
RICHELLE HARRIS: This is Richelle Harris interviewing Miss Cardenia Davis. Her address is 5453 Race Street. I’m sorry. What is your date and place of birth?
CARDENIA DAVIS: My date of birth is 8th month, the 11th, ‘21. Year ‘21.
RH: Okay. And do you work now? Are you presently working?
CD: No, no. I don’t work now.
RH: Okay. Okay, I know your husband is alive. How old is your husband?
CD: Sixty-seven.
RH: Okay. How many children do you have?
CD: Five.
RH: Could you give me some background on your education?
CD: Ninth grade. I went from first grade to ninth grade, when I started school, it was in like five months of school, in the south. Then I finished that and went to then to a Rosenwald school. It was a school that people had to pay; families had to get together and pay like—the Government give a little, but not enough. And the families had to get together until they finally had they got a Rosenwald school we called it. And that’s how we went to school. We went for five months. Then we left for five months, and went to seven months. Then from seven months, we went to nine months.

By the time I was finishing that, I was in ninth grade, the last year. But first they had two teachers, three teachers, then four
teachers. I graduated from the ninth grade under the fourth, you
know, the fourth set of teachers, different teachers. And from then on,
I got married.
RH: Really? How old were you when you got married?
CD: Eighteen years old. I got married eighteen years. I was married up—I
was eighteen years old. I was eighteen years old, one month, and five
days.
RH: [Laughs]
CD: 1939.
RH: Wow!
CD: Yes.
RH: Okay.
CD: But I told you a little bit before. I should have said something before I
got to that, because when I was a child, I was about three years old.
And my mother had a child betwixt me and the baby that she just had.
My aunt was washing some clothes and she done washed me up, and
washed my sister up. And the baby crawls to the back door. My
mother told me, “Catch the baby! Don’t let the baby fall out the
door.” I couldn’t handle the baby, because the baby was real heavy.
The baby went out the door in a puddle of water, and I went behind
him.
RH: [Laughs]
CD: And my mother said, “Lord, have mercy.” And my aunt, “If you
leave her alone, she will fell out door either.” And when I was about
four or five, about five years old, I walked a mile and a half in the
morning, back at twelve. She was chopping cotton. And back again
at the noon day. And back at night.
RH: To go to school?
CD: No, this was to the field, to chop cotton.
RH: Oh, okay.
CD: Then, after I got a little bit older, they leave me in the house, to take care of the kids, the rest of the kids.
RH: And how old were you at that point?
CD: I was about twelve, ten or twelve, something along that age. And one day we was gathering tobacco, I [pause] got scared, because she didn’t come home like she should have come home, at fresh—you know, at sun down. And I closed the door and went on the porch, and I start hollering. And he beat me for doing that, but it was the wrong thing to beat me up.
RH: Who? Your father?
CD: My father did. He beat me, but it was wrong for him to do that. So. Then the [unclear] and I went on to school just like I first said I went to school. So then what is your other question?
RH: Okay. Well, what is your religious affiliation?
CD: Well, I was a Methodist before I moved here.
RH: What made you change? Once you got here?
CD: Well, when I got here—all right. When I got here, I joined Mount Pisgah [African] Methodist [Episcopal] Church, down here on—I think it’s on 41st and Fairmount [Spring Garden St.]. I think that’s the way you say it. I went there. That church was just like it was glass. I went there; I joined the church there. It didn’t have no spirit, nowhere about the church. You wasn’t allowed to say amen.
RH: Why’s that?
CD: How the preacher’s got them in this? I don’t know what the preacher called himself doing, but he just got up there, and said the word, you know how some highfalutin place. And they say it’s still that way. But I didn’t enjoy the service they had. And I went to—my granddaughter, my daughter’s baby girl, with me there one Sunday, and she ended up no less, “Grandma, grandma, grandma! Look it, look up, look up!” And what you reckon she see? Little stars, twinkling up in the top of the ceiling—they’re still twinkling up in the ceiling.

RH: Really?

CD: Yeah. And that strikes your attention, you see. And you don’t know what’s going on. When I went to the church, they ask me what was I was affiliated with when I was at home. I told them. I stayed in that church six months, and it never did call my name no more, and ask me nothing, ain’t did nothing.

RH: Well, was this church a segregated church, or was it just all black people?

