

Renee' D.: [inaudible 00:00:04] All right. So, um, would you please state your name and spell it for us?

E. Boyd: Ethelmae Symonds Boyd. 843-559. You said telephone, right?

Renee' D.: No, spell your name for us.

E. Boyd: Oh, spell it. E-T-H-E-L-M-A-E S-I-M-M-O-N-S B- ... B-O-Y-D, Boyd.

Renee' D.: Awesome, thank-you so much. All right, so, Miss Boyd, are you from John's Island?

E. Boyd: My home.

Renee' D.: Okay. And then how long has your family been on Johns Island?

E. Boyd: I-I can't answer that because this is the only place I know. Uh-

Renee' D.: Okay, so as long as you-

E. Boyd: As I could remember, yeah.

Renee' D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And what part of Johns Island are you from?

E. Boyd: Um, am I from? I live on Plow Ground Road, that's all I can tell you.

Renee' D.: Okay.

E. Boyd: Hmm.

Renee' D.: All right. And, so, in ... around Plow Ground Road, is that a part of like a [Geddes 00:01:21] neighborhood or-

E. Boyd: The Geddes?

Renee' D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative), or-

E. Boyd: They're behind me. They're be... You get to them before you get to me.

Renee' D.: Okay.

E. Boyd: I ... that's my original place for my grandfather. They live over there where the Geddes live.

Renee' D.: Okay.

E. Boyd: And they bought land over ... across the road, just across the road, you know, on Plow Ground Road, and he built his house there. So that's where I was born, on Plow Ground Road.

Renee' D.: Okay. And then what was family life like for you when you were growing up?

E. Boyd: Well, I remember a little bit about my grand-grandparents. My grandfather, rather. I know all of my, um, my mother's family. They live on Exchange Landing. My grandfather, my daddy's father, live on Plow Ground Road. It was nice. It was friendly. We all love each other. We were all one on Johns, on the one need, and the other have, you get. If you need help, someone is always there. And my father was the, uh, veterinarian but all ... and he never went to school for it, but when they need something with the animal, they'll come and get him. And then they had a certain time of year that they used to butcher, in November. So my daddy says, he was the, he was the one that-that do it ... he does the bush- ... the butchering. He'll, um, he do his pigs or whatever he's gonna kill first.

Then he had a smokehouse and he put meat in the smokehouse. Some was in some kind of sugar, and some was in salt. Then he had big s-s- ... it was a real barn, like ... all the meat was hanging up, hanging up on that particular barn, yeah. I didn't like the meat, but anyway, we had to eat it (laughs) 'cause it was too salty. And, um, and then when he finish his, um, job, then he go to the next man, but all the people in the neighborhood would come to help the other one with whatever chores you have to do.

I know one time he-he ... well, I build a house [inaudible 00:04:04], and he took the old house we had and he rolled it in the back and make a ... made a barn out of it. Everybody in the neighborhood was there.

Renee' D.: Okay.

E. Boyd: All they had to had was the moonshine and everybody else was working. And my ... we are, we are cooking dinner and then they go to the next man house, and the next man house, and do it until they are ... everybody had done their butchering.

Renee' D.: You mentioned that your dad was a veteinar-veterinarian for the island. Where did he do his work? Or did he just kind of travel to different people's houses?

E. Boyd: It's something he'd-he'd pick up something, that's something he'd pick up with ... he ... my daddy went to private school.

Renee' D.: Okay.

E. Boyd: Yeah, on Johns Island.

Renee' D.: Where did he-

E. Boyd: The teacher was the ... he was a Presbyterian Minister, Reverend Scott.

- Renee' D.: What was the name of his private school?
- E. Boyd: I guess, I don't know. All I know, he went to the man's house. I don't think it had a name.
- Renee' D.: Okay.
- E. Boyd: Yeah.
- Renee' D.: Okay. And then for his-
- E. Boyd: But he didn't, um, it didn't last 'cause Reverend Scott left, so then they had to go to public school. But his father had, um, a store on Plow Ground Road. He had a, he had a gin mill, grocery store, something ... they plant cotton and, um, sugar cane and [benny 00:05:40], and all the vegetables and whatever. We never had to buy no vegetables.
- Renee' D.: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- E. Boyd: Yeah, I had ... we shelled beans, Lima beans and shucked corn and, and all that. We never wanted for food, that's for sure. My daddy was the type of man, he was a hardworking man, yeah. Loved him to death.
- Renee' D.: So in addition to his veterinarian work, um, was he a farmer as well?
- E. Boyd: He was a farmer, yeah. My grand-daddy was the big farmer. He had people used to work for him.
- Renee' D.: Oh.
- E. Boyd: Yeah.
- Renee' D.: Did he own his own land, your grand-daddy?
- E. Boyd: Yeah, you know back then, back then, land was just there for the grab. It's they call it a squatter's right.
- Renee' D.: Hmm.
- E. Boyd: And they, and they went down to the, um, to the place where you buy land I guess. I don't know what you call it, uh, and he put a ... and that's how he got the land from- from them. He bought it, no he had to buy it, but they chose what ... the one he did want is not the one he really got. He got both [inaudible 00:06:54] from Bohicket Road to Baptist Church, that's what he had wanted, farther than that, but they didn't give him Bohicket Road. They start at Baptist Church, and he went all the way down. He had 200, 200 acres. Yeah. I still have most of it anyway.
- Renee' D.: That's a lot of land. Um, around what time period was that, do you know?

