedy.

Interviewer: Oh you do? Ah, okay!

Participant: My older... my older daughters...

Interviewer: Hmm. So, I was wondering if you could just describe, I know you've been doing this, but so I can have it on recording, a couple of the objects that stood out to you? I remember you talking about the lamp... can you talk about that one?

Participant: The lamp? The lamp I merely brought in to indicate the extent of my life, I guess.

Interviewer: Yeah? Mhm.

Participant: That's how I started out. When I first started school, that's how we was reading by.

Interviewer: Mhm, and you said you were born down the street?

Participant: I was born in the house that they're restoring.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant: Upstairs, I suppose... which way's East and which way's West? Do you know?

Interviewer: I have no idea, I don't know that one, haha. Not good at directions

Participant: I was born upstairs.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Participant: There was two bedrooms upstairs, I was born... born in there.

Interviewer: And what's your, um, family name?

Participant: Family name?

Interviewer: Yeah, what's your last name I guess, and can you describe...

Participant: My last name...

Interviewer: Or, what do you know about your last name and your family, as it relates to Longtown?

Participant: What do I know about them?

Interviewer: Mhm. I know you know a lot, but, so I can record it.

Participant: Um, it was a good start, I know it was. I started out with a kerosene lamp, and I came on up and I'm now here looking at things, and [??] time and space. I've really been through it, cuz I remember when we got our first battery radio. So, I was here before radios and before airplanes, and started down the road here. Is that enough?

Interviewer: That's fine! I have a lot more questions for you, if that's okay! I'm sorry. So, your family stayed in this area the whole time, but you moved to Columbus, Ohio?

Participant: I actually left, I left there and went to Dayton and worked at [???], the government for 10 years. Then, I went Columbus to a wedding and met someone there at that time, so a year and a half or so later, married a Mason. And I stayed in Columbus. And, I've been in Columbus now since, uh, I got married in 1952. I'm still here, and everybody else is gone. Now, I've got grandchildren and great-grandchildren, got two great-grandchildren coming along. Her brother, her oldest brother, have had their first grandchild.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Participant 2: You already were a great-grandma too, for Mason and Miles. How old is Miles? Like 11?

Participant: [??], my daughter's had two boys there... she's got a... my daughter had a girl and a boy. And, I have a grandson who's coming next week, she was coming home for my birthday. She has the same birthday, 7th of October.

Participant 2: How old are you? Are you ready to tell her?

Participant: How old am I?

Participant 2: How old are you gonna be? Did you tell her?

Participant: I'm gonna be 95.

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Participant 2: She says it so casual.

Interviewer: My great-grandpa was the same. He, when he turned 102 he'd just be like "yeah, I'm turning 102. What about it?" So...

Participant: People tend to live life after a hundred now, because they don't do that bad [???], what's... how do you pronounce that word they use?

Interviewer: The vaping?

Participant: Vaping! Every time I see one of those advertisements where they're blowing that out, oh my goodness, why are they killing themselves?

Interviewer: They didn't do that when you were young?

Participant: Heavens, no! They did cigars, I guess. Tobacco, but usually it was. Actually we used to grow some tobacco... not on our farms out here, they're close to Palestine though, you remember in the past I was talking about that barn? Used to be for drying out tobacco. But, that was when I was just a little girl. They hadn't run anything like that out here for years.

Interviewer: So, I guess, do you have any childhood memories that you wanna talk about?

Participant 2: How about the schoolhouse?

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

Participant: The school house, oh yeah. I went to school for the first year or two and we [??] building. One teacher didn't like me, which is how I ended up sitting underneath the desk half the time when I was in third grade. He was a young man from here, a Holland man. Holland? Don't you see the Holland family on there somewhere? He was one of their older brothers, became a teacher and he taught up here. I think he only taught here a year or so, then he probably went to town. I don't know what happened to him! Actually, though, one of his brothers was a year younger than I, I think.

