

Transcript: EB Rich Interview

Interviewee: EB Rich
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Interviewer: Kimberly Hill
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KH: Hello, this is Kim Hill on June 21, 2007, and I'm at the home of Mr. EB Rich in Birmingham, Alabama, interviewing him for the Southern Oral History Program.

AR: I was born in Marion County, Alabama, in a rural community. I was raised on a farm, which—our farm was just outside of a little coal-mining town name Briggett, Alabama. Briggett was the home of Briggett Coal Company and Brookside and Prep Mining Company. The combined mines worked a little over a thousand people, underground mines. But in my childhood, I had worked on a farm. Then my last two years in high school, when we finished our farming, why, I worked at the sawmill about four weeks during that period of time to earn me a little money.

And then when I graduated from high school, I went to Itawamba Junior College on a football scholarship. At the end of the football season, why, a lot of us had to go into the Army because of the Korean thing. I went and stayed in the Army two years, and I got out in December of '52. I had a scholarship offer before I went off in the Army with Livingstone State University, which now is University of West Alabama, and I had one at Austin Peay up in Tennessee. But when I got out of the Army, they told me that since I was in the Army and I'd be eligible for the GI Bill, why, I'd have to go on the GI Bill. So I refused to do that because I felt that if I made the football team, I should receive a

scholarship on top of the GI Bill. They wouldn't do that, and I made an offer to Livingstone that if I made the first thirty-three that they'd give me a scholarship. If I didn't, why, I still go to school on the GI Bill, but they wouldn't do that.

So I came to Birmingham and put my application in at US Steel, and they hired me March the 29, 1953. I worked in the open hearth department, and after the people there got to know me and made friends, in I believe it was '55, '56, they elected me as assistant grievance person. Then in '59, somewhere along in there, I was elected as the grievance person. This is a large department. That grievance person represented about eleven hundred people. Then in 1962, the chairman of the grievance committee resigned, and they elected me as chairman of the grievance committee. The local union's size at that time was sixty-eight hundred people.

October of 1966, the international union appointed me as a staff representative, assigned to service all the basic US Steel locals and some other locals, too. At that time in US Steel, we had thirteen or fourteen local unions for various reasons. But I believe it was 1971, they made me a sub-district director. Then in the '80s, President Williams promoted me to international representative, but with the understanding that I wouldn't have to move to Pittsburgh and I'd still be over the sub-district that I was in. The sub-district, we always called it the Fairfield Office. We had a different office from the district office because the district at that time covered Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. In our office, I had nine staff representatives and two secretaries. We serviced the majority of the membership in the state of Alabama out of our office, and I held that position until I retired in 1990.

KH: Did you ever have to handle things going on outside of Alabama, too?

ER: Yes. I helped negotiate contracts in Mississippi, Florida. I did arbitration work in all of those states, and in the seventies, they put me—. On top of all my other duties, I helped guide the guys in cases that dealt with testing. The international union had sent me to the University of Wisconsin to

study industrial psychological evaluation under Dr. KU Smith. I believe it's U. It might have been Y, but I bet it's KU Smith. The purpose of that is how to evaluate a test as to why it fit that strictly with the job they were being tested for or if it had areas in there that could potentially be discriminatory and that type thing. At that time in the seventies, all these psychologists and those people were going around peddling these tests to the different companies as how they could evaluate people. The purpose of my study is to make sure that the test was validated correctly. Of course, as you know, there's two forms of that job test validation or actually on-the-job validation, which on-the-job validation is more correct way to evaluate a person. But a lot of companies didn't want to do that.

KH: How many tests did you have in your company?

ER: Well, US Steel only had one type of test, but their test eventually was validated. But after the sixties and the early seventies, why, they started straightening up their act, and we didn't have much problem out of that. When they started up the new pipe mill, we challenged a test that they was giving those employees in arbitration and brought Dr. Smith in as a witness. But the arbitrator denied our case, so—. That is the last case that I know of with US Steel dealing with testing.

KH: How could you tell when a test was unfair?

ER: By the questions that was asked. If they asked question who's unrelated to the job that they's doing, you know they was trying to do something else. They started out testing that an employee had to be able to have the knowledge to ascertain the training for the top job in that line of promotion, which might be ten jobs above the one that they was bidding on. But we got that struck down and got it taken care of in contract negotiations, too, so they could only test on the job that they was bidding on. We also won in arbitration that if an employee had filled in on the job, say, above him or her on a temporary vacancy, that would be considered as training, and they wouldn't have to go through more training, which made it much better and stopped a lot of stuff that was going on.

