FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Annie Bell Davison Sherman**

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Interviewer: Pat Pollicoff

Transcriber: Megan Moore

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33 Pages

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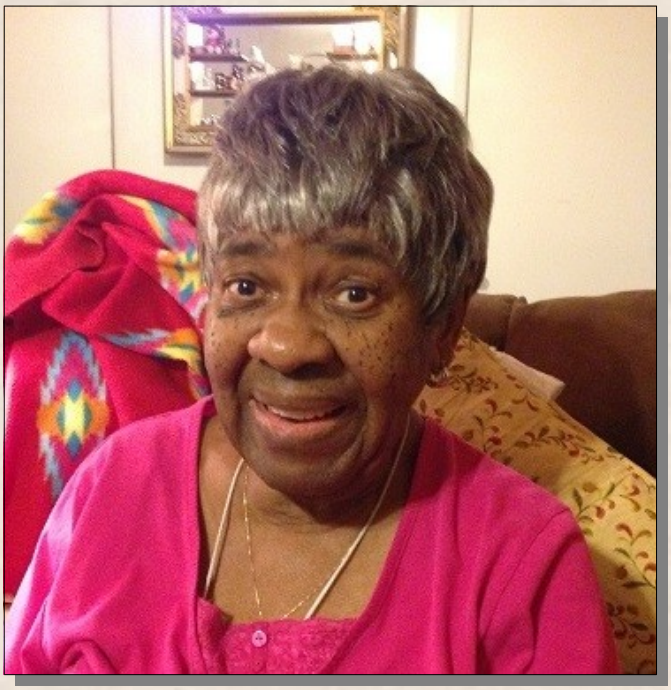

Transcript

POLLICOFF: So Annie, will you please tell us your full name and date of birth?

SHERMAN: Annie Bell Davison Sherman. I was born November the twentieth, 1933. On Travis Street in Richmond, Fort Bend County. I was born at home, didn't have no hospital.

POLLICOFF: Ok, and so your home address was?

SHERMAN: It was on Travis. We didn't have addresses then. We didn't have numbers, but it's Travis Street now. The Methodist church has a parking lot there now.

POLLICOFF: What brought your family to the Fort Bend area, and when did they arrive?

SHERMAN: I know my grandmother got here in 1914, from Louisiana. Her name was Olivia Murphy Davis from Palmetto, off of Monroe, Louisiana.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The 1910 Census record lists her as living in Saint Landry Parish, LA, which is not really near Monroe, but does have the city of Palmetto in its boundaries.

POLLICOFF: Do you know what brought her here in 1914? Was she married at the time?

SHERMAN: No. Her mother and father came with her. But her mother passed away in 1914.

POLLICOFF: Were there other children? Did your grandmother have siblings?

SHERMAN: I know she had a sister named Ophelia who came here. She said she had a brother, but I didn't ever know his name.

POLLICOFF: Do you remember what her parents' names were?

SHERMAN: Her mother was named Dana.

POLLICOFF: And your great grandfather?

SHERMAN: I don't know.

POLLICOFF: Tell me about your parents. When were they born?

SHERMAN: My mother, Evelyn Phillips, was born March the 29, 1914. My father was named John E. Davison. I know his birthday was July the 29th. What year, I don't know.

POLLICOFF: Do you know what kind of work your grandparents did here?

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SHERMAN: Well, they worked on a farm in the cotton field.

POLLICOFF: How many children did your mother and father have?

SHERMAN: She had four children. Clifton Davison was the oldest born March the sixth, 1932. Then me, November twentieth, 1933. Then Harvey Ellis Davison February the eighth, 1934. Then my brother Ivory Edwards, born March the twenty ninth. He was born on my mother's birthday.

POLLICOFF: What were your earliest memories of living in Richmond?

SHERMAN: First we lived in Manor, Texas, up near Austin. I was born here, and then went to Manor, Texas. We moved back here when I was – my mother said I was three years old when we moved back here. My earliest memories of Richmond were going to church.

Richmond didn't have any street names. Wasn't any of this back here – there wasn't a street going through here. Only street was Travis Street. When it got to Travis Street, it was just a little trail coming here to this house. We didn't have a street back here. It didn't go all the way through. It was just woods back there. That's where we had our hogs and raised our gardens and everything.

POLLICOFF: Did both parents work in the fields or did your mom stay at home to take care of the kids?

SHERMAN: No, my mother had to work. She worked at the courthouse. First it was called the PTA. Up there on the third floor, it was homemade cloths. They had a sewing area and they'd go up there every morning and make cloths. This was a government something. I don't know if it was for prisoners they was making clothes for, but they made clothes. There were a lot of people that worked there and they had a white uniform they wore. They needed seamstresses to sew different things. Some of them sewed uniforms for businesses and for prisoners.

POLLICOFF: Was that back in the 1930s?

SHERMAN: Yeah.

POLLICOFF: You said your father worked in the cotton fields. Was he working on different farms, or one farm?

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SHERMAN: I don't know really. The farms he worked on were in Manor, when we were there.

POLLICOFF: So, until you were age three, that was what he was doing? When he moved back to Richmond, what did he do?

SHERMAN: He didn't move back to Richmond. He moved somewhere – he stayed up there, I guess.

POLLICOFF: Oh, he stayed? Then your mother came back with all four of you.

SHERMAN: No, we weren't all born then. It was just me and my brother, and we stayed with my grandmother.

POLLICOFF: Your grandmother was here? That's right. Was your grandfather alive at that time?

SHERMAN: No. I don't ever remember seeing my grandfather.

POLLICOFF: So your mother worked and she was really the sole support? Did she ever remarry?

SHERMAN: Yes. I think it was in 1942.

In the later years, she worked for the Baker's, up here, right down the street. And she worked for the Van Slyke's. Lester is a lawyer now, the oldest Van Slyke. She worked for them and helped raise him. And she also picked cotton on the Ernest Farm right there where Mennonite Road is. He had a farm out there, and we'd go out there. Sometimes they would pick us up on Sundays and we wouldn't come back till that Friday.