E. Boyd: When he-

Renee' D.: Like a late 1800, early 1900?

E. Boyd: I guess in 18 ... my daddy was born in 18 ... my mama was born in 1898, and my daddy was born in 18 ... he was born in October of the year before.

Renee' D.: Okay.

E. Boyd: What's that, 97? My mother lived a whole century. The whole of the ...

Renee' D.: Apparently that's an, a common thing [crosstalk 00:07:58]

E. Boyd: ... 19th century, yeah.

Renee' D.: That's [inaudible 00:08:01].

E. Boyd: 19th, yeah, I think, yeah, 19th.

Renee' D.: And, so you said your granddad owned about 200 acres.

E. Boyd: 200 acres, yeah.

Renee' D.: And you still own part of it today?

E. Boyd: I still have.

Renee' D.: That's really good.

E. Boyd: I still have about 50 or 60 acres of it.

Renee' D.: So, um, when your granddad was running this farm, um, where did he find people to work on these 200 acres, or did he just [crosstalk 00:08:35]

E. Boyd: People who live in the community.

Renee' D.: Okay.

E. Boyd: And the other people who need jobs and they come and they worked on the farm, yep. And then his, his ... my daddy ... my grand-daddy's brother had, what's it called, a ferry? To take the people to the market, hey? He goes down to, um, he went to, um, Exchange Landing. That's where the ferry was parked.

And he, my grand-daddy didn't want none of the land that his grandfather had, so two brothers, Uncle Jack and my grandfather, they left Whaley, 'cause we were supposed to be in Whaley. That's where we were supposed to be from. But they came out and they got their own land.

One, uh, was on, um, Uncle Jack, he was on River Road. He didn't have that much, uh, he didn't buy that much land though, but he had a nice house and store too. And he used to take the people back and forth to the market to sell their vegetables. And-

Renee' D.: Where, where was this ferry located? You mentioned that there was a ferry to get people-

E. Boyd: It's on Exchange Landing.

Renee' D.: Okay.

E. Boyd: Exchange Landing, running to, um, Landing Ocean. It's beautiful down there. You need to take a ride and look. Very pretty.

Renee' D.: And did your granddad have a name for his farm?

E. Boyd: No.

Renee' D.: Okay, just a farm?

E. Boyd: Not that I know of, not that I know of, yeah.

Renee' D.: Okay.

E. Boyd: He-he died when he was in the 50s, but nobody knew what he died from. So then that's how come he lost most of his land, 'cause the children didn't have the money to ... farmers usually borrow money to farm. And if you don't make a crop to, to pay back, then that's where the other people take your property away. Yeah.

Renee' D.: Okay. And so, have you lived on Johns Island your entire life?

E. Boyd: All my life. Would not leave till God calls me home.

Renee' D.: Can you tell me of any specific neighborhoods that you know about, or specific, like, areas or sides of town?

E. Boyd: Yeah, oh no, you mean besides Johns Island?

Renee' D.: Uh, no, on Johns Island?

E. Boyd: On Johns Island? Well, we visit all the areas, you know. We were, we were ... Johns Island was mostly a group of people together. Yes, 'cause we had, um, my daddy was ... I belonged to the Presbyterian church.

Renee' D.: Okay.