KH: I'm guessing with all those other processes that were going on, people didn't get promoted

too often.

ER: Well, they started getting promoted, the blacks did. See, there were certain levels of jobs that blacks worked, and they didn't go above that. But I believe it was in—was it in the early sixties? President Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925, which meant that companies had to start getting their house in order as far as promotions is concerned. If they didn't, why, that company wouldn't receive orders that dealt with any government contracts or anything like that, which the majority of major steel companies' products somehow tied into that. So we set up a pool as to where all job class fours and below was considered one job, and then when the job come open, then the line of promotion, why, they had to bid those jobs and those people would be allowed to bid on those vacancies. Later on, we merged lines progression to include black jobs, white jobs, and all of them, and that was finalized in a court order by Judge Parner in May two of seventy-three, I believe. After then, why, the blacks started moving into the lines progression and then picking up their seniority and eventually moving on to top jobs. But that's easy said to give the history, but it wasn't easy done.

KH: Yeah, it seems like that was what you spent most of your time on in here, is talking about that process, because you started it in sixty-three or so, and this judge didn't finalize it until '73.

ER: Well, that trial didn't start until 1972. It lasted sixty-six days, and before he gave a decision, the parties agreed that the judge's order would be a final thing. So the judge appointed a company representative. His name: Dennis Flynt Hooten. We all called him Flynt. He was labor relations guy from the Birmingham district of US Steel, and he appointed me as a representative of the union. His directions to us was to finish merging the lines progression and to write a set of rules in language that would be used throughout the works that would provide for promotions, filling jobs, and all that type thing, and we was to report back to him. That process took a while, because the company guy and I disagree a lot, and then the judge would come in and we'd report to him and he'd come in a make his decision on it. That being on the afternoon—I believe it was around three o'clock on May

2nd, why, he called all the local union presidents together and gave his decision and issued those rules to go by.

KH: Is that just steel mill unions?

ER: Yes.

KH: OK.

ER: And he set up a committee to educate the people on those rules and to hear complaints from individuals. I believe the title of that committee was Implementation Committee. That was made up of a guy named Moore from the federal government, Hooten, myself and the president of the YML local, who was black, named Johnson. I forget his first name.

KH: That's OK.

ER: He's since passed, but we started out—. Well, I go around to the local unions, but first we had a two-day meeting with the company and the union, the top eschelon of the local unions and the company, to explain the rules. Then I'd go around to the local unions at their regular meetings to explain the rules. In that two-day meeting, the district director attended those meetings, and the vice-president of the corporation. But then we started out meeting with—made it public to everybody that we'd meet three days a week for a period of time.

KH: That was so that they could come and bring any grievances they had?

ER: Yeah, or ask educational questions about the rules. Then it tailed off to we'd meet one day a week, and that went on for a period of time. But the implementation committee itself, after that, would meet once a month to see if there was any procedure in the rules that we had to issue an explanation on or anything, which they were several. That remained in effect, and any change in those rules had to be approved by both the company and the union and the court, which the actual language in the rules is never changed. Sometimes the interpretations was improved on or modified, but the rules per se, the actual ink on the rules, is never changed until—well, it was after I left. I left in 1990,

and it's after I left that the court dismissed their jurisdiction over it.

KH: That means the court isn't going to try to enforce it anymore?

ER: Oh, well, if there's a charge comes up or something, they can go to court, but first you go through the grievance procedure within the union. Then if that don't resolve it, anybody can go to court.

KH: OK.

ER: The company always wanted to get out from under the court order, and I never would agree with them, because it's a big help to me to know that I had a court order to back me up.

KH: Um-hmm. Why did the court change its position now?

ER: I don't know.

KH: I was just wondering. How soon did you get involved with the union when you went to work with US Steel?

ER: I started attending union meetings—. Our local union met every Monday night, and I started attending union meetings the first Monday after I went to work with them [laughs].

KH: That's impressive. Why did you decide so early on that you were going to get involved?

ER: Well, I had been raised in the country where I was, and knowing the coal miners, I just thought it was the thing to do. And the department I was in was the bulk of organizing the steel workers in Fairfield Works in 1936, so we had a strong thing there. You could very well see at that time if it wasn't for the union, why, the company would be treating you terrible. I was smart enough to see that and made friends with some people that was active, and it was just a thing I liked after I got in it all. I liked what I was doing. Undoubtedly, they like me. [KH laughs] They kept electing me.