CD: No. It was all black people.

RH: And the minister was black?

CD: Yeah. And they did never call my name no more they ain’t give me no card didn’t tell me who my leader—they didn’t tell me nothing. I said, “This ain’t going to work.” So I just stayed away for a while. My daughter then moved to another church, around here about um—well, you know where the zoo is.

RH: Yes.

CD: Well, there is a church around there on Mantua. You keep straight on up and when you be on Parrish Street you get—when you pass
Mantua, you get on Parrish Street. And our church is right there, 3814 Parrish Street [Second Mount Zion Baptist Church]. I went there for about, hm, a good ten years.

RH: And what kind of church was that?
CD: This was Baptist.
RH: Okay.
CD: But honey, when I hit that church? Before this, when I started going there, I was really coming up there to see my daughter, Tracy’s mother. Honey, the preacher they had there, that church was packed every Sunday. I mean every Sunday. You could hear them people singing. Honey, it would make you want to walk a little bit faster, and when you get there, you just want to get in on what’s going on, you understand?
RH: Yeah. That’s how most Baptist Churches are.
CD: And so I say, “This is my church, I do believe.” I said, “I’m not going to join today. I’m just going to wait.” So I kept on going; I kept on going. They said, “You not going to join?” I say, “I’ll probably join one day.” So my mother got sick. And she said “Whatever you do, don’t you join that church.”
RH: Why?
CD: They are Methodist.
RH: Oh.
CD: Keep up your dues down here. Stay a member of this church. I don’t care where you go, you stay a Methodist. I said, “Mama, I ain’t going to tell you that, because I went to the Methodist church.” I said, “It was so cold, and so highfalutin, I just couldn’t take that.” I wasn’t used to it, see. The Baptist people and the Methodist people, down
South—the Baptist people and the Methodist people, and the whole mess of people down South, they’re the same.

RH: Yeah.

CD: That’s how they are, they are the same. But here, they’re not. The Methodist people. They like swollen up so big. Oh, it ain’t nothing for them to just raise ten or fifteen, twenty thousand dollars right up there to Saint Matthew. You see? When you don’t raise that much money for the thing, you ain’t done nothing. And I didn’t go up there.

RH: Wow.

CD: Mm-hm. What else you want to know? How far did we get?

RH: Okay.

CD: You didn’t tape all that did you?

RH: Excuse me?

CD: You taped all that?

RH: Yes, I did.

CD: Oh, my God!

RH: That’s okay. All right, I need to ask you about your migration here to Philadelphia. Do you remember how you actually came, like your mode of transportation?

CD: Mm-hm.

RH: Okay. Could you tell me a little bit about that experience?

CD: Well, let’s see; I came here in ’70. Maybe a little bit too close—I mean, I know what you want. I know what you want, but I can’t tell you, because—I can tell you something what some people said, but I can’t tell you that because I’m not that person. You understand?

RH: Okay.
CD: I’m telling you my side. My husband came first. He come in August I think it was. And he stayed up here from August to October. That’s the time he stayed, me and him stayed apart from August to October. And whenever he came up here, he owed debt down south, because he didn’t pay any debt, because crop was going just like that, it almost take the little crop away from the people, and the price went down so low. So when you couldn’t hardly make that, he decided he’d come to the north. He came—and now he left me and my; not the baby son. The niece—well, my baby son’s still down there, because he’s in college. But he would go home to my brother and stay with him on some weekends, until he finished school at Denmark, South Carolina. And I came in October. I stayed with Tracy about, from—I moved with her before her baby was born, and I came in a car, with my son, and my cousin, his wife, and him and my cousin, and then after that they went back. Then later on, he came, too. But in the meantime, my furniture and stuff was still in South Carolina. I never move my furniture from South Carolina.

RH: Why is that?

CD: Because when I went to go back down there, I would always go to my home and stay. Like if I say, cause at that time, my mother wasn’t that well, and I would go backwards and forwards. And I either would stayed at her house, or I would stay in my [unclear] was going to stay with her, I was going to my own house.

RH: Okay. So, you kept your house and everything?

CD: Yup.

RH: Even when you moved here.

CD: Mm-hm, still kept my house up until after my father died.
RH: And how long ago was that?

CD: My father? He died in 1981.

RH: Okay.