Participant 2: But she was in the same class as Brenda's father.

Participant: Brenda's father was in that same class. My brother was in a class with Cecil Holland, Jackie Holland, they've probably been talking about him some.

Participant 2: When did you say you taught Sunday school? The person that knows the verse that you made her remember, that she said when she was 11, that was recited at... what's her name?

Do you know what I'm talking about?

Participant: Ethel May... Ethel May Bass... That, no no she was a Stevens. Her mother Marie was the youngest Bass girl.

Participant 2: But where... you were teaching Sunday school? Here?

Participant: Right here.

Interviewer: How long did you teach Sunday school?

Participant: I was probably just subbing then.

Interviewer: Do you have any more childhood memories that you wanna share?

Participant: I got my little iron I didn't even think to pick that up. I've got a picture, I've got a little piece of iron and I got, a little old fashioned kind with a handle on it, and when [??] was ironing, I would get mine out and get over there, think I was ironing. And one time, she had asked me to get her something. I said "I'm ironing!" and she said "oopee, you better get that." She said, "you stop your ironing and get that for me." She didn't let me get by with it. [????]. I remember planning [???]. What were I... did I tell you... did I say something is fun to you?

Participant 2: You were talking about that, you said you always went in cars. You said your dad always drove you guys everywhere. Over here. And he had that Model T, a picture of that car!

Participant: Well, we didn't go very many places because we were always busy on the farm, and my dad not only worked on the farm, he also went to, he got a job in Winchester, in Union City. And, my mother and I, we had to do the milking and the... that was the first car [???] bought. That's from 1947 Ford!

Interviewer: Oh, wow. That's a nice car.

Participant 2: I don't know what [???]. They're done with these ones though.

Participant: Now, that's my youngest brother, this I think is my older brother.

Interviewer: How many siblings do you have?

Participant: Huh?

Interviewer: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Participant: Okay, so there's two brothers, my little sister that died... that's kinda the reason I was giving her that, there's two of them that didn't live. One of them didn't live a day, the other one didn't live about a week. And that was, that was them, that smaller book you have, no.

Participant 2: Oh they have it. They're taking a picture of it. Oh, that was that car you were looking for. That was that throwback picture.

Interviewer: So that's a Model T? Who's car was that?

Participant: That was my dad's car.

Interviewer: Your dad's car?

Participant 2: [???] you inherited it.

Participant: I didn't inherit that one...

Participant 2: Oh, which one did you get?

Participant: That one, the 1947...

Participant 2: Oh, the buggy one.

Participant: The one that everybody was standing beside of. Actually, I had a picture there of somebody on the steps of this church. That's the reason... I picked up the wrong envelope. I think when we were trying to find the box, we put the wrong [??] in there.

[unintelligible talking about finding a certain folder]

Participant 2: I remember... the ones we went through...

Participant: Those books were in there.

[more trying to figure out what something is]

Participant: That's the one where they bought the house of Sheridan.

Interviewer: So that's a deed? What house is that?

Participant: Well that's, as I said, the one [????].

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Participant: They didn't have that?

Participant 2: No, I don't think they got that. They probably would want it, yeah.

Participant: That's what I was basing it on.

Interviewer: Oh yeah?

Participant: See where they sold it to, my grandfather...

Interviewer: Wow, in 1895.

Participant: That's where I got that date.

Interviewer: Okay, wow.

Participant 2: You said, when you were talking with them to you said your mom... what did your mom make? Was known for her preserves or something?

Participant: Oh, her strawberry preserves.

Interviewer: Oh, yum!

Participant 2: She was, like, famous...

Participant: We had a strawberry patch, we had the best strawberries in town!

Interviewer: Did you ever make some? Strawberry preserves?

Participant: Mhm, I did.

Interviewer: What did you guys do on the farm? You said that you milked cows, right?

