

TRANSCRIPT—NANCY SIMPSON HUDSON

Interviewee: NANCY SIMPSON HUDSON
Interviewer: Dwana Waugh
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START OF CD

DW: This is Dwana Waugh talking with Nancy Simpson Hudson on July 11, 2006 about Belmont and Piedmont Courts' communities. Good morning or good afternoon.

NSH: Good afternoon.

DW: One of the things I want to start with is if you could tell me about your childhood and growing up living in Piedmont Courts. I think you put on your life history form that your family moved to Piedmont Courts when it opened in 1941 and you were-

NSH: Nineteen months old; just my sister and myself. Piedmont Courts is all I ever knew as home. That was my home. That wasn't a housing project. That was my home like many others. I tell anybody that it was the happiest time of my life. I don't know if it was because, you know, *Happy Days* '50s especially. Things were a lot simpler, you know, much less complicated. People were friendlier and always wanted to help somebody out no matter. Whether if somebody had a baby and, I mean, you could forget like ambulances now and whatever. If somebody had a car they'd take them to the emergency room like our mom and dad did if somebody got hurt or somebody was sick.

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I mean, you didn't even have to be related. But you had a bond just like family. It was a close knit community. Everybody knew everybody so needless to say, I'm thinking about fifty years later, now they're wanting to do what was natural when we were coming along. As a child you could not go anywhere or do anything that, especially if it was something you weren't supposed to do, that your parent would know about it before you got home. Or this is one thing now that is so different. Say for example, we grew up and we were taught I don't care what an adult says to you, you do not talk back. Period. You just listened and you just went right on because there was a lot of respect that I think is lost now. Like, you--. I lost my train of thought. You had people in the neighborhood--. Do you want me to tell you about how it was when I was a kid other than just what I think about the differences in the past and the present?

DW: Yes, I think first I'd like to and then talk about what you remember and if you could talk about the differences now and then.

NSH: Okay. Well, as I said, things were a lot simpler. No TV, no computer, no Game Boys, no DVDs or whatever. You had games, mind games that you made up yourself and played. You had--. I doubt if a kid would even know what to do with a marble now. I was somewhat of a tomboy. I really didn't know there was a difference between boys and girls until I got in about seventh grade because I played marbles. I played ball. I saw this guy that I went to school with in elementary school, sixth grade, and he said he had told his wife this, because she had told me this, what a fast runner I was. I could beat all the boys. I thought that that was funny. Of course, that was some of the things we did too. The summer times were a good time because we had what they called playground teachers. This was through the parks and recreation. They would send

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out--pretty much they were like college students, you know, get a summer job. They would have one male and one female. That's when the old rickety rackety beat up ping pong table would come out with the paddles and what you call horses and put the table on it and that was it. We had horseshoes. The playground that we lived off of and that's what we called the playground. That's where all the equipment was. They had big swings, little swings, the seesaws, the jungle gyms, little and big, the hand walkers, that's what we called them, monkey bars I think is what they call them now, but we called them hand walkers, and so that was pretty much what was there. Then we lived right where the spray pool was. The spray pool, other than that creek that our mama told us we better not ever go in to, was the only water we ever saw. It was kind of shaped like an eight. On each end of it, it had two humongous sprays. They had a water box near our house too. We just happened to live right where everything was at. You'd turn it on and they'd leave it on for a long, long time. It might get up--the middle part where of course the water would drain--oh, it was just so much fun. You could sit in it. You know, kids would put their bathing suits on and get in there and jump over the sprayer. The sprayer was about as big as a plate and had all the little holes in it. It put out a lot of water. We did that.

Then we had softball too. I was telling you about the playground teachers. We did that even without them before and after summer. They had girls' softball teams. They had co-rec softball. We would compete with other playgrounds in the city of Charlotte. This was all city. We were lucky, when we did play, if somebody had two or three gloves and one ball among the whole team to play with. That's like when we played softball. We played softball on the park so there was a big wide space where all

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the equipment was. We used that for like a ball field even though there was one on the other side of the Courts. That was not used. We were blessed if somebody had a bat and had a ball. It didn't matter if you didn't have a glove because we played—the person would hit the ball and whoever caught it—roller bat, that's what they call it, roller bat. If you caught it in the air, then of course you naturally got to bat. If you didn't then you'd roll the ball and if you hit the bat then you got to get in. You played that. Sometimes they would pick up teams. Sliding board was first base, the little jungle gyms was second base, and we just kind of made a third base because the big jungle gyms didn't match up. There was a big, old tree and that was home plate. We enjoyed that.

Our delight was at Christmas, everybody wanted a pair of ball bearing roller skates. We're talking about *this* was the real McCoy that you had to have the skate key and you tightened up the--. You put your regular shoes, of course you wouldn't be using Sunday shoes, just play shoes. Because way back then and I'm still that way now, you had your Sunday clothes, your school clothes, and your play clothes. You didn't mix them up like these kids do now. They got more clothes than they know what to do with. Anyway, you'd put on your old shoes and tighten up the thing and the office parking lot that was our skating rink. It just so happened that when you come off Seigle Avenue and you come down it was at an angle which meant you could get at the top of the hill and skate down real fast. That was concrete and then you get to the bottom of it and that was tar, then had a little space of grass. That's about the only place I know they had a fence and why I don't know because it didn't really make sense. Because they had steps leading down to the parking lot but they had a wire fence. When you played Pop the Whip, Lord have mercy if I had a penny for every time I've slammed into that. If you're

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on the end, that's the bad part. If you're on the front, that's okay, not so bad. If you're on the end, so when you come down that hill and I mean spread all across, you come down the hill. When you get down there, bam, you run up the grass and slam into the fence. If you were real good, there was like a culvert but it was even, instead of being like a U shape, you could just skate across that and go right up that culvert and wind up in the grass somewhere. Here you'd be going clamp, clamp, clamp and then you'd wind up at the top somewhere but that was better than hitting the fence. There was always something to do. I would say that our church, Seigle Avenue Presbyterian which was right across the street, was the backbone of Piedmont Courts. As much as the government tries to tell us that you have to separate church and state you can't do it, not in reality. If it had not been for that church and what they did for all those little poor drabs—that's what I call them, little urchins, little street urchins, me being one of them. One other thing you loved. Oh my goodness gracious the joy was you couldn't wait until the first of June because I don't care if it was 100 degrees you could not go barefooted until the first of June. There was nothing like taking those shoes off and going barefooted. Nothing I'd like to say since this is going into history, girls were not allowed to wear pants to school. No, no, no that was out. I don't care. But, if it was cold or snowy or whatever, you could wear pants up under your dress to school. Anyway, you've heard of Daisy Duke and those pants. Daisy Duke didn't start that. I just want to tell somebody that's what we did, we had blue jeans. And see that's something when come home from school we could wear. We changed into blue jeans like when it was cold weather. When summer came we took the scissors, we cut those blue jeans off. We had a pair of shorts. That's why I have a hard time with people because there was no

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waste, no waste. I don't care if it was food, clothes, what. It was either worn until it was worn out or it was passed down. Nobody was too proud. Nobody was too proud. Daisy Duke did not start those short shorts. We had them first. [Laughter]

DW: [Laughter] I'm glad that's in the record now.

NSH: That's right and I want them to know it too. See, people don't know that. They don't know that--. That's the way it was anyway living in a public housing project. I don't know what other girls did but that's what we did. Cut them off and wore them and that's the way it was.