POLLICOFF: All of you would go out there? How old were you when you were doing that?

SHERMAN: Oh, I was about seven, eight. I wouldn't do much work. I didn't know much about working. I was at the house, in the barn because we slept on hay, on a hay bed, on the floor.

POLLICOFF: What about school?

SHERMAN: Well I started school when I was six. I was at what we called the Colored School. It was on the North side. It said Richmond Colored School. From first grade to eighth grade. We were a four-room school with about 30 students.

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POLLICOFF: Oh, well those were some big groups. So you probably had easily over 100 students at the school, right? After the eighth grade did you go on to high school?

SHERMAN: Went to Jackson High School for a while. Now I didn't finish from Jackson.

POLLICOFF: Okay, and then school went through the eleventh or twelfth grade at that point?

SHERMAN: Twelfth.

POLLICOFF: You didn't finish because life gets busy. (Sherman chuckles softly) So what did you do?

SHERMAN: I got married at 18. Then I went to Texas A&M, for training for the Expanded Nutrition Program. I worked at the courthouse on the third floor. With Miss Bertie Alford, Miss Georgiana Thomas, Miss Walker, and Miss Weathers. They were working at the county extension service. It was 1969 when I started and I went out in 1975.

EVELYN: [Daughter] It was a program back then, when they gave out commodity foods. They had to go into the homes and teach the families how to prepare these foods that they received from the government. So she had to go to Texas A&M to be trained.

POLLICOFF: Tell me a little bit more about that job. Did you enjoy doing that?

SHERMAN: Yes, I did. I enjoyed it. We learned how to prepare the food because they'd give you different kinds of canned goods.

POLLICOFF: So, it was mostly canned goods that they were handing out?

SHERMAN: No. It was some of everything. It was butter, it was cheese, it was canned meat.

POLLICOFF: So you must be quite a cook.

SHERMAN: Not anymore.

EVELYN: Yeah, but she tried out the recipes on us a lot. (laughs). My mother was a great cook.

POLLICOFF: What was your favorite thing to make?

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SHERMAN: Well, really, my husband and them, we cooked a lot of everything. He liked sweet potato pie and he liked cake, just a plain pound cake with raisins and pecans. He didn't like the fruit cake. The chocolate cake, that was one of his favorite cakes and the pineapple cake.

POLLICOFF: So tell me about how you met your husband.

SHERMAN: My husband's brother was coming to visit my aunt, my mother's sister. He said he had some more brothers at home. And I said, "Oh, really?" So one day I walked up to my grandmother's house and my husband was sitting there. When I walked past him he was sitting on the steps. He looked at me and just did his nose up like this. When I walked in I asked his brother, I said, "Who is that?" "That's my brother." I said, "You should have left him at home."

POLLICOFF: (laughs) So it was not love at first sight?

SHERMAN: No, no, no. He told me later he had gotten his nose hurt or something. I passed by and he's sitting on the step and he just kind of stuck his nose up and I said, "Whoo!"

POLLICOFF: It's a likely story (with humor). So obviously you must have met him again later, and his attitude had improved.

SHERMAN: No, not really. It took a while for it to improve. He was living out across the river on a farmer's place. Out there where they have a school out there now. Where Randall's is, all over there. That's where his father was, and nine of his siblings.

POLLICOFF: He had nine siblings.

SHERMAN: Yeah, his father had nine and his mother passed away when he was real young. He didn't even remember her.

POLLICOFF: So all the kids really just raised each other?

SHERMAN: Yes. But he married another lady and she had six. Because he didn't want them separated. So he kept them with him. She had six and he had nine in a four room house. Can you imagine that? They had a lot of work to do because they had to farm on the farmer's place where they were living.

POLLICOFF: Now tell me your husband's name.

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SHERMAN: Albert Herbert Sherman born July 25, 1932. We were married here in Richmond on my mother's porch. Didn't have church weddings like they do now. All over in this neighborhood, most people had porch weddings.

POLLICOFF: So when you have a porch wedding, everybody else is in the yard watching? And so you were elevated up there on the porch? Who married you?

SHERMAN: His name was Reverend Thomas. He was from Fresno. My brother, Harvey, he was up in the tree. Then nobody knew he was in there but me because when I walked out he looked up at me and I looked up at him so he just stayed up in the tree the whole time during the ceremony. This house was facing Fannin Street at the time.

POLLICOFF: Oh, that's great.

SHERMAN: My mother didn't raise me. My godmother raised me. Her name was Caroline Davis.

POLLICOFF: Did you go live with Caroline Davis?

SHERMAN: Yeah, I lived right here.

POLLICOFF: So this was Caroline's house? Where we are right now? At what point did you come to live with her?

SHERMAN: I can't remember. I try to remember real hard if I was three years old and my mother brought me here, or if she got me from my grandmother. I used to think about that a lot but then I stopped thinking about it. I don't know. But I ended up here. It was just she and her husband. She didn't have any children. My mother worked all the time, and she wasn't able. I was the only girl so she just let her keep me.

POLLICOFF: Did you see your mother often?

SHERMAN: Yeah, I saw her all the time. They all worked at this place up at the courthouse. She also worked for Doctor Nichols. She was the maid up there. We washed their clothes, she'd take in washing and ironing at the home. We used the black irons. We had a furnace that you put coals in, and then you put the irons on there. I remember I had a little iron and little ironing board, because you had to iron everything. I ironed Doctor Nichols's shorts and undershirts and fold them. She'd iron all those other things.

POLLICOFF: You know, I've tried those irons. They're not easy.

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SHERMAN: No, they're not. They're not, but I didn't get a spot on them. I couldn't.

POLLICOFF: No, because you'd have to wash it again. Start all over.