CD: And my mother died in 1976. And that’s when I joined the Baptist Church. I’ve been a Baptist ever since. And you wonder what I do in the church? Why I’m affiliated with?

RH: Go ahead.

CD: Sunday school is the first thing. Second thing, the gospel chorus. Third thing, on the trustee, help the trustees—if they need an aide, they have a trustee aide program, um, organization in the church. They help trustees out. Nurse.

RH: Wow! So you do a lot?

CD: I went to school for what? Eight weeks, I think, take up just a briefing, but I passed the test, and made it. I remember that. I come to tend to my mother, because I didn’t know how. They learned me how to take blood pressure, you know, take blood pressure, and then I could take—I could—what else I could do? Learned how to make the beds like they make them in the hospital all that stuff. I was seeing it done, but I never did pay—I wasn’t paying attention to it.

RH: Well, when you came to Philadelphia, what type of job did you take on at first?

CD: After I come here?

RH: Yes.

CD: I didn’t take on no job for about, oh, to the first of the next year. Then I went to a dry goods store. And right there from—I can’t think of what I started in. It was in February or March, but I started somewhere down the line, one of those months. And I worked up
until about a week and a half, week before Christmas. I told the lady, “I said I’m going home. Tell the boss that I’m going home for Christmas, and I’ll be back after Christmas.” The week after Christmas, after the New Year. After the New Year is when I was coming back, in two weeks. I didn’t take off no days—I hadn’t took off no days in between, because what was we was trying to do was get ourselves situated that we could pay all our bills. Didn’t owe nobody there, you understand?

Okay. After I told her, she went and she come back the next day and she told me, she said um, “You can’t go.” I said, “What?” She said, “Yes.” I said, “Well, I’m going to tell you right now. He’s not my daddy, and he sure God ain’t my mother. And my daddy not a white man, and my mother wasn’t a white woman.” I said he don’t have no claims on me. And you tell him I say have my money ready when I come back, and you keep the check until I come back. When I went back, I went to the hairdresser and I had my hair done, stepped in there with my lamb fur coat on, black shoes and black pocketbook.

And when the girls in the grocery store seen it, they said, “Come here,” because they had it open; one part of it was a open space, which was betwixt the dry good store and the grocery store. But the grocery store didn’t have nothing to do with the dry good department. So my husband ran that. That was where I was working, in the dry good department.

RH: Well, how long did you work there?
CD: About seven months.
RH: Seven months.
CD: Seven months, mm-hm. That’s it.
RH: And what was your husband doing while you were doing this?

CD: What was he doing? Little fooling around. Well, the first went to [unclear] Steel. That’s one place he went to. That’s on the waterfront. And then he went to construction work, but that didn’t last, because he began to have arthritis. Blood pressure got high. He had done did so much hard work until—he had no let’s say a solid job—just like help people do, putting on a lock or something like that, that’s not no—you know what I’m saying?

RH: So that’s what he did mostly?

CD: That’s what he do, yeah.

RH: So, what did he expect when he came to Philadelphia?

CD: Well, he accomplished what he expected when he first came.

RH: And what was that?

CD: He pay all his bills and didn’t owe nobody.

RH: Okay.

CD: That what he expect.

RH: Yeah.

CD: He said, “If I can pay all my bills, that’s what I’m expecting to do.” And he did that. And for the fall, he and his brother had make even enough to pay the taxes. He maybe cleared about $200, something like that. He wasn’t nothing to amount to nothing. It just was sad. It was a sad—it was a sad story, to tell all this because when I was home, my children had nothing too much to wear. Not letting children have nothing, throw out clothes and stuff, no. When I was going to school, I only had two dresses, and a white burlap sack skirt.

RH: The whole time you were going to school?
CD: Whole time, when I was in the seventh grade, from the seventh grade up. First year I got a flowered dress. The next year I got a blue linen. Some material my mama made; my mother made it. And then it come out the white flour sack. She bleached them, and took all the writing out of it, and made a skirt. Let me tell you one thing. It look just like linen do now.

RH: Really?

CD: It sure to God did. It was so pretty and white, it looked like snow. And she made me a straight skirt, with a pleat in the back.

RH: Okay.

CD: And a white lady gave me a flowered dress.

RH: And that’s all you had?