Like I said, the church played a—I can't even think of the right word to say what a role--. You didn't have to be a member of Seigle Avenue Presbyterian Church to enjoy going to choir practice, going to Girl Scouts. They had little clubs. What they would do to entice little people to come to church just like they do now. Seigle Avenue was blessed to have these big rich churches, like Myers Park Presbyterian, places like that and people with money, like the Belks to contribute. Somebody knew—I don't know who it was that—Queen Pie Company. We got to get Queen Pie Company in there because what they would do to get you to come to church on Sunday night, and believe it or not Presbyterians used to go to church on Sunday night now they closed the doors. To get you to go to church they would have all these goodies, all kinds of little pies and cakes, stuff like that so if you came to church you got something. What kid wouldn't want that?

I would like to say something about my parents here because I just feel like that we were so blessed, my brother and sisters in having parents that truly cared about where their children were and what they were doing. If it didn't have anything to do with church or school you could forget it. We were in bed when the sun went down or we

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were in the house anyway. That's why I told people that's why I got married so young because I wanted to see what it looked like out after dark. I wanted to know what went on because the mothers and fathers--. We had a nice tree in our yard and we had a glider set. I laugh about this, I say we were kind of the upper class of the poor because we had a glider, we had chairs. The people, they would just sit out. That's what's missing. People would sit out at night and just talk with each other.

What I wanted to say about my parents was that—and that's what I told my granddaughter too when she was little she'd say, when she'd come to visit, "Grandmother can we watch television?" "No, we going to sit at the table and eat like humans." Because that's the way I grew up. I don't want a television on, don't want anything. This is the way we grew up. Our mother and father and us sat down at the table and ate together. Now see, they're trying this stuff now. I'm thinking, "Hey, that's not new. " That's what we did when we were kids. That's the problem. You don't have people sitting down together, eating, talking and bonding with each other. I love that word bond. It sounds so--. But that's the way you did it. Everybody sat down at the table and ate together. Families did stuff together. One kid wasn't going here to cheerleading practice and one going here for a ball practice and we'll stop by Pizza Hut or McDonald's or whatever. My mother cooked home cooked meals. I'm talking biscuits and cornbread. I'm talking as she would say real food. No sandwiches, you wouldn't have bologna or pizza. You could forget fast foods. There were very few. I think McDonald's came out in the '50s and so did South 21. If you've never had any South 21 you need to go eat some South 21. Oh my, they have the best onion rings in the world. No, there was no fast food. Families ate together, went to church together. My mother had to cook on a wood stove.

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We're not going to flip a burner, gas come on or turn the burner on and electricity. You had to start in a wood stove, that's what you cooked your meals on; you had to start that everyday. Boy was it like an inferno almost in the summertime.

Kids can't believe when you say "Air conditioning, are you kidding we were lucky to have a fan." My sister and I, in the summertime and you know how this part of the south is, it's very humid. My sister and I would lay crossways in our bed that was up against a two double windows. We'd put our pillows in there and practically have our head as close to in the window just to get a breath of air in the summertime. No air conditioning, oh please. No flipping a switch and having heat on in every room. We had a coal heater in the living room. That heated the whole house. Lord have mercy, many a time we've jumped in bed and night under those quilts and the floor would be ice cold. Of course, needless to say, that's the way it was in the roofs because you didn't have air or heat in each room. No, that's the way it was. You'd burn up in the summer and freeze in the winter unless you were in the living room which is a congregation place too. The kitchen and the living room are so important to family. To tell you the truth that's what's wrong now. Families don't get together enough. They're too busy, too busy being busy. That's the way I feel about it.

I am like my sister when it comes to this; I would not trade one minute for all the conveniences and things that they have now over the way I grew up because growing up the way we did we were taught if you want anything out of life you've got to work for it. Don't expect anybody to give you anything because number one they don't have to. That's what's wrong with our society too, somebody's looking for a handout. No, get

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you lazy self up and get a job or get two. That's what we were taught. We were taught you go to school get an education.

The only thing that I do regret is that at the time that I lived—not much different now, the reason I'm saying that is because it has to do with male and female. Females, it was okay to graduate from high school, but once you graduated from high school then you got married. Now, I think about these little old young girls now, I'm thinking I was sixteen when I got married and Joe was twenty-one and had just gotten out of the navy. I'm thinking, now number one they'd be calling them a child molester. But it wasn't like that then. Nobody thought that way. It was pretty much like that either somebody two or three years older or whatever, they married someone anywhere from three to five years older than them, along in there. There was nothing strange about that then, but now there is.

Anyway, I did want to say that as long as I lived in Piedmont Courts and went to elementary school, 1st Ward and Piedmont Junior High that there never seemed to be any difference. But when I went to high school that's when I learned that I lived on the wrong side of the tracks. There was a culture difference. There was a class distinction. Oh! The first time that really ever happened, though, was our church also, Seigle Avenue Presbyterian, the Presbyterian synod, they had a camp which is just right over here off of Camp Stewart Road. The name of the camp was Camp Stewart and that's where Presbyterian children would go to camp in the summertime, so that's another thing we had to look forward to. I don't know if sometimes if they just decided that poor child needs to go to camp or if you did something that was worthy of going to camp. Nobody ever told us and we didn't question.

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[Interruption] Get out of there Maggie. She's nosy. Oh, by the way that's my husband's cat. That's his girl. I'm second when it comes to her. She's old too. Come on Maggie. I can't believe she came in here.

Anyway, we'd get to go to camp. Cabins, just the old wood cabins, no air again. There was some good old little girls that came about, we were all about the same age. It's probably the summer of sixth grade. Anyway, you know how you meet new people and you make friends and all this kind of stuff. Well, I don't know why she wanted to know where we lived, one of the girls. As soon as she found out we lived in Piedmont Courts it was like we had the plague. I say we, it was my friend, Helen and me got to go the same week. They had weeks all year in the summertime. That's kind of the first time I realized that I was different and didn't know it. I became aware but that was an eye opener. The same thing came about in high school too. Now it is strange it takes a lifetime of maturity or wisdom to realize that it's not where you live but who you are that really makes a person. That's all that really matters. Anyway, I think I've pretty much covered--.

Oh, did I tell you that in the summertime they also had an art teacher come once a week so we got to make little things. Plaster of Paris, I will never forget that. They had these little molds, you got to pick out what you wanted to make. You got to make them and they had to set up. Then you had to color them. We made lanyards. I know you probably know what a lanyard is.

The thing about it is that you would compete with the parks whether it was horseshoes, racing and I think my family must have been good. I think my daddy was good at racing. They'd have like fifty yard dash, hundred yard dash, blah, blah, blah.

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You would either win blue, red or white ribbon for what place you came in. They also did it for horseshoes, also did it with ping pong. Ping pong was a big thing in the summer, back then. That was before I guess the Japanese, the Chinese found out about it. They'd probably been doing it longer than that. That is one thing we had, you know. We didn't have a recreation center. That's where we went; we went to Independence Park Recreation Center, there on Seventh Street. That's where you'd go to meet other people to compete whether it was horseshoes, ping pong, whatever.