SHERMAN: Right, because we had to wash by hand.

From the 17th century, sadirons or sad irons (from Middle English "sad" meaning of "solid", used in modern English through the 1800s began to be used. They were thick slabs of cast iron, triangular and with a handle, heated in a fire or on a stove. These were also called flat irons. In the 1800s and early 1900s, everyday clothing and household linens were made from 100% cotton or flax linen and, after laundering, both demanded heavy pressing with hot irons to remove wrinkles. *--Wikipedia*

POLLICOFF: Oh, my goodness. So, Caroline Davison – what was her husband's name?

SHERMAN: Dan Davis.

EVELYN: They were Davis, not Davison.

SHERMAN: Uh, uh. They were Davis'.

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POLLICOFF: But your mother's name was Davison; her married name.

SHERMAN: Mm hmm.

POLLICOFF: But clearly, this part of town, everybody was very close.

SHERMAN: Yeah, everybody was close. Everybody knew everybody, and everybody just was family. The lady where I was born, that was my mother's godmother and I was born in her house. Her name was Laberta Scott.

POLLICOFF: This part of town was called Freedman's Town.

SHERMAN: Well I don't know why it was called Freeman's Town because when I was growing up we called it Sand Town. There was a lot of sand. Where Austin Street is, that was sand until they put pavement down there. And where Jane Long School is, there used to be a hill up there, and my mother's sister stayed up there. You couldn't go to their house from the street. You had to go around through the back and go up there because it was too high to go up the street.

POLLICOFF: The slope was too high, huh?

SHERMAN: Yeah. The other side of town we called Baptist Hill. I don't know why we called it Baptist Hill (with humor) but this here was Sand Town.

POLLICOFF: Was there a Baptist church over there?

SHERMAN: Yes, Mount Carmel on Tenth Street. It's been there for years. Our school was right behind Mount Carmel.

POLLICOFF: All of this area backed up to the woods. Was any of it fenced off?

SHERMAN: Yeah, it was fenced off. Because in the back, that's where we had our hogs and we had fig trees and peach trees, something like an orange fruit orchard back there, watermelons and sweet potatoes and all that.

POLLICOFF: You really just grew your own food? That included all the meat and everything?

SHERMAN: Yes, because we just raised hogs and chickens.

POLLICOFF: Did you all ever hunt for deer or anything like that? Or turkey?

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SHERMAN: Yeah, people in the neighborhood – not deer or turkey. There was rabbits, coons, and opossums, and squirrels and all that stuff. There was fishing, they'd go fishing.

POLLICOFF: Where did people go fishing?

SHERMAN: Down at the river. We called it Old River down there, like you're going past the park down there. That's where we'd go. Like you're going to Sugar Land. It's like that when you're getting ready to turn at that light going to FM 359, if you look to your right, it's water. That's what they call Old River.

POLLICOFF: What kind of fish did you mostly eat that they pulled out? Was it Catfish?

SHERMAN: No. buffalo and sheepsheads. Good fried but those buffalo and sheepsheads and garfish have a lot of bones in it. I didn't like it but we had to eat it.

Small-mouth buffalo fish. --Wikipedia

POLLICOFF: Tell me about your neighbors. Do you remember who lived around you?

SHERMAN: Not very many people lived around because right across the street, where the brick house is, it was just a Mr. Lucius Humphrey. He had his mules over there and his wagons and stuff. Over here on the corner, that's where he had his hogs and things.

POLLICOFF: What other kinds of work were people doing? Or other businesses?

SHERMAN: Household maid, wife, women were maids and some of the men worked as chauffeurs. Over here on Austin Street, the first store I remember was Mister Sidney Sanford's store. His wife was a teacher, Miss Johnnie Mae Sanford.

POLLICOFF: Were they also African American?

SHERMAN: Yes.

POLLICOFF: So everything that's southwest of there was more of the Sand Town?

SHERMAN: Yeah. Where the school is and where the clinic is, Mr. Joe Wessendorff's father owned all that. There were just little four room houses all over there. There was a LOT of houses in that area.

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POLLICOFF: Did you own the land here?

SHERMAN: No, no, no. Didn't anybody own the land. We owned our land here, and up there where I was born, they owned their land there. But all the rest of us, they rented from Mr. Wessendorff. Up there on the corner there, by the two story houses where it's a law office now – that was the A. T. Thomas' place. They had rent houses and he was African American. He had rent houses, and my grandmother, that's where she rented. We'd go there and get our water because they had a pump and people didn't have faucets at that time.

POLLICOFF: Not until when?

SHERMAN: Years later. But he owned the houses and we'd go to his house and get water. Then where my grandmother lived, where they moved later where Mr. Wessendorff was, they had a well. Each block had a well. He had a well there and he had a well in the other place. Over there by the trench he had houses, they had a well there. One of these big open wells with no top on it. Frogs would get in the well and everything.

POLLICOFF: (laughs quietly) So you're trying to haul the water up?

SHERMAN: You had to bring it up with a bucket.

POLLICOFF: With a bucket and a rope, I guess, right? And just splash it down? It was a lot of work, hauling water like that.

SHERMAN: Yeah, you had the wash water, drinking water that was your water. Yeah, that lasted until 1950...let's see, they started making us put in sanitary stuff, plumbing and stuff like that.

POLLICOFF: So the city finally got a sewer system started where you could actually have plumbing and everything, because it wasn't that developed before?

SHERMAN: No, it wasn't. That was back in 1951, I think, when they started on that.

POLLICOFF: So it was really a very rural area until the fifties?

SHERMAN: Yes, it was.

POLLICOFF: Farming, raising cattle, and livestock, I guess, of all kinds was the biggest thing here?

SHERMAN: Yes.

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POLLICOFF: I know that there were some oil wells around here too. Did you know anybody in the oil business?

SHERMAN: It was down in Thompson where they had all that. Not here. Wasn't any oil in this area.