CD: That’s what I had. And she went and found some—I don’t know where she get that material from, but God knew that was the worses coat, seemed like.

RH: [Laughs]

CD: I sewed some after I came here at home, but not, you know.

RH: So when you moved to Philadelphia, what did you expect with your life? Did you expect any changes?

CD: No—I always knew—well, I never liked to sew, I always wanted to be—I wanted to be where I didn’t have to be in too much debt. You understand what I’m saying? Because all as a little child, I had to sit in the dirt. You sit in the dirt, you sweep under the house, and I got sick of that, and all this mess and that we do. You’ve got to go out and tote water and everything. And see I got done with the person that you didn’t have to go out tote it, but I knew you had to pay for it.

RH: Oh, yeah.
CD:  [Laughs] You know, I didn’t know all of that, see.
RH:  Right. So you wanted a easier life?
CD:  Yeah, I wanted—because I done worked hard all my life, and I used to string tobacco for four people.
RH:  Yeah.
CD:  Two on this side, and two on this one. Now you know that was hard. I was doing this things loop de loop. So, what else?
RH:  Well, how did people treat you? Like, did you feel that people were different?
CD:  Here? Oh, nice, really nice.
RH:  Really?
CD:  Really nice. Because I had a lot of family here, a lot of family. I bet you if I could get all my family together, everybody—that’s cousin, first cousin, aunts, and nieces—just cousins, like Uncle, children and all of that. I guess I have, I know it would be over a thousand.
RH:  Wow. That’s some family!
CD:  Right. And my husband’s aunt, she’s 90, and she go to church every Sunday. And my Aunt Mary, she is right at 81. Right at 81.
RH:  Really? And is she still alive?
CD:  Yeah.
RH:  Really? Yeah. Okay. Well, how did you do socially, here in Philadelphia, coming from South Carolina?
CD:  Me? Fine.
RH:  Fine. Because of all the family, then, I guess.
CD:  Before, when we was on the road coming here, it was least hard, because when you first start coming, you couldn’t stop.
RH:  Why?
CD: And eat at these restaurants.
RH: Oh.
CD: You had to carry your food, or you didn’t get none. You get gas, and maybe a soda, and a cracker. But you didn’t get no hot food.
RH: Because you weren’t allowed to eat in the restaurant?
CD: Mm-hm, unless you could find a black one. Where was a black one we didn’t know?
RH: But once you came to Philly—?
CD: After we came to Philly, we was here about two or three years, everything opened up to us.
RH: Okay. Well, how was it when everything wasn’t opened up to you?
CD: Together?
RH: Yeah, how was it socially, when, you couldn’t do—?
CD: In my home town, you couldn’t go to these different places. You couldn’t go to no restaurant. You couldn’t go in no restaurant, and you go to the doctor, you went to the back door plenty of time, or the side door. You never went with white. And I was raised with white all my life.
RH: In South Carolina?
CD: Mm-hm. It is still slavery down there, in some parts.
RH: Yes, I know.
CD: Somebody got a settlement. They want to try and get out, but they haven’t got out yet. They haven’t gotten out yet, but they trying. They haven’t gotten out yet. The right man ain’t got there yet.
RH: Jackson haven’t got in there yet.
CD: Yeah. Okay, let’s see. Did you have problems with your children’s schooling once you came here?
CD: My children was all out of school.
RH: They were all out of school?
CD: Mm-hm.
RH: Okay.
CD: My baby was in college, Denmark, and he graduated while we were here. He graduated in ’72, I think it was.
RH: Oh, okay. Okay. Do you have any hobbies?
CD: I have hobbies, but I can’t do them now like I used to. My hobbies were sewing and caning. I don’t do that no more.
RH: No?
CD: On account of this eye. My grandson went hunting with his cousin. He lay his gun upside the tree, and I pulled the vine to make the squirrel come out and the gun went off. And put a hole in his—in here, and put his whole shirt down in there. That’s when his cousin packed him and took him up and towed him almost to the end of the field. He went to the hospital, and he got no idea what [unclear] and said. “Ken, Ken, Ken, got shot, Ken shot, Ken shot.” And we got in the car, went back there and got him. And when they told me, I hollered so hard, I felt my blood vessel when it bust, thing went bust.