Participant: Milked cows, [??] pigs, [??] pigs, drove ‘em to the patch, everything.

Interviewer: Did you like working on the farm?

Participant: I didn’t know any better, I was a little girl. I was the oldest, so I ended up being my mama and my daddy’s helper. That’s all I can remember, ‘cuz I was the oldest, and... The two boys that were born after I was born died. So, there’s five years difference between my older brother, and eight years difference between my youngest one. I was the oldest child.

Interviewer: What do you think ‘freedom’ meant to your parents, your grandparents, your ancestors, or your family in general?

Participant: Freedom? Yeah they [were or weren’t]¹ free, they just worked all the time trying to make enough to keep from losing the farm!

Interviewer: Yeah.

Participant: At that time... because they didn’t get paid anything. [????] on the farm. My mother would [????????], you know, if you weren’t lazy, and did your work, you’d never be hungry. Or dirty. And she was right. It took all of our time to just, grow our food, eat our food, can our food.

Interviewer: So that stuck with you?

¹ I can’t tell which she says

Participant: [????] is what I did when I was a little girl. I didn't have time for anything but work, and then garden work, pulling weeds, planting potatoes, you know. Cutting lettuce and whatever. I had all those things I could do.

Interviewer: Well what does freedom mean to you, I guess?

Participant: Freedom mean to me? Freedom. What kind of freedom?

Interviewer: However you want to take it. I guess it's an open question.

Participant: That's an open question for freedom! I never thought much about that freedom.

Participant 2: You never thought about it?

Participant: Freedom [????????????]. I didn't even feel free on the farm, I had so much to do. Everybody now is always reading into little things like that, and they, they don't have to work like I worked. I think it's good for them to have things to do. Or at least it was for me. I didn't, I didn't consider being free. I wasn't free because I, actually with me being the oldest girl, I didn't go anywhere back in those days. I didn't do any running until I got away from home. So, I guess I was free as a farm would let you be. I was busy. I can remember, we always came to church and then we'd go home and a lot of times people would go home with us to eat and, back in those days, people were neighborly. I don't know most of my neighbors in Columbus. I only know about two or three of them. It's very strange, nowadays. *You're free, but again, you don't know any better beyond freedom².*

Participant 2: And too, like how you were saying you feel like things aren't recorded, like we have to go through all of this and backtrack to try and get history corrected. Cuz a lot of it's not correct.

² I think this is what she said, but it was very muffled so I couldn't quite tell.

Participant: Yeah, we can't really... Everybody has their own idea of what's important. And you have to respect that.

Interviewer: So, you talk to your kids and grandchildren a lot about this town? It seems like.

Participant: No, I never have time to talk to them anymore. Except my... she's been away for a few years, so she's back now. I could talk to her, [??] I'm saying, at least I'm [??] I can, but before she, we didn't have much time to spend together except we always, we still, our birthdays and everything we always still remember in our family. [??], right? Isn't that right?

Participant 2: Yeah.

Participant: We used to remember everybody's birthdays.

Participant 2: Yeah, we always get together for birthdays.

Participant: And if we don't have anything but cake and ice cream...

Participant 2: But you don't tell us about the, I feel like you told us when we came to... like when we came here, you told us about it. And I remember you took us to the house when I was really little. But, you didn't tell us that much about it, I didn't feel like. I mean, well I don't know. Are we still talking about freedom?

Interviewer: Yeah! Yeah.

Participant: I've lost contact with this house, because the people are new. A little older. I think I met more of them trying to do this than [????]. Another time I'd come and didn't know who was who, because we didn't even hear of these people. [????????] pick up on history, that's what you're trying to do. Pick up on history.

Participant 3: Oh Cleo, Cleo was one of the first persons that, uh, found out about my discovery. About James Clemens. Her family owned the house which at that time was the [name]'s house.

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant 3 : And their family had bought it in about 1909, 1910, something about....

Participant: 1895 [???].