KH: Yeah, it seems like they liked you [laughs].

ER: I served one term as financial secretary of the local union in—I believe it was '62 to '64, but I resigned that job because the chairman of the grievance committee was taking all my work, all my

time, and we went through several times in there. In fact, there'd been this—. We kept changing lines of promotion and progressing as fast as we could and still hold things together, you know. That was in the early 1960s to '73. The court order really give us a big thing to go on. We was catching hell from all sides. Some of the whites felt that we shouldn't be doing what we're doing, and the blacks felt that we wasn't moving fast enough. You know, it's in the thing. [laughs]

KH: Yeah. But when you started with the union, there were already black and white employees?

ER: Oh, yeah. There was always black and white employees in US Steel, just blacks were relegated to the lower-task jobs.

KH: I was confused about that because I know that you helped integrate the kind of jobs that people could get, but I didn't know if the union itself was fully integrated then.

ER: The union itself?

KH: Yes, sir.

ER: We had a couple of black representatives, but later on we had more, and secretaries. In fact, just before I left, this guy who lives down the street here, Morris Anderson, that worked for Jim Walters over—. They're not a part of US Steel, but I service them and I recommended him to go on the staff. They appointed him, and he's done a good job. That was before I left. In fact, the business, they wanted to move him to Pittsburgh, but he didn't want to go. He would have had to have gone if they had really come down and told him to go, but he wanted to stay here. I advised him not to go to Pittsburgh, because it's a different situation up there working out of the headquarters. You're going everywhere, cost of living is considerable greater up there, and his pay would have only amounted to about twelve thousand dollars more, which would have eat up—. The cost of living up there would have eat up his pay. I told him, "Morris, just stay. They're going to promote you here." And they did and made him a sub-district director.

KH: Is that how much that you made working for the union here, just twelve thousand?

ER: No, no. No, no. No, I believe that's what I started off at. I believe it was fourteen thousand when I started off in 1966, but it has gone much higher than that.

KH: That's good.

ER: Morris had a very good job and very good pay and benefits, and I had—me, too. I had—compared to living, you know—I had a good job and good benefits. But Morris's assignment now is to negotiate the first-term contracts. What I mean by first term is when you organize plants, you know, you got to negotiate a contract. First contracts are very hard because you've got to get the language in there that you want, and the company's got these high-priced lawyers that doesn't want to do this and that, so you've got to take your time to do it. Morris is very good at that.

KH: It sounds like a very difficult job.

ER: It is, but it's—. I liked it. I liked to negotiate first-term contracts. I did big first-term contracts at the end and arbitration.

KH: You had to know almost as much about law as the lawyers did, basically.

ER: Right, right.

KH: Did you want to become one of the union representatives?

ER: Yeah. I mean, I didn't have to take it if I didn't want it.

KH: You were nominated for it?

ER: Yes.

KH: OK. I was wondering if you volunteered or anything. How much of an extra time commitment was it for you to be one of the union leaders, like in addition to the work you were already doing?

ER: The work that I was doing when I was in the mill?

KH: Yeah.

ER: Well, considerable more time because once you get to be—. Well, when I was chairman of the grievance committee at the local, they put me on full-time. I didn't have to work in the plant. I worked in the plant enough to keep my benefits and seniority going. But once I become a representative with the international union, why, plus handling the grievance work and the arbitration and all that for the local unions that you was assigned to, why, then you had to make their local union meetings, which the majority of them met at night. They lasted up to two hours. [Coughs] Excuse me.

KH: Would you like to stop and get some water?

ER: No, I'm OK. But it takes—. And with my position, I was away from my family a lot, but after our first child was born, my wife—we chose for her not to work a job. She quit work and took care of the household, which made it better for us, and we made it fine. But a lot of times, you'd have to go off and stay gone two or three days or so, and every third year when the basic steel contract come up for negotiations, why, we'd be gone for extended periods of time. From 1973 on, why, I had an assignment with the international union to handle what is called local issues for the western half of the United States in those contract negotiations. That required that I stay during those negotiations. We could come home—they'd let us come home every other weekend, but that would go on for about three months every third year. They'd start off negotiations in Pittsburgh, but they'd eventually move to Washington down at the tail end, so they could be there close if the president or the labor department wanted to intervene or anything.

KH: How were your relations with the local union representatives?

ER: How was mine?

KH: Yeah.

ER: It was good.

KH: You found it easy to cooperate with them and get things done?