My sister and I had to--. We were both good and we're both so close in age, there's just nineteen months difference between us, so we would be in the same category when it came to any of the things. We were both very competitive. Anyway, one year, this was when I was sixteen and so she was seventeen, she beat me for first place at our park, Piedmont Courts, and so I came in second. We went over to Independence Park. We had to play other people and it came down to we had to play each other for the championship. I beat her. I beat her. That's pretty neat. I got a little trophy; believe it or not I got a little trophy for that. Most of them were red ribbons.

Besides that, if it wasn't something recreational all you had to do—I tell people, listen, where I came from it was wall to wall children, wall to wall children. You learn to go outside and take up for yourself or you stayed in the house under the bed. You had a choice that's the way it was. You get out in with the rest of the kids or stay inside.

Speaking of that, we could never go outside—we did get treats which was rare but we were taught, and I see this now and I'm thinking oh my goodness, you could not go outside to eat if you didn't have enough to share with whoever was out there. You just didn't do that except when you got enough money to go to the drugstore and buy a drink.

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Oh boy, that was something. Ten cents, you could a—I know people think this is weird. You could get a big old drink for a dime. Well, people would say “tobies”. If they said “tobies” you’d have to say no “tobies” if you bought something because there was always boocoups of people around. You had to say no “tobies” before they said “tobies” because if they did then you had to let them have a drink of your drink. No, everybody-- I thinking, “Oh my God and here I am a germ freak now.” People just drank after each other and ate after each other and didn’t think a thing about it. That’s what you’d do you’d have to say no “tobies” before somebody would say “tobies” so you wouldn’t have to share.

That’s like when you were teenagers because we could not go out unless our mama could see us. This was way before all these perverts in this life now. My mother was very, very, very, she was overly protective. She really was. She really worried about us. I said something about home cooked meals and stuff. One thing in my childhood that I remember that wouldn’t be anything to anybody now like then was that my mother would go, probably before summer, go to Belk’s Bargain Basement. Now listen, what they had in Belk’s Bargain Basement was as good as what they had upstairs. It was just a lot cheaper. My mother would lay away all of our clothes, four kids now, three girls and a boy. I mean everything shoes, socks. Little girls used to wear those plain white little slips under their dresses and stuff. I mean the whole nine yards. She laid away everything. Well, before school started, I guess she’d just pay and pay and pay until I guess if Daddy had a good job, which by the way, my dad was a floor sander which is seasonal work which meant summertime you had a lot of money, wintertime no, especially if you didn’t save. Who could save? You survived. There was no saving. If

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Daddy had a good job she'd go up there and-- Well now, we were blessed because we had cars too off and on. Her and Daddy would ride a cab, now that was big stuff taking a cab and going downtown and taking a cab home. Come home and big, old, humongous coat boxes literally packed with everything. Of course, my sister and I have always been about the same size so it was like you didn't know what was yours or what was hers. My mother should have been born a queen because she had exquisite taste. What we wore, we may have lived in Piedmont Courts but there wasn't any kid in Myers Park that dressed any nicer than we did. My mama might go around in an old ragged pinned house dress but she saw that her children had as good as any kid in Charlotte. She was always that way, always.

Easter, that's another thing. You know you hear that--well you don't even hear that song any more like you used to--Easter Parade. Well, that was really true. You would get Easter clothes. My mama would buy my sisters and me, we would have a bonnet and we'd have a dress and pretty patent shoes. That was the thing always for girls; you always have those patent shoes. They didn't have those pretty lacy socks like they got now, just plain old socks. We would go down to our grandma and grandpa's. They lived in what we called the "back". Piedmont Courts even had its sections. You had the back or the creek or the playground side, Seigle Avenue side. Everybody had their section. We would go down there just strutting our stuff. We'd go down there all of us like a little line, one, two, three, four. That's the way we were like stair steps, one, two, three, four. We'd go down there and show our grandma and grandpa and Corrine, that was my aunt, show her our Easter stuff. Then from our house we would parade up to church. We wouldn't be the only ones parading. Everybody else would be parading too

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because they'd be getting new stuff. That's when you had--. When you would go back to school after Easter holiday—and by the way it was Easter not spring break, I take offense to that too, trying to be so politically correct. I told my son oh politically pooh. I say what I want to say. I don't have to be politically correct. I've lived long enough. Anyway, what did I say last I forgot?

DW: You were going back to school after Easter break.

NSH: Everybody wore their Easter outfit to school. That was just the thing you did. A lot of the kids you saw at school didn't live in your neighborhood. We lived in Piedmont Courts. We went to 1st Ward. All those people lived up around 1st Ward maybe or down on Davidson Street or somewhere along in there. All those people you didn't see. You wanted them to see what you got for Easter. That was a big thing. Easter was celebrated.

I'll have to tell you this. This has got to go into history. I had some ladies laughing in the shoe store because now I've had some trouble with the balls of my feet. We were there. The reason it even came up was because one of those Belks was in there. You could tell southern gentleman but he was in there. Anyway, I was telling the girl about—now we went to Belk's basement too. This is when women wore hose. I'm not talking pantyhose. I'm talking about hose. Evidently we didn't have the money for me to get it or I didn't know about it. I don't know what. I'm talking about a garter belt. Women will know what that is. This was when I got my first pair of heels and they were baby doll pumps. Oh boy, that was the thing, white pair--I don't even know if they come in anything but white--white pair of baby doll pumps. I was going to get to wear my first pair of real hose. Okay. Here I am, new shoes. Oh, I had this gorgeous white two piece

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suit. My mother got it because she had good taste. Anyway, you put the hose on and then you had garters, not like those pretty ones you see the guys taking off of their brides. Oh no honey, they were just like rubber stretching, rubber material. [Laughter] Be thankful, be thankful you don't have to go through--. You didn't even have to go through garter belts so be thankful for that too because they strapped around your waist and had the long elastic and you snapped your hose to those and wore them. That was better than what I had because my first time--. So, here I get ready, I put my hose on and then you put the garters on. What you do is you roll the hose down over the garters and the garters would be right above your knees. That's the way the hose were worn. Like I said, that was before the garter belt. This was an Easter Sunday, here I am thinking I look so good. I'm going up the sidewalk to church and Carol's friend, Billie Faye, her grandmother had come to visit. She saw me walking up to church. She told her daughter, she said, "Oh look, that poor little girl's had polio," because I was walking stiff legged. Here I was doing like this because I was afraid if I bent my knees my hose would fall off. [Laughter] Too, I'm laughing about this but back then, when we were coming along there was no shot, no drops. If you got polio, that was bad news. Because of the way I was walking she thought I had had polio. That was my first hose and heels experience. They weren't even high heels! They had the little heels like this. [Moves fingers to show about a one to two-inch heel] That was funny.

I don't know if Carol told you about this. I think he needs to be remembered in history too. When I say he, I'm talking about Mr. Allison of Allison's Fence Company which is still over there. When we talk circus, we're talking circus. We're talking about the old tent and the dirt floor and everything. What Mr. Allison would do--and see all

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you had to do was for one person to know it and they told everyone else and there'd be a million kids up there on the sidewalk near the church. What Mr. Allison would do, he would come down there and he would give every child one ticket to the circus and a quarter. Now quarter seems like such a small thing, but a quarter was a lot of money back then, a lot of money. He just did that on his own. I don't know what made him do it. He would do that every year.

DW: And the circus was at his--. At that plant?