POLLICOFF: You got married when you were eighteen?

SHERMAN: January 21, 1951. Angelin (Ann) Elizabeth was born June the second, 1952.

POLLICOFF: And then Evelyn, you were the middle? What's your middle name?

EVELYN: Sadell. I was born July 24, 1959. The youngest was Clara Margaret Caroline Sherman. That's her full name.

POLLICOFF: (laughs) She got more names than everybody else.

SHERMAN: Well, she was the last one and everybody wanted to name her. My husband's sister was named Margaret and she asked me, would I name her after her. So then my godmother is named Clara. And the lady that raised me, her name was Caroline, so we put it all in there.

POLLICOFF: That's great. What was her birthday?

SHERMAN: March the fifteenth, 1969. My husband always wanted a son. He tried to give himself time, but it didn't happen.

POLLICOFF: So your godparents, your godmother Caroline and Dan Davis, they lived here originally. Then they passed on and you just inherited the house at that time?

SHERMAN: He passed on in 1940 and she passed on in 1957. We started our family here then we moved out there, across the river, on the farmer's place, too. My husband thought he wanted to farm. I didn't like that.

POLLICOFF: He found some land that he wanted to buy and farm?

SHERMAN: No, no. His daddy was living on a farmer's place. That's where he was raised. My husband was the only one left there with him. So they were farming. But I told my husband I didn't want to stay out there. I didn't like it because there wasn't any houses – you couldn't see anything out there where Randall's and all them places was. I was afraid out there – it was too dark for me.

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We'd get in the car sometimes, and we had a good looking car – no top on it, and the passenger side, there wasn't a door on it, and we'd hunt at night. I'd drive and he'd sit on the hood and we'd just hunt. It was a lot of fun. He was on the hood and I was driving. He told me to keep the light on it, you know, I had to keep up with the light, and he'd just shoot it and that's what we'd eat.

His brother was working for A. P. George. In later years, when we left the farm over there, he got him a job working for the Georges. He worked with the cattle.

POLLICOFF: I remember they did a lot in breeding.

SHERMAN: We didn't stay that long because at the end of the year, the ones that got there last, I think they call it the least seniority, they had to go first. So that's what happened. We were there about a year. Then we moved here and he started working for Mr. Earl Bender. Then he ended up working at George Vaughan's lumber company in Houston. He had to catch a ride. He didn't have a car. He had to hitchhike there and back.

POLLICOFF: Tell me what your families did on a day when everybody wasn't working.

SHERMAN: Most of the time, we'd go to church. That's what we do for fun, we go to church. But when I was growing up, we'd have, – I don't know what you'd call it. We would have some balls of cloth, of materials we'd ball up, and then we'd put kerosene on it, and we'd light it and play with it. You know, throwing it up.

POLLICOFF: Like a torch?

SHERMAN: Yeah! We didn't have no streetlights, so we just did that. We didn't ever set nobody's house on fire. But we'd ball the balls up real tight and then we'd light them and then just throw them. You know lights, we didn't have lights and things like that. There weren't lights on the streets, we just had lamps at home. It was real dark.

Then at the church we had a wood heater. At home we had wood heaters. At the church we'd run the pipe through the window and the smoke would come up in the church and we'd have to let the smoke out and then go back in the church.

POLLICOFF: Open up all the windows.

SHERMAN: Mm hmm. Doors too. The church I grew up in there on Travis and Fourth street. Church of Living God, the Pillar and Ground of the Truth.

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POLLICOFF: Was your family – were they some of the early founders of the church.

SHERMAN: Yes. My grandmother and my mother that raised me were some of the first ones. And Nettie Bell Washington and Laberta Thomas and her husband Harvey Scott, he used to work at the barbershop downtown. We had the barbershop. My husband's daddy worked in the barbershop.

POLLICOFF: This church came at about 1918, if I remember. It was a very different church at that time, for this area.

SHERMAN: Yes, it was. We didn't pray but the prayer that we found in Matthew, the sixth chapter. Then we washed feet. We didn't serve wine or anything like that. We served water. It was so different. The Baptist people didn't do that.

EVELYN: I think one of the things that really stood out to mother was the tambourines and drums and people didn't do that back then.

POLLICOFF: That's so interesting. So when Evangelist Isom Ford came to town it must have caused quite a stir.

SHERMAN: It did! That's why he had to go before the judge. They said it was preaching a strange doctrine. They weren't used to that. But now everybody does it.

POLLICOFF: So they obviously got used to it. People liked it. Because it was joyful?

SHERMAN: Yeah, but they didn't do a joyful noise then. They did music but it was mostly just piano music and that was it. They didn't sing that loud either. We sung louder than they did.

POLLICOFF: So the Baptist church was here. Was there a Methodist church as well?

SHERMAN: Yeah, the Methodist church was on Fifth Street. It wasn't where it is now. On Good Fridays we had our Easter program and on Sunday had the Eater Egg hunt. Some Easter Sundays we'd be with the Methodist church.

We still don't fellowship much with the Baptist church because we believe in women ministers and they didn't.

POLLICOFF: I read in that paper that it was very unusual in the twenties to have women church ministers or leaders. And this church allowed that?

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EVELYN: Yes, they did and still do. The founder was Mother Magdalena Lewis Tate, She and her sons set the standard that brought the Church of the Living God P.G.T. to many places in 1903.

I have pictures of her and Eldress Octavia Laws, the first African American female at our Richmond location. So women have held titles of Eldress, Evangelist, Pastor and now female Bishops.

POLLICOFF: Real equality, even from the twenties.

EVELYN: Yes Ma'am. The Church of Living God P.G.T. was the first of its kind and denomination in the city of Richmond and was established in 1918 by Evangelist Isom Ford after being acknowledged by Fort Bend County Judge Charles H. Chernosky.