- E. Boyd: And they had a lady there, she used to come as [inaudible 00:11:30], right, yeah. And she used to come to our house to teach us Bible school and Sunday school, and-and we had to wait ... invite all the children from Whaley and-and Plow Ground Road. They'll come in and-and the ... in my yard ... my mama's yard. And she-she had an organ, so the organ, most people played with, um, a battery, because we didn't have electric light at that time.
- Renee' D.: And what decade was this, with the no electricity [inaudible 00:12:02]?
- E. Boyd: Well no ... they didn't have ... we didn't have electricity until I was ... I went to college a year or two before we had electricity.
- Renee' D.: All right.
- E. Boyd: Before ... because they-they did all the highway first, and then they did the side roads, yeah.
- Renee' D.: What year was that about? So you said it was when you went to college.
- E. Boyd: When I went to college in 1950.
- Renee' D.: Okay.
- E. Boyd: We didn't have no light. 1951 we had no light.
- Renee' D.: Okay, okay.
- E. Boyd: Around '52.
- Renee' D.: And you said they did the highways ...
- E. Boyd: The highways were-were, um ...
- Renee' D.: ... first?
- E. Boyd: ... dirt. That-that didn't happen ... that happened a long time after I was teaching. 'Cause they did, they did half of Plow Ground Road because the farmer there said a road, uh, would bother his tractor and equipment so he stopped it after he passed our house. Then he stopped it, yeah. So whenever I was going to school in the morning, driving going to school, I'd get stuck every morning 'cause the road was bad, yeah (laughs). But I know that the white fella up there, he and my daddy was friends. He bought my grandfather piece of land what he lived on. And I know he used to go down to see about the people that were working for him, so I'd sit home until I see him pass, then I'd go in the cargo [inaudible 00:13:33], when he coming back, he'd push me up (laughs). Yeah, but he does it every ... and he did it every morning, never said a word (laughs). Yeah.
- Renee' D.: And so, what-what were the main streets that were already paved before?

- E. Boyd: River Road.
- Renee' D.: River Road?
- E. Boyd: Bohicket too. Yeah, and Bohicket, yeah. All the main roads were paved. And the, and those dirt roads had some holes in it. Either way I went I-I would get stuck.
- Renee' D.: And what-what school, what elementary school did you go to?
- E. Boyd: I went to Miller Hill Elementary School for three or four years. Then I went in the city school, lived with my aunt.
- Renee' D.: Um ...
- E. Boyd: And on Market Street, I went to Buist Elementary, Charleston. And they went ... Buist ... that elementary school went to the seventh grade.
- Renee' D.: Okay.
- E. Boyd: The one on Johns Island only went to the fifth grade. And that's why the children had to finish the fifth grade [inaudible 00:15:02] way, they had to find work. That's all the education they had.
- Renee' D.: And then did you go to Burke High School?
- E. Boyd: Then I graduated from Burke High School, and I went to [Clathlon 00:15:15] and I went to state, then I went the other school around in the area, you know. Night school sometimes, yeah. They used to ... the superintendent, he used to always send me there (laughs). Any time somebody needed to go to a class to-to bring it back to the other teachers, there were two of us. He always said, the two math teachers, I would ... my major was math.
- Renee' D.: Hmm.
- E. Boyd: And he would send me to math and science. Then I-I got ... went in the elementary school, and then I went back and got my major in elementary ed also, but I like elementary better, yeah.
- Renee' D.: And for school, elementary school ...
- E. Boyd: Elementary.
- Renee' D.: And I guess they call it middle school today?
- E. Boyd: They didn't have no middle school then.
- Renee' D.: Okay.

- E. Boyd: Elementary school in Charleston was from one to seven.
- Renee' D.: Okay, and then high school was eight through ...
- E. Boyd: 8 to 12.
- Renee' D.: Okay.
- E. Boyd: It was four years. [inaudible 00:16:19]
- Renee' D.: Okay.
- E. Boyd: Yeah. 'Cause they took the, they took the seventh grade out of ... the sixth and seventh grade out of it. Sixth and seventh grade, right?
- Renee' D.: Yeah.
- E. Boyd: Yeah. That's middle school.
- Renee' D.: And, um, can you tell us where Miller Hill Elementary was located, approximately?
- E. Boyd: Oh, as you ... I don't know. About a, about a third of a mile after you leave Plow Ground Road, on that ... about round there, yeah. It was a [inaudible 00:17:03]. The first teacher had first through third, and the next teacher had fourth to fifth. And when you finished that, that was it. Children used to head up and go to New York, or ... I didn't want to go to New York.
- Renee' D.: Hmm. Why not?
- E. Boyd: I didn't like New York. I used to go to visit my sister, during the summer time sometimes. But these were [inaudible 00:17:34] they-they got married and in the summer time, they'd send all the children down to me, so I raised all of them. So I had a lot of children (laughs).
- Renee' D.: How many approximately?
- E. Boyd: Uh, you mean children that I raised?
- Renee' D.: Yeah.
- E. Boyd: Ooh, my ... one of my, one of my sister's child, I raised her from one day old. She didn't know, she had a baby, she didn't know nothing about no babies. But I never had a child. But it's just something here, I took it [inaudible 00:18:03]. And my other sister, she had two boys. One was two and one was three when she brought them home, until they go ... able to go to school. And my other sister took her son when he was five, to New York. Then my other brother, when my brother started sending two of his sons down in the

summer. Then my uncle used to send his son down in the summer. So (laughs), and that was me pumping water (laughs).