Participant 2: They have it...

Participant: They're making a picture of it over there now.

Participant 3: Yep, they bought the house.

Participant: They bought the house back in 1895.

Participant 3: Okay.

Participant: And my grandfather was the one who bought it, William B [???]. And you know he... in your records, you have the deeds, you know how they have when you get a deed, I gave it to whoever I sold the house to. 'Cuz that's probably where you got the names off of it didn't you?

Participant 3: Well, I remember going to your house and showing you the story and then, um, one of you had a book of deeds, and James Clemens was the first one. I have a copy of land *patents*, that he bought that particular piece of land in 1822.

Participant: Who?

Participant 3: James Clemens. That's when he bought the land.

Participant: 1822!

Participant 3: 18! 1822. The cemetery land he bought in 1818, which is something that I have been fighting for, because most of the history books said he bought land in Darke County 1822. But, I went to the archives and he actually purchased land October, 1818. The issue of the question is, and this is what the Darke County historical society when Connor researched his

roots and got James Clemens classified as a pioneer of Darke County, he listed Warren County as a place of residence. So, they didn't count that as being actually part of it, um, he didn't actually claim a place of residence until 1822. But, he bought the land in 1818 and I found, those ladies that did [??] recently, she compared the Goen's and the... no the history of the house. And, what she found was when Clemens bought the land, he actually did a mortgage on it. So, he had a mortgage and didn't pay it off until 1822. But for all intents and purposes, that's basically buying a piece of land. Even if you have a mortgage on it, you do it. So, a lot of the history books are still stating 1822, because that's the first deed that arrives. But, when you talk about pioneers of Darke County, pioneers of Ohio, he is listed as buying land in 18... I found some of the original documents, October 18th, 1818.

Participant: He actually bought that land, it wasn't [?????].

Participant 3: Yeah.

Participant: [??] signed?

Participant 3: Yep, yep.

Participant: I found something, I didn't bring it in here. I found something in my papers that I was wondering about, because John Quincy Adams signed a lot of land grant for, it was signed in Cincinnati.

Participant 3: Yep, you've got it. It came out of the Cincinnati office.

Participant: And that's when [??] on that particular part, it didn't show who bought it or anything. I actually have a copy and I started to bring it today but I picked up the wrong one, and she picked up the wrong one.

Participant 2: These aren't the ones you wanted?

Participant: No, no. No. This is back in the 18's.

Participant 2: Did you want them to take any? Okay.

Interviewer: Alright, wait. Okay I'm recording. So, you're the granddaughter of Cleo, right?

Participant 2: Yes.

Interviewer: Alright, and what's your name?

Participant 2: Kristen.

Interviewer: Kristen. Okay, so, you've been brought up here before when you were little, you were saying?

Participant 2: Yeah, when I was younger she brought me to the property to the farm where she was raised and everything.

Participant 3: And born!

Participant 2: And born. Literally born there.

Participant: [??] what was his last name? Clemens.

Participant 3: James?

Participant: James.

Participant 3: or Morris? Morris was...

Participant: C and her brother came here with my son and I a few years ago, and we had dinner down at the Clemens, remember?

Participant 2: Yeah, I was a kid! You said a few years ago, but that was a while ago. I'm 28 now, that was when I was a kid. Like, little.

Participant: Well, you wasn't that little. You was....

Participant 3: You come from some strong stock.

Participant 2: Grandma, it was like... yeah I was really young.

Participant: You was really young?

Participant 2: Yeah, when you showed us the rhubarb? 'Cuz remember we loved your rhubarb jelly? And you showed us where it was made and everything on the farm? And you were like "that's what rhubarb is" and we were like "what!?"

Participant: They done cut it all away, haven't they? What did they do...

[???

Participant: What's over the spring now? Where you head, where that house, the [name] house used to be?

Participant 3: There still is, um, [???] there, yeah. It's still there.

Participant: It's still there, but it's just there [??].