Mother Magdalena Lewis Tate.
--Wikipedia

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mary Magdalena Lewis Tate ("Mother Tate") (January 3, 1871 – December 28, 1930) was an African American evangelist. She was the first American woman to serve as a Bishop in a nationally recognized denomination. She founded a Pentecostal denomination, The Church of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of the Truth, in 1903. Its first convocation was held in June 1903 in Greenville, Alabama. The church was the first Pentecostal Holiness church in America founded by a woman, and spread to at least twenty states. At least seven denominations currently trace their history back to her church. --Wikipedia

SHERMAN: The women, like she said, were Eldress. And the men were the Elders. Pastors, Bishops and the Overseer. Most denominations have associations whereas we have assemblies and districts. The Bishop was over the assemblies.

EVELYN: You have a presiding Bishop over all the districts. We were in District Eighteen. Overseers are the ones that are assigned to go out to every church within a year's period. Every year they make their way around to each of those churches and check up on them, make see that everything is going well with the congregation. Bishops normally have that title and they sit on the board with the presiding Bishop. Elders and Eldresses are the ones that were appointed to churches in these various districts. Other denominations use Reverend, that's the way we use Elder.

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When I was licensed for a minister in 1976 I became an Eldress. But I CHOSE to use the title of Evangelist because I moved around so much singing. I had singing groups, so I was more of an Evangelist because I wasn't stationary. Now that we don't have a full time Pastor or Elder at our church, I oversee the affairs of our particular location.

Church Of The Living God, Pillar And Ground Of Truth - Richmond, TX. Texas State Historical Marker dedicated on 8/12/2017.

POLLICOFF: I understand that you're one of the few original residents who lived in this area. You and who else?

SHERMAN: Me and another lady about two doors from here, Erma Davis.

POLLICOFF: Erma's family has lived over here all this time as well?

SHERMAN: Yeah, her father was the one, her GRANDfather was the one I was telling you about – that had his mules over there. Her mother's house was the house right across the street over there. But they didn't live there all the time. They had their house built there because they used to rent from Mr. A. T. Thomas, I was telling you about. The African American man who had the rent houses.

POLLICOFF: Did Mr. Thomas have another business besides renting houses? How did he acquire all the houses?

SHERMAN: He worked in Houston. He and his wife. I don't know who they worked for, but they'd work in Houston, and they'd come in on weekends and that's the way they acquired what they had. Over there where, it's not Hillcrest, it's before you get to the other part over there – they had a farm over there. They had cattle over there.

POLLICOFF: You said that you had a garden. What kinds of things did you grow?

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SHERMAN: We had an orchard. My mother had a peach orchard back there. We had plums and peaches and all that stuff. We had sweet potatoes, we had a little thing, it looked kind of like a dog house, but it was a sweet potato house. We'd put hay in there and put the potatoes in there and they would last a long time, until we'd used them all.

POLLICOFF: So you smoked all of your own pork and bacon and everything?

SHERMAN: Yep, and then sometimes my mother would cook it fried up, just like we were going to use it and then put it down in oil, in grease.

POLLICOFF: That would preserve it?

SHERMAN: Yeah. Then when you needed it, they would take it out and warm it up and that was it. And they'd put up their own tomatoes. They made their own tomato sauce. They put up corn. They put up everything. Most of the time the ladies would all get together in one house and they'd divide the stuff they made.

POLLICOFF: Let me go back to the job you had with Texas A&M's Agricultural Extension Service, where you went and you helped teach nutrition to families. Tell me what that was like. How were the families identified?

SHERMAN: No, they were on a program. I don't know what the name of the program was, but they were on a program and they would get signed up to go get this surplus food. We call it commodity food. They would let us know who they were and we'd go in, because they had all this cheese and dry milk and canned meats and all this stuff, flour and they didn't really know what to do with it.

POLLICOFF: What did you do when you go into these families?

SHERMAN: Well, really, I worked with the youth phase. We had adult phase and the youth phase. I worked mostly with the children. But I worked along with the adults. The adults would go into the home and find out how many children there were. They were teaching the adults, and I'd go in and teach the children how to cook.

I had recipes. I'd tell them about the four – at that time it was the four food groups, you know? We'd teach them about which groups were the best for them. We told them how to make peanut butter toast. They would get this powdered milk and we'd show them how to make their own chocolate. We had a recipe called Tango milkshake. They used powdered sugar and Tang. I don't know if they still make Tang, do they?

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POLLICOFF: Oh, the Tang? I remember Tang.

EVELYN: Yeah. But you would take this – (softly laughs). I tell you, she'd practice on us. You'd take this powdered milk and you'd mix it with Tang, and you'd make Tango milk.

SHERMAN: Then they started making Tango ice cream, they called it. Put it in the freezer and let it get frozen. Then they'd eat it like ice cream.

POLLICOFF: Sounds like a popsicle. That sounds a lot better. So you practiced these recipes. You looked at all these things and went, "How in the world am I going to make a nutritious meal out of this?"

SHERMAN: Yeah. We did all that. We had some ground meat, I mean some meat in a can. We'd take that and some corn, whole kernel corn, and some peas, and fix that up together and put cheese in it, and that would be a meal.

POLLICOFF: Now, your daughter is turning her nose up at the thought of that canned meat, but you think it's okay?

EVELYN: Yeah. But we had FUN with trying the recipes and stuff that they would make for others. I LOVED their cheese. That was the best cheese in the world, you know? (Sherman laughs) I would take that cheese over store bought cheese any day. It was great for grilled cheese sandwiches and stuff – whoa, that was great.

SHERMAN: Boy, I'd make carrot raisin salad and then I'd come home, my daughter wanted me to make some and I'd say, "I've been eating this all day." Then I got to eat some more. (Evelyn laughs)

We worked with some of the groups from the state school. We had them come once a week to the office. Our office, after we moved out of the courthouse, was down on Morton Street. Worked there about seven years.