And if I had paid attention when they first came, and I first came back, it wouldn’t have did that, cause I could have went and had it done it right then, I wouldn’t have this problem. But they had to go in there and tie it off, and they said they will give me something to stop it. And heal it up inside, but I waited too late. They said they had to go in there—I only have a partial.
RH: Oh, really?
CD: Mm-hm, and then I have glaucoma, and I’m a diabetic, hypertension blood pressure. Now, what can I do?

RH: Mm-hm

CD: You know like, help with kids and stuff like that, but other than that—I can cook; can do my own cooking.

RH: Yeah. Yeah, I know that must be hard.


RH: As far as—?

CD: I’ve been doing all what I want to do. Don’t bother me no more.

RH: That’s good.

CD: Oh, I see, I’m usually alone what it would be just be.

RH: Yeah.

CD: When my time comes, that’s what of this—because I thought I was going this year.

RH: And why is that?

CD: Well, my sugar dropped below 30, [unclear] started to drop. Then the next time, I didn’t know nothing. My husband said I just fold just fell on the floor, he picked me up, I fall right back down. But now I’m doing—you know, I’m doing all right. I can go anywhere I want to go. [Laughs]

RH: That’s good. [Laughs] Okay. Well, once you came here, and you experienced what you did, how did you feel about staying here? Did you want to go back to South Carolina?

CD: Oh, I plan to go back.

RH: You are? Why is that?

CD: Well, I have sisters and brothers and I’m the oldest child, and every time I go down, “Is you coming to stay with us, stay with us.” I said,
“Well, in the meantime, I haven’t finished paying for this house.” I said, “I would like to stay for five years at least and pay for the house before I thought I would go somewhere else [unclear].” And I may not never go back. I don’t tell them; I haven’t told them definitely I’m coming back.

RH: Yeah, so you’re not sure. Okay.
CD: Not sure I’m going back.
RH: Okay. What is your outlook on the condition of the black community during the next century?
CD: Well, on the next century, that’s nineteen—that’s twenty, isn’t it?
RH: Yes.
CD: If they don’t change, and change fast, it’s got to be double the problem we have now. I mean double. When you see babies out there cussing, swearing, and taking up things, and doing things that they’re doing out there now in the street, it can’t do nothing but be worse! Well, I fault the mothers and the fathers, and especially the fathers—he should take care of that family. He out there doing what he want to do while the mother got to get out there and work, to try to help. Then she get so frustrated then she goes, leaves the kids there, do anything they want to do.

I see one out there the other day. Now hear, I don’t want this on the tape. I don’t want this on the tape. Just one word, I’ll tell you when we finish. Make me remember now, while you’re here.

RH: Okay. Okay. What were your parents’ names?
CD: My father was named Ken Mennerlyn. They called him “AK.” His name was Ken, K-E-N. M-E-N-N-E-R-L-Y-N. My mother Phibbie, P-H-I-B-B-I-E, Longs. When my father came, my father’s father
came from a white man and an Indian. You see these high cheeks we has? It’s Indian. I don’t care what—don’t let nobody fool you, now. Ask you [unclear] got it in the book, ask them, people with high cheek bones, up here? Ask them if that’s a trace of Indian blood. And he’ll tell you.

RH: What was their date and place of birth?

CD: Well now, for their place, my mother, her place of birth was—at that time, they called it—some say Florence, but it wasn’t. All the records and things was kept in Marion County. So I don’t know if Marion County and Florence County were divided, or what. All I knew, that they have a record in Marion now, concerning some property that is in Florence County, belongs to my mother’s father. [Laughts] Now you got the list!

RH: Yes, I do.

CD: And so my father’s father didn’t have no property. But the only thing that I knew that he said that his father did—he tend to horses in the first war. That’s the Confederate War.

RH: First war?

CD: First war. First war was the Confederate War, I think it was. Anyway. His father, now, not him. My father didn’t go in there—his father, my father’s father. He was tend to the horses. But they say that—I try to get, try to trace that up about seeing, did he have anything in service that saying that he was there? But I never gotten it. I’ve been trying to get it, but I didn’t know who to, you know.

RH: Who to talk to.

CD: Who to talk to about it. I didn’t know that I was related to a lady in Panama until she was dead and buried. And she was a white. She had
Indian in her. Her, my grandfather on my daddy’s side, and her were sisters and brothers.