ER: The majority of them, the vast majority of them. In fact, I wanted to show you a plaque

they gave me after we went through the '73 rule change thing that all the local unions voted to give me, but I stored a lot of my stuff. We got an old wine place up in northwest Alabama now, and I stored a lot of my stuff up there, and that plaque's up there. But they treat me OK. And then they gave me a plaque in 1983 for some more work that I did, and somewhere along in there, the Birmingham Labor Council gave me the representative of the year award. I got it out there in the den, one of the plaques. I'll show it to you before you leave.

KH: OK.

ER: But we had—I'd say a good relationship now. I'm not saying that everybody agreed with me, but particularly in the 1960s and early '70s in there, a lot of them didn't agree with what I was doing. But they understood where I was coming from, and they didn't give me any problems.

KH: Everybody respected that you were trying to get the best you could for everyone.

ER: Yeah, yeah.

KH: And that's not an easy position to make, to be able to convince that many people that you're trustworthy. I was wondering, from your personal perspective, what was the most difficult thing that the company was doing that you were trying to make better?

ER: Well, to start with, the company wasn't—. Until President Kennedy's order, the company wasn't cooperating. Unless you had some tool to use that you could lean on with somebody like the governor or something, it wouldn't have been enough support to strike a plant to merge lines of promotion or something. My toughest time in the union was integrating those lines of promotion and writing those rules.

KH: Um-hmm. And I know some of the workers didn't appreciate that either, right?

ER: No.

KH: Some people were fighting it, yeah.

ER: See, on seniority, the very best you can do is fifty percent, like when you're merging lines

of progression or that type thing, because if the person's going to be displaced or somebody move ahead of them, he's going to be mad. And the person that's moving up and getting the benefits is—well, most of them's going to be satisfied and they going to be your friends. But some of them say, “Well, we didn't do it quick enough” and that type thing. So the very best you can do is fifty percent.
[Laughter]

KH: I didn't think about that. All the people that ended up lower than they though they would be would be angry.

ER: Yeah, yeah.

KH: So you would also consider that your best achivement in your union work?

ER: Yes, and in 1983, the company had shut the plant down, and we negotiated an agreement to get them to reopen it, a concessionary agreement. I'm satisfied with that, but I look back to even where the black people had disagreed with me back in the '60s and early '70s. I run into some of them now, and they all tell me how much they appreciate what we did back then.

KH: Is there anything that you look back and you wish it would have gone differently?

ER: Yeah, there's several things, but nothing you can do about that.

KH: Yeah. Could you tell me about one in particular?

ER: Well, if it had been possible, I wish we'd have moved quicker. But when I study that and I look in retrospect, we moved about as quick as we could move and keep things together. You see, I know, looking at you, not old enough, but you've studied, I'm sure—. At the time we was doing this work, '62 to '73, we had Bull Connor in the streets with the dogs, and we had George Wallace standing on every street corner hollering, “Segregation for now and forever.” So it didn't make it easy, and I'm just telling you. I'm not looking for any glory or anything, but it didn't make it easy, not at all. I know the Bible teaches us to forgive and that type thing, but I never did vote for George Wallace and told him I didn't and—.

KH: You met him?

ER: Yeah, they all knew where I stood because, you see, all his supporters in the local unions was giving me hell about that and running around in the plant taking up money for him. Of course, at the local union meetings, there's always a place in the order of business where the representative makes a report. I'd give him hell [laughs], and of course his supporters didn't like that, and my supporters stayed quiet. They wouldn't say nothing, so it kind of put me out front. But he was running around all over the factory up in Gary, Indiana, and everywhere, raising all kinds of stink. Of course, he later—. Before he died, he wanted forgiveness for that, but that was already done.

KH: Yeah. I have studied it a lot and talked to a lot of people about that time, but yeah, since I didn't live through it, I think I may never really understand how hurtful it was.

ER: Oh, it was. Of course, I—. They come to me and tried to get me to with it, but that s.o.b. caused me many a heartache and sleepless night *not* to support him. I think she mentioned that in here. But of course, as far as Bull Connor is concerned, when we'd have picket lines or something and have some kind of disturbance, he wouldn't bother us. I mean, he wouldn't do it. But when it come to integration—. Like we had a staff representative and a black guy that was riding to a meeting together, and he had them arrested. But that type thing, anything to do with segregation, he was absolutely an idiot and caused a lot of people a lot of heartache. Of course, I don't know; I believe Judith covered that. But a lot of people don't know when he locked up all those kids, when they was marching and everything, you know who made the bond for those people?