My husband, he passed away in 1974 at age 42. Then I worked for the Office of Early Childhood Development. It's now the clinic up here, but we started out in Rosenberg.

POLLICOFF: What did you do?

SHERMAN: Same thing. Going to the area children. Find out how many children was in the family and teach the children how to cook and different stuff.

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POLLICOFF: Teaching the children how to cook. So you taught them in their own home, as opposed to taking them to another place for a class?

SHERMAN: Yeah, the teacher would go to the home. I would teach them. I worked the whole Fort Bend County area. Needville, part of Sugar Land. Fulshear and all over there. I ended up in Katy and I had got out of my territory. I was in another county. I wasn't supposed to work but for Fort Bend County. Worked in Needville and all those places. Stafford. Plus I did private sitting at a hospital. Certain times in the afternoon. Because I worked at nights most of the time.

POLLICOFF: How old were you at this point, when you started doing that?

SHERMAN: Oh, about forty something.

POLLICOFF: Because that was a lot easier than driving around this entire county?

SHERMAN: I don't know if it was or not. (Pollicoff laughs). No, the only thing – I'd get attached to my patients and they'd pass away and I didn't like that. So I had to stop that.

POLLICOFF: You spent a long time doing that as well?

SHERMAN: Yeah. My mother worked at same thing. She was one of the first people working there – it used to be called Autumn Hills Health Care, now it is Richmond Health Care.

Really, I had some good memories, but I didn't ever want to live in Richmond. Always thought I wanted to live in California. That's where my father went. He was in California. I'd see things on television. When we first got our TV I was afraid to take a shower in front of the TV because I thought that they could see me. It took me a long time -

POLLICOFF: When you look back on the years that you were growing up, what are your favorite memories about growing up in Richmond?

POLLICOFF: (laughs) When did you get your first TV?

SHERMAN: Oh, that was back in the fifties. We had tubs, round tubs we had to bathe in, so we had to put it in there where the heat was. And when I turned the television on, they looked like they were looking right at me and I just couldn't get in there. Because the men looked so real, we weren't used to that.

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I just didn't want to live in Richmond. You'd see all this stuff on television about California and all these people, how they'd look, you know? So I wanted to go to California, so I told my Dad I wanted to come to California. He sent me a ticket, but I had met Albert then. (laughs)

POLLICOFF: I don't blame you at all.

POLLICOFF: So Albert changed your plans and you stuck around?

SHERMAN: Yep, yep. Yep, sure did, after I met him. I did go out to California and visit my father and it wasn't like I thought it was in California. It was back in the early sixties.

POLLICOFF: So did you go by yourself?

SHERMAN: No. I took my two children. Los Angeles. We didn't go to Disneyland. He showed us Beverly Hills and stuff like that.

POLLICOFF: So that was not really what you wanted?

SHERMAN: Mm mm. So I end up back here in Richmond. Yeah, I'll stay right here. But it was alright growing up. We didn't know anything else. We'd play games like hopscotch and hide and go seek and stuff. That's what we'd do in the evenings. Then we had a lot of work to do because we had to come in to get wood, get water and all that stuff, so we didn't have too much play time. Then we'd go to church, every night it seemed like. Sundays, too.

EVELYN: Ugh. (softly)

SHERMAN: I said, when I got grown I wasn't going. My children said the same thing. But when they were grown up, they got grown, they said when they were young they wouldn't go because they said they go all the time. (soft laugh)

POLLICOFF: Look what happened, you're still there.

EVELYN: Yeah, you know, I think that a lot of children probably say that. My father was Chairman of the Deacon Board for years, and the Chairman of the Deacon Board's family was always the host family for (Sherman laughs) your pastors that came. Pastors were always here at our house. Some of our pastors had five, six, seven kids.

POLLICOFF: So you've got to entertain the whole family?

SHERMAN: Yeah, we had to sleep them, we had to feed them and everything.

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EVELYN: So you think to yourself, are WE gonna get something to eat tonight? We'd sleep on pallets on the floor because one of our pastors, his daughter was here for the dedication ceremony, and she was just reminiscing on the things that happened when we were growing up. Her family was from Temple, Texas. They did not choose to move here. So they would drive in every Friday evening. We knew that Elder Jenkins and his family was coming. They stayed all weekend! He was pastor for thirteen years. So that went on for thirteen years.

POLLICOFF: If you were to say, what were the biggest changes you've seen in Richmond, in all the years you've lived here.

SHERMAN: It's been a lot of changes in Richmond since the streets have changed – the naming of the streets, and street lights – we didn't have that. It was just a lot of mud, because, like I said, Travis Street, when you got there it wasn't a good street. But it was better than here. We had a little trail because you couldn't drive your car down through here. Unless it was real dry. There was just a little trail. We had an ice man, would come by on an ice wagon. We'd buy ice. Then we had to walk to the ice house and get ice, and put it on a stick and bring it to the house. So it made a lot of changes. Where it used to be Richmond Drive-In, that's where the bus station was. We had to sit out there on the long bench. If it was raining, cold or hot. We had to sit there and wait 'til the bus came. We had to go around to the back and order a hamburger, if we were able to get one.

POLLICOFF: So it was very segregated.

SHERMAN: Yeah, we had to sit outside and eat the hamburgers. I remember back in 1954 four, when I was in Houston, we would come out for Christmas and went back, and we had to stand up. All the way and I had a baby. Ann was a baby. A lady, a young white lady, was sitting in the seat and there wasn't anybody beside her but I couldn't sit down.

My husband was trying to hold on to the baby, because I couldn't hold the baby because I was trying to hold on to keep from falling. Because once you got the seats filled in the back, that's the only place we could SIT. Then you had to stand up. So she saw us and we were having such a time – it seemed like the bus driver, I guess he was driving so fast, because every time he'd get on the brakes we'd slide to the front, you know? So she said, "Put your baby down here." I laid her down because she was just a baby. He looked at her like he wanted to tell her, don't you do that. But he didn't say anything. So we had to stand up from Richmond to Houston.