NSH: No, no, no. The circus just came to town. It was a circus just like the old timey things you see on television where they pitch the big tent and everything. It wasn't like you see now where the animals get to ride. Well, they might have been on a train but they just got off and walked whatever. No big deal like now. It was a real circus tent circus, the real McCoy, not like now. A quarter could buy a lot. You could go to the movie. You could go to the movie for a dime. I see these boxes of popcorn now at these theaters and I'm thinking, "Oh my word". The little small box like this, that's what you could get for a dime, get in the movie for a dime. If they could do it then they could do it now, but no they charge you an arm and a leg. Did my sister tell you about Turners?

DW: She did not. She just mentioned it's a restaurant with a juke box.

NSH: Well, they did cook stuff too because the men from the city barn would come over there. I'll bet she didn't tell you about our uncle.

DW: No.

NSH: We lived on the playground. The ice plant was here. Did she tell you about the ice plant?

DW: No.

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NSH: We are talking real ice plant. By the way, when I said something about the wood stove and the coal heater, we had an ice box, the real thing. We talking about where the ice man would come and you tell him you want twenty-five cents worth of ice. He'd break it off, those big tongs and put it in what you would call would be the freezer. It kept your refrigerator cold. The water would drip down in a pan underneath it and you had to empty the pan. We're talking real icebox. These kids, I'm thinking, oh God, they wouldn't make it now. They just wouldn't. And the wringer washer. We had a real wringer washing machine where you washed your clothes. We had a deep side of the sink and mama would run them through there into the clear water. Then you'd run them through there again and hang your clothes up on the line. None of this dryer, washer/dryer stuff. Oh, please. Now that part I don't call that the good old days. I do love. Of course, I hung my babies diapers on the line and they would literally freeze and me doing it. If they don't do something about that ecology-- I don't know if it's my Indian blood or what. If people don't wake up and start doing something, they said on TV, just the other day, it will take five hundred years for those diapers to disintegrate. Five hundred years! I said boy I could see some woman changing a poopy diaper and having to rinse it out in the commode. They'd have a fit. Pretty cloth diapers, good, oh yeah, I hung my babies diapers on the line plenty of times. I didn't even get a dryer until my third baby came. He's thirty-six. No honey, you hung your clothes on the line.

I'll bet Carol didn't tell you this about how the milkman used to come. The milkman just delivered milk. The only thing some boys would do, this would be bad, that maybe boys would do sometimes. If you didn't get out there and get your milk before some of these teenage boys, they would come along—chocolate milk, that was the

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best chocolate milk in the world. You could get butter, eggs, whole milk and we called it white milk and chocolate milk in the glass jars, I know you've seen them. They had the little stopper in there and you just pull that little stopper out. I can't believe he let that--. I'll be crazy with that fly in here. Anyway, yes, yes. I'll bet she didn't tell you about in the summertime too about how the people who had gardens would come. Did she tell you?

DW: Uh-huh.

NSH: Out of the back of their truck, out of the back of their cars. I mean you could buy all the fresh produce you wanted. These little old tiny, what they call icebox watermelons you could get them four for a dollar. Now they want like \$6.99. I'm thinking, oh they got to be kidding, that's when my husband's '50s mentality kicks in. I will not pay \$6.99 for a watermelon that you could buy for a quarter. That's the way he is. He tickles me. I have to tell him sometimes, Joe, it's not the '50s. Did she tell you about going to the drive-in? That was another thing that people did.

DW: She did.

NSH: So you don't need that.

DW: But I did want to ask you when you were talking before about the parks and recreation people coming in, was that just for--? You said different neighborhoods came together at Independence Park.

NSH: Playgrounds.

DW: Playgrounds came together. Was that just of people who lived in public housing or was that just neighborhood parks?

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NSH: No, no neighborhood parks, neighborhood parks. Now that is one thing Charlotte does have, neighborhood parks, if nothing else. They were all white. You know what I'm saying. I mean, I don't know if truthfully they had parks in the black neighborhood and they did their thing. But we grew up in segregation too. You just didn't do that. That's just the way it was. I don't know what else to say. I didn't know any better. That's the way life was. Here was the creek here, down at the back where the creek was and right across that creek is where there was a colored school, and I hate to say this, old shanties. I know you've heard that word before, shanty.

DW: Oh, shanty, uh-huh.

NSH: Here this school was right here, right across the creek. Of course there wasn't any way to get over unless you went down in the creek and across, not there anyway. We went all the way up McDowell Street to Ninth Street and went up to 1st Ward. As the kids would be coming this way going to that school and we'd be going up this way going to our school. That was in elementary school. That's just the way it was. What did you want to ask me about the parks? That's it?

DW: Yeah, yeah.

NSH: You know what I don't even know if the park and recreation even did anything other than I just knew they did it for us. We just happen to, I don't know. I guess we were just lucky, I don't know. We were accepted. [Laughter]

DW: It's such a good thing. That's good.

NSH: Yeah, to a certain degree. To a certain degree we were accepted. That old saying, you know, living on the wrong side of the tracks. When you're a kid it does make a difference. When you're a young teen then, I don't know if that's when you start

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becoming aware of differences. When you're a kid you don't even think about, I mean, just life in general. I mean, this is the way it is and this is what we do. Then when I went to high school, like I said, that's where I really--. I don't care if it's color, religion, or whatever, everybody has in some way or another, or monetarily, there's a class difference, period. Somebody said, oh, like the girls I grew up with and stuff. My other friends went to 1st Ward the whole time; well we got to go to Villa Heights. I went to Villa Heights from first grade to the fourth grade. The reason I went there was because my daddy went. My daddy went to Villa Heights because he grew up on Parson Street. That's not what you would call the Belmont area but it's close to the Belmont area. My grandpa bought two lots, built a house. We're talking about where you see all those houses and all that land and stuff out there off of Hawthorne Lane. That's farm land. People had cows and stuff. That's where my dad grew up. I guess they wanted us to go to Villa Heights, I don't know. Somebody said, "How did you get to do that?" I said, "Well, that's where my daddy went." We got to go there literally until we were made to change schools because we literally lived on the wrong side of the tracks because right there on Seigle Avenue at the city barn and where Turner's was that's where there's an overpass so the tracks did separate the boundaries. The other side was like the Belmont area. You had the North Charlotte area. I don't if you've ever heard anything about North Charlotte or not.

DW: Yeah.

NSH: Well, you could go there now and be safe. Some years back you couldn't. Everybody had their own little thing sanctioned here. Everybody was pretty much—well North Charlotte people, they had homes. We didn't. We lived in an apartment.

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DW: I wanted to ask you about the schools. I know your sister Carol was saying that you both went to Villa Heights as you were just saying because your father went there. What were the schools like? I guess what I'm really trying to get at is throughout all your schools, what kind of make up of your schools was there? Was Villa Heights very different from 1st Ward?