Renee' D.: Oh, 'cause there was no ...

E. Boyd: No light, no electricity, yeah. You had the part when you washed, you had to have three tubs of water. One to wash, one to do the second wash, and the other one to rinse.

Renee' D.: And, so, I know that you said that you were a teacher, and so where did you say you taught?

E. Boyd: At first when I came up, first came [inaudible 00:19:07] ... I ... well I had two jobs if ... three jobs if ... two jobs in that [inaudible 00:19:12] but my mama didn't want me to stay up there so I had to come home. Because I was really working up there while I was there, but I wasn't getting paid for it, 'cause every time the school, the elementary school [inaudible 00:19:24] they need teachers, substitute teachers, they would get a group of us. Your sister was one of them too. But we never got paid for it.

Yes, but when I finished school, I had, um, two jobs, two jobs, and I was offered two jobs in [inaudible 00:19:43]. But I, I had no money to go there in the first place, so I had to do what my mama said. Then I had a job at, um, at [Walter Barr 00:19:53], Walter Barr, but I didn't take that either. [Abbey 00:19:58] went there too, right? Yeah.

So then I-I substitute at Haut Gap. Haut Gap at that time was an elementary and a high school, right? Yeah. And I had the seventh grade there, for a semester. Then the next year, they sent me to Promised Land. There was two vacancy, Promised Land and-and La-Lagreee, [Lagreeville 00:20:30]. Miss [Whelan 00:20:31] went there, and they sent me to Promised Land because I was just out of school, and Miss Whelan was out of school for quite a while. So if I had went to La-Lagreeville, I wouldn't have known what to do, so I didn't accept it. Uh ...

Renee' D.: What was so different about Lagreeville School?

E. Boyd: Huh?

Renee' D.: What was so different about Lagreeville School?

E. Boyd: I would have been there by myself. I wouldn't know what I was supposed to do as a Principal, you know? And I wouldn't like to go in a job I don't know nothing about. Yeah, so I didn't, I didn't accept it. He even came for my brother when Mr. Davis left, the superintendent came for my brother, 'cause he wanted somebody from Johns Island to, to live there with the children, you know? But my brother didn't ... after he finished school, he went in service.

Renee' D.: What was it like teaching, um-

E. Boyd: I loved it.

Renee' D.: Yes?

E. Boyd: I didn't like high school though. But that was my major (laughs). But I didn't like it. The children ... I had a boy in the class was just as old as my ... he was older than me (laughs). And all he did all day was say, "Miss, you're sure pretty though," that's all he did all day (laughs). Richard, Richard, um, Gibbons (laughs). He had a big attache case, "Miss, you sure are pretty." I know (laughs), and a little, a little boy was there, I ought to tell the story. I don't know, I shouldn't tell that story though. No, I'm gonna tell that story.

A little boy there he teased me the whole time. Lord forgive me. But I hit him. I just go ... I-I didn't know I was gonna do it. That's not me. That's not me, that's not me. And when I looked up, who was at the window, but the Principal. And, and he called me into his office, oh Lord I just got the job and just lost it (laughs).

He said, he said, "You are a pretty woman, and those boys in there, they're gonna give you a bit because they like pretty women." And so he didn't [inaudible 00:22:48], he said, "But I didn't know you had it in you. Now you're gonna make a good teacher." I said, "Well, thank-you." When he called me in there, give me my check for the [inaudible 00:22:57] (laughs). He gave me the check, I looked at the check, a little bit of money here, he said, "You're surprised to see how much money you got, huh?" So I said, "Maybe I didn't look at the check right." And I looked at it again (laughs). I looked at it and I say nothing, 'cause I would have said something wrong so I just walked out the door (laughs).

That little bit of money was all I earned for nothing. Nothing, nothing, but back then it was a lot of money, 'cause things were cheap. I built my house when it was cheap.

Renee' D.: So, just for reference ...

E. Boyd: Hmm.

Renee' D.: ... for that check that you got, that you said was so small, how much was in that?

E. Boyd: How much money was?

Renee' D.: Yeah.

E. Boyd: 250.

Renee' D.: Two ...

E. Boyd: For one month.

Renee' D.: Two dollars and 50 cents?