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POLLICOFF: When did it change?

SHERMAN: Well, little by little it changed. We had a four room school, like I said. We'd go trade with the high school, the white school's high school. We'd stand out and watch them play football games. We'd stand out and look at them. Couldn't nobody see us in the dark, you know? So we couldn't go any place. In the doctor's office, they had colored and white. We couldn't go the same place. In the courthouse, we couldn't drink out of the fountain. They had one up on the third floor where we could drink. Couldn't go to the bathrooms until we went up on the third floor.

POLLICOFF: The signs stayed up for a long time?

EVELYN: For a very long time. Even when I was coming up, what I remember was when they integrated schools. 1966, my first year was at Jane Long.

POLLICOFF: 1966 was the first year Richmond integrated the schools?

EVELYN: Yes, ma'am. That's exactly right. I'm like, "What's happening?" Because we had all black schools. Let me see, I was six years old, so it had to be first grade. In preschool, we had a black teacher, Miss Mary Somerville. She taught out of her house. That's where I went to school when I was five.

POLLICOFF: There was no Kindergarten otherwise? Not like it is now.

EVELYN & SHERMAN: No, no.

EVELYN: I went to, what we call, private Kindergarten, because it was just six students. Other than that, kids didn't go to school. But they were able to send me to Miss Mary Somerville to get a kind of head start before everyone else. When I started in, it was integrated that year, but it took a while for things to change. I remember going in back doors with my dad, there in Rosenberg. Going up to places where you have to go through little alleys and go to the back window to order your food.

SHERMAN: (softly) Mm hmm.

POLLICOFF: That was after the sixties?

EVELYN: Even then. You know, even when I was younger. I remember my dad holding my hand. It's like, okay, we're going up here to get sausage or whatever. You could not go in the front door. We would go through the little alley and they would have a window there for black people to order their food.

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SHERMAN: Same thing with the movie up here. We were up on the top floor.

EVELYN: Right! We sit upstairs. That's where the colored – they had a sign up there. The theater in Richmond on Morton Street. And the one in Rosenberg was the same.

SHERMAN: Mm hmm. Yeah, Rosenberg was the same thing.

EVELYN: When they closed the one here in Richmond, we had to go to Rosenberg. The one in Rosenberg had a sign that specifically said, Colored. And we sat in the balcony.

POLLICOFF: Change comes slowly to small towns. Was there overt racism? What was Richmond like? Evelyn, tell me.

EVELYN: I don't know what it was like for my mother, but it wasn't pleasant for me. I would have much preferred to stay in an all black school, than to be integrated. EVERY DAY – when I ended up in junior high, middle school, EVERY DAY there was a group of students and we had to be taunted. Every day we had to deal with those things. Oh, why even go report it? No one's going to do anything about it.

POLLICOFF: That was all through elementary and even in high school?

EVELYN: Even in HIGH school. Every day there was a group of kids. Hoo! Every day. (laughs)

POLLICOFF: Very tough. And now, is that true of the Hispanic kids in the area, too? Did you all have Hispanic friends as well?

EVELYN: Well, the funny thing, we had a lot of Hispanics in the Freeman Town area

SHERMAN: But at first, when I was going to school, the Spanish folks had had a one room place building. There weren't very many Spanish people here.

POLLICOFF: So when you were growing up there was a Hispanic school as well as a Black school. Everybody was separate. Whites were separate?

SHERMAN: Mm hmm. Yep. Everybody was separate.

EVELYN: It was like that for a while when I was coming up, until first grade or Kindergarten.

POLLICOFF: So everybody had their place, and you better not cross the line or what?

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SHERMAN: You sure wouldn't have a job. And really, when we put the state school up here, they didn't want that because that took a lot of the people out of their homes, working. You had to work. I worked for fifty cents an hour. Seventy five cents an hour.

POLLICOFF: So you're saying that there were a lot of people upset that it sort of changed the whole dynamics of the town?

SHERMAN: Yeah, it changed a lot of things. The state school out there. And Stanley Thompson's wife, she worked on that – seeing about getting the state school in here.

NOTE: See Dr. Stanley Thompson's interview on the FBC Historical Commission website at https://www.fortbendcountytx.gov/home/showdocument?id=40619

POLLICOFF: Oh, in fact I actually interviewed Doctor Thompson. He's the one who lives up there on FM 762.

SHERMAN: He's been there a long time. I remember I took my oldest daughter to him. I carried her to the doctor, she wasn't getting any better. He was working that day and the regular doctor wasn't in. He said, "I'm going to give you something to help." It was a little bottle of Penicillin. That's the first time I ever heard of it. It was four dollars. He said, "This is kind of expensive." Because four dollars then was a lot of money. "But this is going to get her well." And he gave it to us.

POLLICOFF: When was this? What year, about?

SHERMAN: It was in the fifties. We didn't have a hospital here in Richmond. We had a little place in Rosenberg. You had one room for the colored, and that was it. We'd go in through the back door. Sugar Land was the same way. They had one in Sugar Land, but we didn't have a hospital in Richmond.

POLLICOFF: When did that change?

SHERMAN: That changed in the sixties. They put Polly Ryon up there.

EVELYN: I remember when they first built Polly Ryon, they had a little sitting area for coloreds. That was late sixties, early seventies. And we had to sit, I remember that distinctly, I remember that room distinctly. You'd have to go in and wait to be seated. We had our area, the place they put us and a place they kept the other people.

SHERMAN: You couldn't be in the same room, no. When my baby, my oldest daughter was born, we were in separate rooms.

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EVELYN: Right. They had a separate area for coloreds, or for black people. Now everybody registers the same way. No, we had a section that we would sit in, and you'd go up to this window and you'd register.

POLLICOFF: So was it equal, but separate. Or not equal either?

SHERMAN: (laughs)

POLLICOFF: You're rolling your eyes, so it was not equal treatment?