NSH: Very different. Villa Heights was a—and this is what I've always said. It doesn't have anything to do with the past or the present it's still the same because I've worked in the school system for twenty-six years. It does not matter if it says Charlotte/Mecklenburg schools. I'd like tell that new Mr. Gorman this that what matters is where you live. It does make a difference because Villa Heights was an old school and so was 1st Ward. In the Villa Heights area the neighborhood was I want to say better kept, not that the people in the 1st Ward area weren't hard working people. There were some rich. My husband was born on Ninth Street. He went to 1st Ward. He went to Piedmont. They rented. Area does make a difference. 1st Ward was the oldest school in Charlotte. It was a wooden school. With these humongous old timey windows that you had take the stick and pull the latch and push up the window and the stick propped the window open. [Laughter] Just to get little bit of air. Never mind we're talking no air conditioning. But yes, there was a difference. The children dressed nicer. I want to say their manners were any better because back then children had manners. Poor or not you know when you went to school the teacher was the law. Oh Lord, I could see some of these teachers now rolling over in their graves where kids had fought them and oh my goodness. See, that's another problem too. If teachers were allowed to teach things wouldn't be like they are. Like I said twenty-six years in the system I can tell you, you

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can't have one person disrupt the class and other children be able to learn. You don't have that right. That's what happened probably for a long, long time. I saw it. It started in the '70s and until when I retired in 2000 I knew it was time to go. I might get in trouble. In saying that about Villa Heights being a better school they probably--. I don't really recall seeing a lot of volunteers or whatever. When you're in a neighborhood where you have parents that are active, parents that have access to getting things for your school you can have better educated children. Like I said about school system, in Charlotte/Mecklenburg even today, they can call it Charlotte/Mecklenburg and it's supposed to be the same but it isn't. I can tell you that. I don't know how we lucked up and got all the good supplies we did.

DW: I just want to make sure I'm clear. When your talking about the lack of volunteers are you talking about 1st Ward didn't have as many resources as Villa Heights?

NSH: I don't think they did. I don't think 1st Ward had the same. That goes on today. People can say what they want to. We've had people come to our school and just be absolutely amazed that we have all these resources. They were allowed so much paper or whatever and supplies. I mean to write out an order, get all the things you need or to have, no you didn't. I'll never forget when I was a kid. We went to another school and that was when I was at 1st Ward and what a difference. We went out there to one of those ritzy schools. You could see the difference.

DW: I was curious, you were talking before--. A question I wanted to ask is did you feel that there was any stigma attached to living in public housing? You had mentioned before when you were in sixth grade that you experienced--.

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NSH: At the summer camp.

DW: At the summer camp, then in high school. Why do you think that was that whoever did the—or made you feel negatively about--?

NSH: Well, I may have been a little funny kid too, very sensitive. Okay, here's an example of the kind of attitude that people had about Piedmont Courts. They nicknamed it Pregnant Courts. Pregnant Courts. One thing that I can remember when I was a teenager is that these guys that would come from other neighborhoods and cruise, looking at the girls. You know, hollering out to them and all that kind of stuff because they, I'm sure, assumed and maybe with some rightly so, but most definitely not, that they were easy. They felt because you lived in public housing you were low class and that you would be easy. Sure did. Oh boy, I'm telling you that's funny now when you think about it. They did. It wouldn't be just one boy come by himself, typical they had to have two or three or four. Let's see how many we can get into the car and let's go over to Piedmont Courts and see if we can pick us up a girl. Of course, we are talking time, when now if Piedmont Courts was like it was, except for what you--. I was so upset with everything that I have seen on TV and in the paper that has portrayed Piedmont Courts in a negative light.

[Interruption] Is that—the water. Did you think your microphone is messed up?

DW: Yeah, I was thinking maybe--.

NSH: I don't know why he's watering that--. Anyway, I mean everybody knew Piedmont Courts. Everybody knew what Piedmont Courts, public housing project. It had a reputation, but unjustly so I think. Just like anything you always have your bad apples. For example, I was in my mid thirties before I ever got my ears pierced because if a girl

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had her ears pierced when I was a teenager you were bad. You were a bad girl. Can you believe it? That's pretty much the truth too.

I know my sister won't tell this and I'm not going to tell who it is. There was—of course we talking about the Korean War time. I could remember this one girl and she would dress up on Saturdays and she would go downtown, catch the bus. Didn't cost her but a dime to ride the bus. Where she went downtown, I don't have a clue. She would come back home, she would either have her a sailor, an army guy, a marine. I'm sure she wasn't the only one that did that. That's just an example of why I think that, not realizing that most--. Every one of my friends had mothers and fathers. We all grew up in the church.

We were all taught morals and values which I think are sadly lacking now. Heaven forbid you should tell someone they should have morals and values now. Let's be politically correct. Everybody's the same. No, everybody is not the same. They never have been and they never will be until Jesus comes. [Laughter] I'm serious. It's such a joke. Who are they trying to fool? You cannot make everybody the same. They are not the same. You might be born the same but you are not the same. You are what you have been taught, how you've been raised. Heaven forbid you do anything to shame or embarrass your parents when I was a kid. Do you think they could give two boots now about it? No. I was more afraid of my mother than I was my daddy because she would have killed us. I said no, listen, I was not afraid of the principle or the law. I was afraid of my mama and that's what's wrong too. I had a teacher tell me once. You got to put a little healthy fear. She said see right now I'm going to have to put the fear of God in this one. It's true. We're not talking about demean or belittle. Like I told my principal,

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“Listen, there’s an adult’s place and there’s a child’s place and a child has no business in an adult’s place.” At school one time this kid—they get these ideas. “Why did you get two of those?” Adults could get like two little servings of like a salad. A salad was nothing. Nine times out of ten they were going to dump whatever they had anyway. No matter what it was. “Why did you?” I said, “Because I’m bigger and I pay more.” I said, “When you get big and you pay more you can get two too” because that’s what I’d tell them too. Another philosophy is “Oh Mrs. Hudson that’s not fair.” I said, “Who in life said anything was fair?” I said, “Arlean, now and you won’t be disappointed when you get grown.” It’s the truth. Who says—that’s what I was trying to tell my friend, Arlene, nothing in life is fair. The rain falls on the just and the unjust.

[Interruption—Cat meowing in background] No, I can’t mess with you. No.

That’s true. Nothing in life is fair, never will be. Bad people get good stuff and good people get bad, whether it’s a disease or whatever. That’s life. I don’t understand it. I just know that’s the way it is. I know one day it will all be revealed. And I know that in everything there is a bigger plan.

DW: Since you’re talking about the stigma and the media, I know when I talked to you on the phone, you had mentioned an article or some articles that had been written now in the *Observer*. I guess I’m curious, over time, what your perception of how the media portrayed Piedmont Courts was in the ‘50s and ‘60s and then now--?

NSH: They didn’t even portray it in the ‘50s and ‘60s. No, it only came to light when it became predominantly black. They had drugs and shootings. They had a shoot out there. Really, really like something you’d see on TV. They had a shoot out there. So honestly, no there was nothing ever written about Piedmont Courts, good or bad or

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indifferent. It only became that way when—and I don't know how to say this in a nice way—I mean what can you say, lower class. It has nothing to do--they just happen to be black, what can I say? Just like we say, you got white trash too. It's the truth. I could sugar coat it but the truth is the truth. Tiger go on. It's the truth. That's what it was is when--. I know that probably most of those--. I even went down in there when it was black too. I took my two little people and our church was serving meals. They used our church. I took meals to the shut-ins. They said you scared to go down in there. I said no I'm not afraid to go in there. That's my home. I didn't feel any fear. Maybe I might should have. Maybe if I'd gone down there at night that would have been another story but it's daylight. During the day, hopefully they weren't up. [Laughter] That's terrible but it's the truth. Oh mercy, I'm bad.