RH: Really?

CD: But I knew this much about her. Every time she run—they run a store, and every time I would go to this little store, she always give us a bag of candy. And just “Go, go, go! Scat, scat, scat; get out of here! Go outside! Watch while you’re eating it!” And we’d go on out the door. So, now she’s dead. She’s say, “You want to read something?” I say, “Yes,” “read this,” and I read it. You know, I’ve got watery eyes; I’ve got water in my eyes, knowing that she knew, but I didn’t know. Because if I had known, I would have been there plenty of days, and just sit down and talk with her. But I didn’t know. You don’t know a thing you don’t know.

RH: Yeah, a lot of people don’t know things like that.

CD: I had people that, from the family reunion this year, down in Panama, from my father’s people, I was the first—well, from my daddy’s people. My daddy’s family, children I was the first one went to Florida. To see anything about them. And after I went, then his daughter’s daughter—daughter got killed, and we went down to the funeral. My brother went with his family. And that’s how he knew her. So year before last, they came up to family reunion here. That’s how they—so this year, we going back down there to Panama, for the family reunion.

RH: Really? So you’re saying that a lot of your family is from Panama? Is that it?

CD: I got a—my daddy’s brother, whole brother. Well, I say whole but he half-brother because they didn’t have the same mother. But it’s his
brother; they had the same father, not the same mother. They was, you see [unclear], and Hattie, Thomas, Arthur—Thomas, Arthur, and Hattie. There are three here, or four. Three or four here

UM: Four, Woodrow

CD: There was Thomas, Arthur—Thomas, Arthur—four brother—three brother—two brothers and one sister.

And we didn’t know—I didn’t know anything until I keep hear [unclear] daddy saying, “Your Uncle Arthur, my brother Arthur.” Said, “I would have been at this funeral if it hadn’t been for your mama.” I said, “Why didn’t you go?” “She told me that I would have to bury him if I went down there.” Guess what? He didn’t have to bury him, he buried himself. He had a big plantation turned around and give it all away. Give away every stick from his children and leave him nothing for it.

RH: Okay. What were your parents’ occupations?

CD: Farmers.

RH: Farmers. And how many children did they have?

CD: Eight.

RH: Eight.

CD: I’m the oldest.

RH: Oh, okay. [Laughs] What were their educational backgrounds?

CD: All of them college educated children, except one.

RH: And your parents?

CD: My mother went to Mullinar [?] School, and she finished, I think, the seventh grade, and my father—I think he say he finished the third.

RH: Okay. What were their religious affiliations?

CD: Methodist.
RH: Methodist also.
CD: Mm-hm.
RH: Okay. And what were their political affiliations? Anything? [Laughs] No. Okay. Do you know any of their—go ahead.
CD: Go ahead and say what you first asked me.
RH: Do you know any of their hobbies? What they did?
CD: My father was a fisher and hunter.
RH: He was a hunter? And a fisher.
CD: And a fisher. Oh, boy, loves me some fish. I just start back eating fish about a year.
RH: Really.
CD: I done got to a place where I wouldn’t eat no fish. He go and catch—you see them big old brown fish—like, something like this, he go and catch them things honey by the—tubs and oh! He’d bring them home, sell some. We had to clean them, because at that time didn’t have no electricity, no refrigerator or nothing to keep them in, so he had to—um, you didn’t get no ice.
RH: So you would just clean them and eat them?
CD: Cook, and eat them for dinner. And brother—not unless you take them and cook them and can them, put them in jars, and put the grease on them.
RH: You would can the fish?
CD: Oh, yeah. You ain’t never hear that?
RH: No.
CD: Oh, you take the fish and you clean it. Then you fry it. Put it in the jar, take that hot grease, and pour all in and turn it, the grease, to the
bottom. And then you turn it back up. The grease got it sealed, see, on the top.

RH: Oh.

CD: Stay in there. You get it ready, you sit it out near the stove, and it would unthaw, take the fork or anything take it right out. Sauce! Pork sauces and all—anything that come from a hog or anything—fish, you can get a big cup—I don’t know if you’ve [unclear] fish, caught fish?

RH: Oh, yes.

CD: Ok, you take that put it in a jar raw. Put a tablespoon full of salt—teaspoon full of salt in there, fill it with water, put it in your pot, and let it boil. Just whenever you think it’s done—you know when it gets done.