E. Boyd: \$250. That's what we made. You know I retired 36 years and I still wasn't making, um, \$30,000. But things were cheap when I bought them. Nobody can build a house the way I built mine, but I had a head and I used it. First I built my mom and then a house with that same \$250, and sent my brother Joseph [inaudible 00:24:26].

Renee' D.: [inaudible 00:24:26]

E. Boyd: \$250. I didn't have to finest clothes to wear but I was clean. I didn't have the best cars to drive, but I was driving. I would, I would have gone on a tractor but I had ... as long as I wasn't walking, you know? Wouldn't matter to me what I ride, but I know what I had, I had in head what I wanted to do. I was going to send my brother to college now, and I did. And I built my mom and then an eight-room house, five bedrooms. You wouldn't believe what the man charged me to ... for the labor. \$550. But he was a family member. He could only work on Saturday, but it didn't take, it didn't take a year to do it though. 'Cause sometimes he'd bring people in and [inaudible 00:25:17] \$550.

But he would believe in me, you know, he believed in ... 'cause I was trying, I was trying and I was trying. And he said, he ... I don't think he really knew my name. He used to call me Girlie (laughs). Or that Sunny Gal, that Sunny Gal (laughs). Those [inaudible 00:25:35] make me eat, Sunny Gal, or Girlie. There was three men on Johns Island. They liked the way I lived my life. And nobody couldn't say nothing about me 'cause I didn't bother nobody. I didn't go to no party, didn't party. Stayed home and take care of everybody's children, and everybody else who needed help, Ethel was there and I was still ... I'm still doing it.

Renee' D.: So you mentioned that you didn't go out to party and things like that. Where was there to hang out, or go dancing in Johns Island?

E. Boyd: Or that had [Piccolo Joint 00:26:16], I didn't, I didn't like no Piccolo Joint.

Renee' D.: Where was Piccolo Joint located?

E. Boyd: They had one, um, right across from Miller Hill School. One across from, um, [Fifth 00:26:25] Garage. And then they had, um, the-the-the, um, the on the island going to Kiawah, what's that? There's a ... yeah, um ... no, they had it, had the building down there. What did they call it? There was a beach, a beach, Fraser Beach. Uh, they used to go there, and I used to go down there sometimes during the day, just for the ride, take mama down there. Yeah.

Renee' D.: Fraser Beach was on Johns Island? [crosstalk 00:27:02]

E. Boyd: Yeah, it was on Johns Island, but down there actually going to Kiawah. Closer to Kiawah. They don't have that any more, do they? No.

Renee' D.: And for Fraser Beach, um, have you heard of Mosquito Beach on James Island?

E. Boyd: Yeah, I was there too but I never got out. I just go for the ride and sit in the car. Yeah.

- Renee' D.: Was Fraser Beach kind of set up like-
- E. Boyd: Just like that, yeah. That's when my brother take me out, that's the only person I used to go out with. He going, he going Mount Pleasant, so we get [inaudible 00:27:43] over there, no school children [inaudible 00:27:45] (laughs).
- Renee' D.: And where did you go on Mount Pleasant?
- E. Boyd: I don't know. It was a beach. It was a beach some place, and a woods some place back there. When I arrived with him, I looked to see where I am going.
- Renee' D.: And then, you also mentioned, um, how you got to school, or your job as a teacher, how you would get to school. Did you live close to the Haut Gap, Haut Gap Haut Gap ...
- E. Boyd: Haut Gap School? I didn't have a ... My brother had a car, but I couldn't drive, until after I finished college. And my ... I had a grand-uncle who used to live across the road from where I lived and he used to take me and pick me up, yeah.
- Renee' D.: Every day?
- E. Boyd: Yeah. But before ... but see when I finished college, my brother was still in high school. He was a senior. So he had a car. Later, later he bought a car. And when he went to school, he went Josie Smith, he left the car for me so I could get to work, yeah. It was very nice, nice brother. We-we were like this. Yeah. But he got killed in Vietnam.
- Renee' D.: I'm sorry.
- E. Boyd: Yeah, yeah. That's one death, I used to think if I can live through that one, I can live through any one, 'cause we were very, very close.
- Renee' D.: Um.
- E. Boyd: Sometimes when I'd wake up in the morning, who laying on the side of the bed, but him fast asleep (laughs). And mama catch you in here (laughs). He's just laying on there fast asleep. I know you lonesome back there. He would come and look up, he'd sit on the side with it. He used to go up some time and when he came in, bag of food. He would turn the TV on and we'd sit back there, be laughing, talking, eating (laughs). And he fell asleep right there.
- Renee' D.: [inaudible 00:29:48] Thank-you for-