DW: I wanted to ask you too, you were talking about the good work that Seigle Avenue Presbyterian did. I noticed in your life history form, and your jokes between your sisters that you're Baptist now.

NSH: She absolutely gives me a hard time. I said, Carol, there is no difference between Presbyterian and Baptist. Presbyterian are more ritualistic, with the robe and something like that. Otherwise, I don't know how--. The word is the word. You can't change it. Yes, yes. I am now a Baptist. I have been baptized. I have seen the light. [Laughter] I first got sprinkled. No different when it comes to that. The main thing is just that you know that Jesus is Lord and the only way, the only way and if anybody tells you anything other than that you'd better run like the devil's after you because he is. [Laughter] I give my church just about as much credit as my parents. I wish you could have known my daddy. He was the sweetest, kindest, gentlest, most loving, and the

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biggest thing was that he had wisdom. You could be intelligent. You could have all kinds of degrees but if you don't have wisdom--. Everybody doesn't have wisdom. They think they do but they don't. He had wisdom. My mother was another case. She'd fight a circle saw in a minute. She grew up during the depression, World War II. Those times were hard and people don't understand that. I was born in 1940. I was born during the war. You just didn't have stuff. You just didn't have like you do now. My mother pretty much had to fight and struggle all her life. That's just bred in a person. They have that drive and that push that--. Your environment does have a lot to do, a lot to do with the way you turn out. It really does. Thank God she didn't kill anybody. [Laughter] Thank God she didn't kill anybody. She loved her children in a strange way. Our daddy was the lovey, touchy kind. I don't know how much more love a person could stand over a wood stove and sweat pour off of them and cook meals and wash your clothes so that you had nice stuff to wear. That's love too. One person told me one time a person can say they love you but it's what they do that shows they love you. We were blessed with two loving parents who saw that we were directed in the right direction. I mean, stayed behind us. Not my daddy like my mama. I know one time Carol and I, I figured I'm not running because what's the sense in running. There was this boy that lived down in our neighborhood, his name was Dale Holden, he said that our mom and dad told us that we could go to the drug store. This was kind of late in the day. He wanted us to go out there with him. We said well no, go ask daddy. He went and asked. Well, needless to say, he said we could go and we went not knowing that we weren't supposed to be going. Of course our mom and daddy couldn't find us and here come my short legged daddy out to that drug store. We knew right then, uh oh, we're in trouble. My brother and my sister

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ran on along in front daddy and got home. I just walked along with him. I figured what's the sense in running. I'm going to get it when I get there, which my dad very seldom ever whipped us. My mama would lay it on you. The thing about it, add insult to injury, you had to get your own hickory. You'd better not come back with some little old small one. Oh no, that was bad news bear because if you didn't get a good one and we had two nice bushes out side our house on either side. You could get a good hickory off of. That's another thing with these psychologists and psychiatrists, half of them probably don't even have any children and they can tell you--. There's one thing about a book, theory and practice, two different things. Some children need a good old fashioned--. I tell the some in school, I say "Hmmm," and of course they didn't know what I was saying, "I can see right now you need a little hickory tea." They did. I always say that if you get one child, you get that one trouble maker in front of the class, in front of all of them and they get a good old fashion wearing out; hey, the rest of them are going to sit there like little angels. They will not move. They've taken—we're not talking about beating, abusing. No I don't believe in spare the rod spoil the child. Some of them all you got to do is talk to them. My granddaughter, all you'd have to do is talk to her and she'd go to pieces. That's all it took for her. Some of them need a little fear.

[Interruption] Is that you or is that the cat? Is that her? No. It must not be.

Anyway, public schools aren't any better this day.

[Interruption] Is she messing with something? Maggie.

DW: The plug in the wall.

NSH: Like I said I got married when I was sixteen. I did live in Piedmont Courts. Then my husband and I got our first apartment there. That was our first home.

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That was kind of like a natural thing too that people would do that had grown up there. It was a starting place. And then, we moved to Florida. We'll forget that, mark that out. We moved back and we got another apartment on the playground. The one I showed you that picture of me and Carol out in the front yard. That's where we had our first baby. He'll be forty-eight next month. Our baby will be forty-eight next month. We had him there. It was a good life. As a matter of fact we were married over two years when he was born and we didn't even have a TV. You didn't need TV. We had a car. My husband made big bucks. He made fifty dollars a week. I'm telling you fifty dollars a week, you could carry home more groceries than you could imagine back then. We had a nice apartment. We had a car. The thing back then was going to the drive in because major movies played at the drive in then. You could go to the drive in. My husband played fast pitch softball. My life revolved around that. That's where I met him in the first place, up at Piedmont Junior High. We lived good. We had our needs, not wants, needs. The reason we moved was because my husband had been in service when I met him. He'd just gotten out some months before. Being a veteran, he had the GI bill. My mother saw where they built these little houses kind of little individual Piedmont Courts. They were all down the line on Finchley Drive, all the little one hundred percent brick houses, down the line, one, two, three, four, five. We lived in the fourteenth one on the left. That's why we moved because we used his GI and we bought our first little house. My son was born in '58. In that picture I showed you was in '59 so somewhere along in there we left. I came back because my mother and daddy lived there, my friend lived there, to visit. I really didn't get to see a drastic change when they started mixing public housing. Like I said, years later I went back and helped serve meals to the homeless. I

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only knew what I heard on TV and in the paper. If anybody knows the truth you have to take what they say with a grain of salt because they are there to sensationalize. I'm sure justice is--. When I lived there that there were good, hard working, struggling people who needed a decent place to live, you know, running water, refrigerator, freezer—not freezer but yeah, hey after we left they put cabinets in. We didn't have cabinets. They had shelves. You would have shelf paper and you would put shelf paper on the shelves and put your dishes up in it. That's the way it was when we were there. They got nice real stoves. I think air. Oh no, no air for us. They even modernized it. I can't say, to me that was such a waste. There had to be a way--. That place would have had to been blasted away it was so solid. When I was there, 1941-1956, and nothing was done. Then when we had our apartment nothing was—no changes. The only thing we got they put in real refrigerators and they put it gas heater and gas stoves. That was the only modernization in twenty years that they did there. No air conditioning. I don't understand why they had to waste all that money putting, they put these overhangs on the porch. They had these concrete overhangs, I mean, whose going to knock down a concrete overhang. On the porch, they—what was that to make it look like? I don't—government at waste. To me, you would not believe how many people that have grown up there how they love that place. That was home. How many people said let's move back to Piedmont Courts. That's what I tried to get him to do. I said, "Joe let's move back to Piedmont Courts." Now that they are doing what they are doing I think it's wonderful. If they have apartments for people who are trying to better themselves, not live on welfare, better themselves to give them an initiative to want more out of life. I don't care who it is. It doesn't matter. I think if you're exposed to people, your haves and

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your have nots, if you're exposed to the haves you're going to see that there's more.

Those people that have they, I dare say, there's one in a million that had somebody leave them an inheritance. They worked for it. What happened to working for what you get?

Don't expect anybody to give you. In the Bible it says if you don't work you don't eat.

What happened to that? People think somebody owes you something. Nobody owes you anything, period. I don't care who you are. So if you don't expect, then--.

I like that idea. I like that concept. If they are going to have these places for the elderly and see we had elderly people in our neighborhood but they were all mixed in.