Participant 3: It's just there,

[?????]

Participant: [???] that was there when I was a baby. A picture I have has it....

Participant 3: If we ever put water on the property, then we'll...

Participant: Well, water is on the property!

Participant 3: Well, I mean, actually put plumbing back into the house.

Participant: It is plumbed in the house! Did you cover it up or something?

Participant 3: They probably have to be replaced.

Participant: Here, I got a picture where there was a sink and a kitchen. They didn't take the pipes out or anything, did they?

Participant 3: I know, but they're probably gonna have to all be replaced, every single one.

Participant: Gotta be careful or you'll be busting the pipes.

Participant 3: Also, what we wanna do is, the kitchen had been modernized. The sink and all that? That's a modern variation. So, we actually, there's a cabinet next to it that is original, and then they took the matching cabinet out and made the sink and modern cabinets. So, we actually to bring it back to the original we wanna take out that sink and everything and put matching cabinets back into it, the way it looked when it was originally built. We try to....

Participant: When it was originally built, we didn't have any water in the house.

Participant 3: Right, that's the point.

Participant: We didn't have any water in the house, we carried it up the hill. We carried it up the hill until I was a young, young person.

Participant 3: Yep.

Participant: Because, I remember when washing day came, we had to get our buckets and our...

Participant 3: In a way, we will have water because we're gonna have a restroom, and we're gonna have....

Participant: [??] that water... that water was already piped in the house!

Participant 3: Yeah, but those pipes were probably pretty old. I gotta...In fact, the contractor... I gotta replace the roof now. The contractor that did the windows says we need the roof replaced. So, there's still 150, 200 thousand dollars that's still gonna need to go into that.

Interviewer: And what's your name? I didn't get it on here.

Participant 3: My name is Rowan Smothers.

Interviewer: Rowan Smothers, okay. I'm Kennedy Johnson. Nice to meet you.

Participant 3: In fact, this picture, do you know all these people?

Participant: No, I don't know any of 'em.

Participant 3: Okay, that is Oliver Norton.

Participant: Well that's, I've seen that name in the...

Participant 3: That is Elizabeth Smith-Clemens-Norton. What she did is she married William RJ Clemens, James Clemens' son, and then she was a Smith, then she married Clemens, then she married Oliver Norton. That is Elijah Clemens, that is James Clemens' grandson. He was a physician in Dayton. Do you know anything about Dayton?

Interviewer: Dayton, Ohio? I know a little bit.

Participant 3: He lived right [??] Dunbar. And, in fact, he busted the block in the 1890 census. When it was still white, he was one of the few black people that were over there. And this guy I don't know the name of. This would be my great-great-great uncle. His sister married my great-great-grandmother... no wait, grandfather, which is weird because I never thought I'd have a family connection with that, and suddenly Oliver Norton is up, and his sister married a [name].

Interviewer: Yeah, wow.

Participant 3: Oh, okay. That's William [name]. Is that when he first bought it?

Participant: It's when... I didn't bring what I wanted.

Participant 3: Oh wow! That's my, that's his sister Cordelia. That's the sister of Oliver Norton.

Participant: Cordelia, so that's who... that's who...

Participant 3: And that's my great-great-grandmother.

Participant: See, and he had been buying for quite some time, he had a mortgage.

Participant 3: For her husband.

Participant: And when they moved in they found a guy, that's worked out, I've got papers where they talk about, a couple of mortgage papers there. And they finally got it worked out, and they finally bought the land somewhere, I don't think I brought the papers...

Participant 3: Cordelia's on there, right?

Participant 2: Can you tell me the names for these, so I can write them down for my grandmother?

Participant 3: Okay, that's Oliver Norton...

Interviewer: So, I just wanna to thank you for the interview, I really appreciate it. I have a LOT of material here.

Participant: Did you get enough?

Interviewer: I got a lot, yeah, thank you so much!