KH: No, I don't.

ER: Steel workers and automobile workers.

KH: I didn't know that.

ER: I believe you'll find that in this book somewhere. But I know they did, and the steel workers couldn't publicize that, and neither could the auto workers, because the black membership

would have been terribly upset. But they come in here at night with the money and put it in the hands of a committee here that made bond for those people. Buddy Cooper was the person that arranged all that, of the Cooper, Mitch, Black law firm.

KH: Yeah, I remember him in the book. That's amazing.

ER: Never could come out to give any publicity about it or let anybody know because everybody had been—. Well, not everybody, but the people who was against what he was doing would have raised hell and been getting on the union and everything else, so they just done it very quietly. Not very many people knew about it.

KH: People knew your political stance, though, because you were one of the representatives?

ER: Yeah. But the real guy now that I worked for is named Howard Streval. He was a district director. He's passed. He's dead.

KH: Were there other people in your union who were doing like civil rights protests and trying to not get a lot of attention for it?

ER: That was doing what now?

KH: That they were doing civil rights protests.

ER: Yeah, there were some lower-eschalon local union officers who was dabbling around in it. They wouldn't come out up front. We had a little—and Judith covered that—we had a few people in one department that was in communications. Robert Sheldon, which was a Ku Klux leader in Tuscaloosa, and they were calling him and he was advising them. I went to the company about it. They come back to me later and told me they went to the FBI, and the FBI said they knew who the people were and knew what they was doing, and they didn't want to do anything because they was able to monitor them, which I think was a bunch of b.s. But anyway, that's what I was told. See, in the Viola Liuzzo thing, two of those people involved in her death worked in the department that I came from. Some of the people that worked right around them was trying to collect money for their defense,

but I never would give money, and I got the company to rule that they couldn't collect any money on the company property. One of the people, the machinist, he served time, but the other person died before his time.

KH: They must not have been convicted until quite a bit later, then?

ER: Yeah. It took a while.

KH: Did you work with any other union leaders from outside of the steel industry?

ER: Not really. All my work was with the steel workers union. Of course, when they'd have AFL-CIO conventions or something, why, I'd see them, but as far as working with them, no.

KH: This question has more to do with, I guess, recent events, but has anybody from the Civil Rights Institute ever talked to you about this story?

ER: I can't say whether they was with—. A lot of people have talked to me, but I don't believe—not from the Civil Rights Institute here in Birmingham. They get their information from—. Well, they talked to Buddy Cooper and people like that, but they never did talk to me. But there's an awful lot of people that was involved in this struggle, black people, that's been involved in the Institute.

KH: Could you tell me more about Buddy Cooper?

ER: Yeah, I can tell you about anything you want to know about him [laughs]. He was my friend. Buddy was a Jew, and he was raised at Brookwood, Alabama, which is a coal-mining town. When he got out of high school—. His father had a general store down there that primarily was for the mining people and what have you. That was the community. When he got out of high school, his father put him on a train to Harvard, and he didn't come home till he graduated. They didn't have money to go back and forth and everything. When he got out of Harvard, he started practicing here, but he had to go into World War II. He was some kind of spy or something or another. I don't know. He never would tell me exactly what he did.

After he got out of World War II, he came back to Birmingham and opened up a law firm with

Bill Mitch, who was the son of a person with the mine workers that organized the mine workers in Alabama, Mr. Mitch, and Hugo Black, Jr., which was Justice Black's son. Cooper, Mitch, Black, and Crawford— Tom Crawford was the son of a district representative for the mine workers. So they started the law firm, and as the only law firm that represented organized labor, I'm told, during that time—. And the law firm would grow. And of course, they represented all the steel worker work in the South and Southeast, and they represented the Teamsters at one time. But the mine workers and the steel workers was the big clients. Then later on, they started representing AFL locals. But they had primarily all of the representing of the labor and the workers in the South.

KH: And he worked with you throughout all that process of integrating the promotion lines and even after?

ER: Oh, yes. Yes, he really—. He and Streval were the front men, and I was just carrying out the things that we wanted to do. But no, Buddy Cooper was on the committee that had secret meetings and everything to eventually get the city fathers to change their minds and all that type thing.

KH: Why do you think he cared so much about making the steel industry better?

ER: That was just him. He was a people person. Buddy made all kinds of money practicing law, and he gave it all away to various causes here. He was not a wealthy man when he died, and he practiced law up until about eight months before he passed, and he was about ninety. He said he come through the Depression and he just wanted to help people, and he's received all kinds of awards here for the work that he's done in helping promote integration and that type thing. He was an amazing man, smart as a whip, and got along with everybody except the Ku Klux—.