RH: Yes.

CD: Take it off and set it out. Let the rain run slack from the water, and you shake it. You screw that [unclear] tight.

RH: Wow.

CD: Whenever you get ready for it, you just take the jar, run the hot water over the jar, take the thing off. And guess what he liked? You eat salmon fish?

RH: Yes, I have.

CD: That’s what he liked.

RH: Really.

CD: Honey, we came up on the rough side of the road. My mother raised chicken, raised turkeys, raised guineas. She didn’t have no ducks, but she raised—chicken; we have our own eggs. We had three milk cows, and knew when the milk cows came up the same time. We always
had eggs, butter and milk. You take that milk, and you had like some kind of thing that you tie it round the neck of the jar where it wouldn’t slip off, and put that jar down in the jug. Get a glass jug with a handle or something, and put that in there, and put it down in the bottom of the rail. And they sit down there twelve o’clock.

RH: Really.
CD: And it just as cold as you had ice.
RH: Wow.
CD: Wasn’t no one was a cotton picker.
RH: Yeah.
CD: Couldn’t pick no cotton.
RH: You couldn’t. How come?
CD: I just couldn’t pick cotton. I would go in the field—
RH: You just couldn’t do it.
CD: I just couldn’t never get no cotton—I could pull a little bit, but I still could never pick no cotton. My mother could pick 300 pounds of cotton. Sometimes, somedays, she picked 390. My uncle’s the same way; my daddy couldn’t pick no cotton. My sisters then, they could pick 170 and -80. I mean, my children picked 250, -60 pounds, and I ain’t ever picked no cotton. Just couldn’t pick cotton. They say my fingers was too blunt.
RH: So, what would you do, as far as—?
CD: I be in the field, but that’s all I’d be doing, because I sure wasn’t doing nothing. I might as well have stayed in the house, and cleaned house, and wash for them, and cook for them.
RH: Is that what you did?
CD: She want me to go to the field. I went, but I wasn’t doing nothing; I said I might as well. If you can’t do one thing, they should let you do another.

RH: Yeah.

CD: We canned peaches, we canned pears, we canned grapes, all things that—canned tomatoes.

RH: So did you do that for yourself, or did you do that—?

CD: I did that for myself and for my mother.

RH: Okay. What was the earliest date your family arrived in Philadelphia? You said in 19—your whole entire family, as far as your parents?

CD: My parents ain’t never come to Philadelphia.

RH: They never—? So the earliest—

CD: I was the first.

RH: And that was in 1970.

CD: Mm-hm.

RH: Your parents were free, right?

CD: Yeah. They was free. They weren’t none of them slaves.

RH: Right. But their parents, your-great grandparents, they were slaves?

CD: They were slaves. Yeah, he was—well, he had a friend lived down there. His mother—man of the age of him—he said if he had been living when it was done, he would have killed him.

RH: Really.

CD: They hung tie her up and stripped all her clothes off, and beat her until the blood run down, and turn her loose.

RH: God. Okay. [Pause in recording] Where was the first place that your family lived when they moved here to Philadelphia?

CD: Where I lived when I first moved here?
RH: Yeah. What part of Philadelphia?
CD: West Philly.
RH: West Philly.
CD: Mm-hm.
RH: And is that where you lived since you’ve been here?
CD: In West Philly. I see my [unclear] about—from October to—in December—what that, no, December? It was the first of November. That’s when it was, because, her baby born in November the 30th. And I was there when her baby was born, and my baby daughter.
RH: Okay. Where did the next generation move?
CD: Here?
RH: Yeah, when they left home.
CD: Well, the last one left there and down south was my baby boy. He left there in ’72. I think it was ’72. ’72, ’72, up here. The baby son.
RH: Where did they live? Where did they move?
CD: He was in college then.
RH: Uh-huh.
CD: And when he come in to visit, he would go up to his uncle. Right there, not far from my home, around about seven, eight miles from my original home.
RH: So where does he live now?
CD: He live here in Columbia Shore.
RH: They all—oh, okay.
CD: I have three here in West Philly and one in [unclear], Theresa’s mother. Got one in South Carolina.
RH: Okay. As time passed by, what old customs and values did you keep?
CD: Old customs that I kept? Of doing anything? Washing, ironing, cooking, pies, cakes, serving, doing this, and going seeing the sick, doing all that junk. Still talking. She say I ain’t got a finish yet. [Laughs]