You have a chance for these young people to learn from these elderly people. What a waste of knowledge. Young people can learn. Then the old people have little people to watch, to see, to intermingle with. It's kind of like they help each other. I love that.

When you get old you start thinking that you're not useful for anything and your life is over. If they had a building where people could meet where these old people could read stories to these little people. That would be so nice. Then see people that have made it. I like to think that about the people that I grew up with. See, that's why I got so upset with the media and the newspaper. We had nothing but yet you have people who have served their countries honorably, who have gone on to medical field, education, civil servants.

There was no government to push them to do that. Forget that. No, we didn't have any after school care. We didn't have any day care. We didn't have any hand outs except from the good, rich people, church people. That was kind of like an incentive, get those little boogers in here with a cake or--. Good guidance. Good guidance. The church is really—and when I say the church, the church is the people. The church is only a building but the church is the people and because of those caring people. Those rich

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people didn't have to help us but they did. Because of people like them, like Mr. Allison and the Belks and I wish I knew some of the other names, you know, I don't. I just remember them. But because of people like them—you've got to have people that care about other people and can see past education, color, religion, the whole thing. You just have to love your fellow man. That's the bottom line, not think what am I going to get out of this but think what can I do. What can I do to be a part? It's definite when you meet your maker he's not going to say, "Well, how much money did you make?" "What did you do for that old woman who couldn't go to the grocery store and buy her groceries?" We did stuff like that too. You go to the grocery store and get them something and bring it home, a loaf of bread, whatever, that sort of thing. That's the way it was. What happened? I think it's a—well. We listen to the government, we're going to be in a heck of a mess. By that, I mean, when they tried to separate church and state. Please. Our forefathers were Christians and godly men who prayed for hours, who could have been hung, who lost their lives and lost their health. That's the kind of people that we need now. Don't go to sleep on me. I'm the one who should go to sleep. I went back to bed at 3:37 this morning. That was a bad night last night. I've said enough, I think.

DW: I just wanted to ask you a few more quick questions.

NSH: Go ahead.

DW: I wanted to ask you, in talking about the revitalization of Piedmont Courts. What do you think will happen to the people who lived there before they tore down the Courts? Do think that they'll be able to come back to Piedmont Courts and live once it's revitalized or they'll be displaced?

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NSH: Well, now that's what the paper says that they were supposed to be able to come back, definitely the elderly. The elderly are supposed to. Somebody, and I don't know who that somebody is, but somebody needs to check on them to make sure that they do what they're supposed to do because we know how things can happen. I'm sure some good reporter could do that since they can always look for the negative. I think any hardworking person who wants to better themselves should be able to return. From what I gather it's only supposed to be for a certain length of time which is good because you need a goal, say, in five years. I truly believe that education plays a vital role in a person who wants better out of life. You just can't do it if you don't have an education. I think people need to be educated. Give those people jobs, they had a--. That's better than a lifetime or generations of people who live on welfare. How stupid. Who doesn't want to be treated like a first class citizen? Everybody should be. Nobody should be treated like a second class citizen. I don't care who they are. Educate them. Get your education. Get you a good job and as my husband and I say, "Get a job and stay with it." This is change your job, quit. Oh, well, no, I'm going to quit this job. They told me what to do and I'm going to quit. That's the kind of attitude people have. You don't think plenty of times I wouldn't have like to have said something. No, I'm just thinking in my mind. Who says you going to like everything your boss tells you. No, you're not but he's the boss. You do what the boss tells you to do. You don't just quit. You don't walk out. Education is key.

DW: I'm curious what you think the role of, this is a two part question, the role of the federal government in the housing patterns in Charlotte and public housing in

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Charlotte and what do you think the local government and housing authority's role is in public housing in Charlotte?

NSH: I think local government would probably be better. I think on the local level they know more so they should play a bigger part not the federal government up somewhere in Washington, DC patting each other on the back, saying what can you do for me. I don't think the government should be--. I think they should be held accountable for the money that they spend on public housing or whatever. I think they should be held accountable. After all, they are supposed to be working for the people, ha ha. I do love my country. I just don't like politicians with talk that comes out of two sides of their mouths. Such a waste, I'm thinking put a woman up there that knows how to budget, has to live. But no, that's not that. You know they--. Okay you do this for me and I'll do this for you. See, they making little pacts to help themselves not to help the people. The government should be held responsible to educate and to alleviate poverty. What kind of crazy—here we are living in an affluent country and we have people who don't even have a roof over their head. That does not make good sense. Something is amiss, terribly amiss. Let them get some people that really care not what's in it for them but people who truly care. Like my sister would love to hear me say, the Presbyterians, the social people of the Christians whose interest is that. Then the people in government housing should be held accountable and responsible. It's like they used to say free lunch, no there is no free lunch, somebody's paying for it. Somebody's paying for it. Oh, I take a free lunch. The government should be held responsible to somebody. They are not above the law like they think they are. They should be held accountable for the fact that this money is going to be spent for housing. This money's going to be spent for

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education. It's a matter of mind. You have to change a person's way of thinking. You have to change a person's way of thinking in order for them to change. They have to want the change. Makes me mad where I see some no good person is robs some poor old person and taken what belongs to them. Boy would I love to get a hold of them. How dare you? You get out and work like everybody else has. People need to be held accountable. Is that good enough?

DW: Yeah. I was going to ask you, if you were running things, how would you ideally get people to change their ways of thinking so that they won't expect handouts but expect to want more and work for it?

NSH: Like I said education. If a person is educated, not just in learning as far as schooling, but they also have to be educated to there is a better way of life but you have to work for it. I think that was a big serious mistake in giving handouts. I don't care who the handout was to. That's one thing; it was started for a good cause. Roosevelt started this. He started this handout and now it's something that is expected not something that was at the time a good thing. From that it has gone to passing generation after generation after generation.

I'll tell you somebody I'd don't have high regard for and that that's mayor of Louisiana. How dare him, when he could've helped and did nothing. How dare him. The people who've been living like that down there for generations. Excuse me. Why was something not done? Nothing could have just let these people just keep living on and living on and living on and living on.

I don't know how to say this. You have to have people to look up to. That's a good way to put it. For example, a child who has not had much out of life and has seen

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horrible things because I know I worked with children like that, drug dealings, shootings and all that kind of stuff because the school that I worked for the children were bussed in from a neighborhood like that. We're talking bad news. Piedmont Courts was probably a credit to where these poor children had to grow up and see all this. They need good role models. I'm not just talking about some Panther player getting on television to be seen giving some kid a Panther shirt. You see what I'm saying. You got to get down there and get in. How else would a person know that? I don't know how to say this but I've seen this and I've heard it that the mindset of the young, black boys, they need those men. They need them desperately. They need them desperately. They need somebody to mentor them and to show them what a man is. A man ain't somebody that can get a girl pregnant and her have a baby. That is not a man. I've had them tell me at school. "I'm a man." I said, "Oh, you are." I said, "Where do you work? What's your job?" See, that mentality. You know, "I'm a man." No, it takes more than being able to father a baby to be a man or worse being a sperm donor. That's the truth. I don't care who it is. A man is somebody who wants a home, family, children and is the leader of his home and most of all is godly. I know I might sound like a broken record but doggone it that is what's wrong with our society, period. I don't care what color you are. Young, that's the reason they get out and get tangled up with the wrong kind of people, gangs and all that kind of stuff. I never heard of such like that when I was a kid. Gangs now, here we got all these different kinds of gangs here. I'm saying oh my goodness.