KH: I imagine they wouldn't want to get along [laughs].

ER: And the justice system, why, all the judges respected him. He served on three terms as clerk for Hugo Black when Black was justice, the only three-year clerk that Black ever had. Of course, he made a lot of friends. Of course, at that time, Buddy's position on civil rights and Hugo Black's was

diametrically opposed, but Buddy was—. Well, any of the old city fathers will tell you Buddy was always in the forefront. Did a lot of his work behind the scenes. In fact, in the business you get more done behind the scenes than you do out in the open. They don't get credit for it, but you get more done.

KH: Um-hmm. Do you feel like you've received adequate credit for everything you've done?

ER: Well, of course, you know—. I'd say yes. I never had a big ego, but a lot of things that I done, I don't feel like people really knew, but that's all right. I can live with it. I can live with my past.

KH: [Laughs] I have a devil's advocate question for you. What if US Steel had never integrated their lines of promotion? What would that have meant for the way the industry was in Birmingham and for the workers there?

ER: Well, with the product that US Steel was making, if they'd never integrated, they'd probably have been shut down.

KH: OK. By the government?

ER: Yeah, yeah. And for the lack of orders.

KH: OK.

ER: See, about all of the steel product that is money makers had some kind of tie to government orders, particularly back then. The plate mill, all plate they was making was going to the shipyards and all that type stuff and all of the other stuff. But had that not have happened, I think the black people would have eventually revolted, and they would have probably shut the plants down. They was getting stronger and stronger and stronger, and more people coming out, younger black people, at that time, getting educations. I think that they would have revolted.

KH: But then I guess the tricky part of it is that at the same time the black community in Birmingham was getting more power, the number of jobs available in the steel mills was also going way down.

ER: The number of jobs what?

KH: It seems like the number of jobs in the steel mill, it was like really going down pretty sharply in the sixties and seventies.

ER: Well, that was because of modernization to the equipment. In fact, at that US Steel plant out there now, it's got about two thousand workers in it, but it was primarily run by computers, you know, where you got—. Well, the department I was in, the open hearth, there's about eleven hundred of us in there, and now they got thirty-five, forty. But they got different furnaces, different technology, and all that. That is because of the jobs going down and the company eliminating production of certain products and combining—like they closed their plate mill down and doing the plate work up in Gary, Indiana. I guess you know the history of combining a lot of those plants.

KH: And just moving them to other countries or something.

ER: Oh, yes. Yes.

KH: I just have two more questions for you. I was wondering what would you say are the biggest changes that Birmingham has gone through in the time you've been here?

ER: The civil rights thing, and without question, since I've been here.

KH: Do you feel like Birmingham is a better city now?

ER: Oh, yes, no question. Much better. See, if we didn't have the stigma of the past, why, we'd be getting a lot more favorable recognition than we are. They're doing a lot of things in Birmingham, a lot of things. Of course, I don't live in the city per se. The city limit's half a mile from here, but that's not by design. We've been here thirty years, and I just like this neighborhood. I don't know whether you've noticed or know anything about this neighborhood.

KH: Not much.

ER: Well, it's seventy percent black, and we think we have a good neighborhood.

KH: It looks very nice. It's my first time coming out here.

ER: We got decent homes, we're—. Practically everybody around here is retired. A lot of

people retired from up north and moved back into here. We got a good neighborhood here. Everybody gets along. We don't have no crap going on in the neighborhood.

KH: Yeah, it seems very quiet.

ER: It is.

KH: What would you want people to learn from your experiences? Like your children, your grandchildren, what would you tell them they should know from learning about your life?

ER: Well, of course, I haven't told them, just like my grandson that is in—. I didn't tell him about the struggles I've had, but three things my children's been taught is go to church, treat people right—I don't care what color they are—and to vote Democratic.

KH: [Laughs] Um-hmm.

ER: That's three things they've been taught. And as far as I know, they've lived up to that.

KH: They sound like good lessons to me.

ER: Well, that's just the way I feel. I don't know what party you're with, but I know if you look at the overall picture, you can't be but for one. [Laughter] But I've never hesitated about telling people how I feel.

KH: Um-hmm. Well, thank you very much for having me here.

ER: No problem.

KH: Thank you for your time.

ER: I hope you do well on your project.

END OF TRANSCRIPTION