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Go ahead and talk.
RH: So, which ones did you not keep?
CD: Huh?
RH: Which ones didn’t you keep? You named all those that you kept.
CD: About the same routine, only I was just in the city.
RH: Okay.
CD: I kept my same routine, most likely. Mostly. I just did it mostly, all. One thing, I didn’t have no chicken or stuff like that [unclear] something like that.
RH: Right.
CD: Other than that, I kept my same routine.
RH: Do you know when ethnic groups began to intermarry here? Do you remember when ethnic groups began to intermarry in Philadelphia?
CD: Hm. Well. [Pause] I was about—how many years has that been, Ray?
UM: What?
CD: When the whites and the blacks begin to marry? I think that’s what it means, isn’t it?
RH: Yes.
CD: It’s been since we’ve been here, wasn’t it?
UM: I don’t know.
CD: It didn’t been when we came, it wasn’t that way, was it? Had it already started yet? Well, if it started then, I don’t know when it started.
UM: I don’t know if they was marrying legally, [unclear].
CD: [Laughs]
RH: [Laughs] Right.
UM: People are marrying now. I can’t tell whether I see the white men with the colored women, and the black men with the white women, but I don’t know whether they was married or not. What I mean—it was more under the covers when we first come here. You know what I mean?
CD: That’s why I said I couldn’t tell.
RH: Right. Well, what was most people’s reaction? How did you react to all of this when you saw it?
CD: You know what I say? I say they done did it to my color, why can’t they do it to theirs? [Laughs] You want the truth, don’t you?
RH: Okay. All right.
CD: [Laughs] I say, always called us niggers, but show me a black man person, a real black person. There is none. Most of them got some tangled up with some—like real—somewhere down the line.
UM: What happened here, there ain’t but two people that could ever breed, that was the white man and a colored woman. The black man and the white woman always been—
CD: You should have interviewed him, see.
UM: See, if you could decide that the white man could go with a colored woman, but if a black man look at a white woman, if she loved him—although they say, he raped her or something—they kill him. Which is why she was loving all at the same time, but he was gone. But now, it’s come to the light shining, if she want to stay with you, want to
marry you, it don’t make no difference. It ain’t nothing they can do about it.

RH: Yes. Well, how did you feel when you came to Philadelphia? What was your reaction to being here? Compared to South Carolina.

UM: Oh, it was a big, big difference in the—in the way it actually was—I mean, most of the colored people down south, if they went with a white woman, they were slipping and going. You understand what I mean?

RH: Yes.

UM: But up here, they was walking the street with them. But down where I come from south, you didn’t walk the street with no white girl. Which is why she might have loved you ever so good, but the other white people.

RH: So, when you moved here, did you feel like people treated you differently or, black people or white people? How did you relate to them?

UM: The people in the city, that was born and raised in the city, they didn’t seem like they didn’t want our breeds up here. They’d walk by you and wouldn’t speak to you, and all like that. Where I come from, everybody would speak to you.

RH: Oh. Even the white people?

UM: Yeah. They would speak to you. But the black people wouldn’t even speak to you. If they didn’t know you, they would walk right by you, they wouldn’t [unclear].

CD: You know, they don’t speak now, as far as they’re concerned.

UM: Some of them.

RH: Yes, I know.
CD: I mean, right down there standing, and would speak to you for nothing.

UM: There’s a lady, second door from us.

CD: That’s right.

UM: You could be sitting on the porch, everybody sitting on the porch, and she called everybody names she want to speak to them.

RH: Yeah.

UM: So, if she don’t call your name, she ain’t speaking to you, right?

RH: Yeah, I know it’s still like that today in the south, people speak to you, doesn’t matter who you are, they still wave to you when you drive down the street. You know; and that’s pretty nice. I miss that.

CD: Like I was telling you about the church. When I went in those churches, they just didn’t do nothing for me. I had to leave there. I couldn’t take it.

RH: Well, okay. Thank you.

CD: You’re welcome. I hope it did some good. I’m going to see you and you’re going to send me a copy.

RH: Okay.

[End of Interview]