I think there could be definitely a greater tomorrow. They need to involve everybody in helping to bring a better life and a better world for people. I don't know how we did it. I think we did it because we had to because we did grow up in the church,

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because we did have parents that cared, parents that were there. Oh no, I never came home to an empty house. You have latchkey children. Some of them don't even see their parents sometimes. I think these girls and women that have these babies, if I had my way, they'd have a place for them. They would raise that child. They would go out and work and they could have a day care there. They would come home and be responsible for that child not put it off on mama, poor old grandma trying to make it. Here she is—uh, huh, no. What happened to—you know what we were taught, that's the reason why I never went back home. When I left home when I got married we were told you make your bed, you lie in it. How many people are made--? Simple fact, you have to be responsible for what you do. I found out, well, I'd better work this out. I better handle this myself. Heaven forbid I'd be coming back home with a baby. My mama would have killed me. She would have. I'm telling you. They need more mamas like my mama. I'm laughing but it's true. My husband could tell you. There is no way. You think I would ever even have a look on my face like I would dare open my mouth, not when she was almost eighty-two years old. Her grandchildren, uh-huh you better not. You better not disrespect her. She had stroke but she had one good right arm. [Laughter] Like they say I'll knock in the middle of next week. That's true. They need--.

Single moms have a tough row to hoe. Single moms, especially when the children get to be teenagers. That's when I don't know what happens. They just absolutely lose all sense. If they're in scouts, if they're in choir, if they're in church the odds are much better. Their chances are much better of being successful. You got to have somebody. They need somebody they can talk to. They need somebody to give them a helping hand. They need somebody to look up to. They need all those things.

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That's what makes a person, really. I wouldn't mind helping. I thought about going back to Seigle Avenue and working with children like after school. That way they can see that when different people mingle they can see that, basically, people are the same. Just maybe fat, tall, skinny but basically people are the same. They want good for their children. They want a nice home. That's pretty much true. We got some bad apples too. There are always going to be bad apples.

DW: My very last question is could you just tell me, as you see Charlotte, as a city itself, how that has changed from the '50s or '60s to the present day? What kind of changes you've seen in the city over time? I know that's probably a bit of a doozy. I apologize.

NSH: I'll tell you what tickles me when our media--. When downtown was surrounded by poor blacks and poor whites it was called the inner city. Then when they started ridding surrounding Charlotte because of the stadium and revitalizing downtown, so when all the people came to the games they'd have nice places to eat and whatever, when they push all the people out and build the condos and everything then it's strange how the inner city becomes the center city. Whoa. That's funny. That is funny. I'm being facetious. That's funny. Charlotte has come a long way as far as not being the hick town that they always say Charlotte is. I think having a--. I like Pat McCrory. He's done a lot for Charlotte and changes. They still, meaning the city, they still fall short in public housing, even if it was some--yeah, public housing. My sister doesn't much care for Section 8. I have said that I think people should work for what they get. They should but I don't think anybody should just be given a home and that maybe because we've always had to work hard for what we got. I think that, like I said there should be housing

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for those. I don't know how you separate the people who are going to move in and tear something up within thirty days or three months from those who need a new beginning. If there was just some way that they could do that, be held responsible. Even in a public housing project, our families were held responsible for keeping a nice clean yard, keeping our homes up, paying our rent. You're going to love this one. Do you know that when I was kid there was a term called setting people out? What they would do is if you didn't do what you were supposed to do, you didn't follow the rules, you didn't pay your rent they had people to put everything you owned out on the curb. That way, hey, you either follow the rules, you pay the rent or you're out of here. There's got to be a way that people understand that. Like I said it's going to be an education of mind. Don't expect anybody to give you anything. To me that concept is kind of, it's foreign. I was taught you work. You work hard and then you may have something. Don't expect anybody, and that's what we were told, don't expect anybody to give you anything. If you not looking for it, you know. I think if they had a broad spectrum of people, people from all—with the education thing like this person gets this nice new home. It's just like having a baby. You don't know anything about having a baby you're going to have to be taught how to take care of this baby, what you do. This is what you have to do. They need some kind of intermediary. Am I saying that right, intermediary, whatever. You know what I'm saying. My mind's—I'm so hungry I can't even think. [Laughter]

DW: Oh no, let's wrap this up.

NSH: When I say the government should be responsible. Don't give somebody housing just move them in it and let them go it alone. If they've never had anything then how are they going to know how to appreciate it and take care of it? I got stuff from a

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life time ago. Like my sister said how can the Egyptians keep stuff for two thousand years? They need a little stepping stones to get to the—not necessarily a ten step plan but somebody to help them. Don't just give somebody something. They haven't had to work for it. They didn't earn it. Don't just give it to them. There are people living in finer homes than I'm living in now and my husband and I have worked hard all our lives.

Section 8. It's a fact. Nine times out of ten they won't stay there that long. I would like to see everybody have a fair chance but it's up to them. Nobody can do it for you.

DW: I just wanted to ask if there was anything that was left out of our discussion that you'd like to say or mention.

NSH: Goodness no. No, I'm sure there is probably much more. I would hope that people now could see the difference in the way things were and the way they are now which I think could still be the way they were. There's something happened between then and now. We were poor. We were uneducated. What is it? Is it a drive? Is it something inborn that makes a person know there's more to life but not be materialistic? Hey, what's wrong with having a nice home? It's pride. There you go, pride. That's it. [Pause] Pride.

DW: Yeah I'll wrap this up, this could go on for a long time.

NSH: Yes. But that is true. Mercy me. Well, I probably won't live long enough; I'll be like my mama now. I probably won't live long enough to see it. I would love to see. I really would love to see. I can't wait to see what it's like because I think okay Joe we can go down there and get us, we can go back and go home. [Laughs] I expect the creek looking a lot different. I'm thinking it's going to be pretty and grassy and clean. That's the reason why we couldn't go to the creek because way back when—hey, I'm

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surprised we even survived. The DDT truck. Oh yeah, children, we've been exposed to DDT, run behind it like a—the truck was kind of like a little jeep and it had this fogger on the back. The kids would literally run behind it. They just thought that was a trip. Nobody ever told you what a danger that was. They fogged the creek at night. Here we are sitting in the window sniffing DDT. The Louise Mill ran dye down through the creek.

DW: It can be dangerous.

NSH: Living can be hazardous to your health. They didn't have that at Myers Park I know. Myers Park is the ritzy part of town. That's where all the old money is, the big mansions. That's all right, I'm happy.

DW: You can't beat that.

NSH: That's right. I'm happy. Like I told my mama, I said, "Mama." She got to where she was in need. I said, "Look Mama, when the queen of England dies, the President of the United States dies, I said they going to go just like you. They will not take a thing with them when they go, they going just like you go." So, who cares. You have a nice comfortable home. You have food to eat. You have a loving family. Who could want more? That's it. You could live in a mansion and be--. Movie stars, whatever, look at them. They have the money and the possessions but--. Anyway, you'd better go home and take a nap.

DW: I just want to thank you for doing this interview with me.

NSH: I am so glad I got to meet you. I just wish I'd of had the right dessert. I should have asked. I can't wait to see how this turns out. This is the first year for this.

DW: Yes.

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END OF INTERVIEW