EVELYN: Well what were you going to say? You're dependent. You want to make sure that you get the best possible care that you can. You don't want to rock the boat. That's your family member. Don't start nothing.

POLLICOFF: Very tough. So would you say that Richmond is a different place now?

SHERMAN: Yes, it's a different place now. It's much different. There were a lot of things that went on here, and people couldn't do anything about it, but it's different now. We weren't even registered to vote, black people weren't. Arizona Fleming and Willie Melton, they went to Washington and enabled us to be able to vote. Me and my husband walked these streets and young people signed up so they could vote. A lot of them were afraid to vote. That was back in the fifties. A lot of people wouldn't even sign the thing so they could vote.

EDITOR'S NOTE: In 1950, Kendleton residents Willie Melton, a farmer, and Arizona Fleming, who owned a funeral parlor, challenged Jim Crow laws that denied Blacks, Hispanics, and Jews the right to vote in the nomination of local Democratic party candidates. They began a suffrage movement that led to legal action against the Jay Bird Democratic Association, Fort Bend's all-white political club. On May 4, 1953, the United States Supreme Court ruled that Blacks in Fort Bend County had the right to vote. Texas Historical Marker #16252 commemorating the Supreme Court ruling was dedicated on August 13, 2011, in Kendleton, Texas. --Texas Historical Commission.

POLLICOFF: They were afraid of retribution, so they were afraid to sign up to vote?

EVELYN: You had to fight then, even when I was coming up. I remember Mr. William Melton very well. I can see that man so clearly in my mind's eye. Mr. Willie Melton lived in Kendleton and he was a great advocate for the black community. He honestly and truthfully, was.

POLLICOFF: He was a white businessman?

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EVELYN: NO. He was a black man. He looked white light skinned. (with humor). Arizona Fleming did, too. She could pass for a white lady.

SHERMAN: She had the first black funeral home.

EVELYN: Yep, she sure did. Matter of fact, they have a school named for her, not too far from my nephew's house.

EVELYN: I remember going to Miss Arizona's house all the time.

SHERMAN: My brother worked for her.

POLLICOFF: So now, the church I think was probably the place where you felt the most comfortable. You did most of your social activities there.

SHERMAN: Yeah, right there at the church. Yeah, we have box suppers and different things at the church and that's what we did.

EVELYN: That's where we would have fun. I felt safe.

POLLICOFF: I would also guess that the people who were members of your church, were an important part of this community. They really were responsible for helping Richmond become the city that it became.

SHERMAN: Yeah.

POLLICOFF: Whether they were the ones that were supporting the business owners or the farmers the church made a difference. Evelyn, you said that's one of the reasons that you felt it was important to have that historical marker, because Richmond would not be what it is today without all that.

SHERMAN: Yeah. Nettie Bell Washington lived right across from the church. She was the first black custodian there at City Hall.

A Texas Historical Marker was installed next to the US Post Office (background) in Kendleton, Texas, the hometown of the plaintiffs in the US Supreme Court case.

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POLLICOFF: They never hired any blacks at City Hall before?

SHERMAN: We went up there and sang for the rotary club.

POLLICOFF: I'll be darned. I know that you all have many wonderful community events. You had these ministries, like for food, clothing, and nursing at home? Tell me about those ministries.

SHERMAN: Well we'd go to the nursing home and help people. Oh sometimes our house would look like a store. Mother and I would bag bag up food and the people in the community would come and get food. Some people couldn't get food stamps. My husband was sick for six years and they never let me get on food stamps and they never let me get on free food for my children.

Professor Johnson used to be the Principal of the black school right across the street from that brick house. He went up to Jane Long when Mr. Boucher was the Principal. My husband tried to get on. He came and told my husband he didn't look like he was sick, and spoke of the car we were driving. So we couldn't ever get on. Because there wasn't anybody able to work but me. They told my oldest daughter she'd have to rack bottles or clean tables in order to get lunch.

POLLICOFF: So the church really played an important role, supporting all these other families?

SHERMAN: Yes.

EVELYN: People that find themselves in that situation would get what we call the boxes from the church. You know how we would get cardboard boxes, and people would donate food and we would give it to needy families. I remember a lot of times people would show up at the door (getting emotional) when my dad was sick. We never really went without because someone was always at that door to bring us supper.

Now we just don't come together anymore like I remember when I was coming up. You would think that the things that we endured – that we would be more united than we are. But we never went without. Never. I think that that had a lot to do with the foundation that we had at our churches.

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At holiday time, we didn't have to worry about turkeys and stuff. Someone would always knock at our door. "Sherman," (they would always call daddy by his last name) "we done brought something for you all." And the guys, the men up there at Vaughan's Lumber Company that he worked for in Houston – I remember them coming a lot of times with donations. And they'd come with money in a brown paper bag and give it to Mama.

SHERMAN: But I remember reading, he said, "Never have I seen the righteous forsaken, nor the seed begging bread." Whatever we got, we always was able to give somebody something. Children in the community know they can come here and get something.

EVELYN: Yep. All the time. Church of Living God was always there.

POLLICOFF: Alright, tell me about the annual Walk to Christ.

SHERMAN: Robert started that a few years ago. I don't know too much about the Walk for Christ because that's something he initiated.

Operation Home Grow started in that little building over there with Elder Clay. Either remodeling the church or something. So Operation Home Grow was where we would do different things to raise money to try to get different ones in the church. We'd sell dinners and different things to try to get money for the church. One day I was working with the Expanded Nutrition Program program and I went to Thompson and I saw this church and the grass was way up near to the door and I could not wait 'til my husband got home. "Albert, I found a church! It doesn't seem like anybody's using it anymore."

So we went there and he waded through the weeds and looked in. He said, "Looks real good." I came back and I said, "I wonder who owns it." I asked Mr. Johnson, across the street. He said it had been a Methodist church and the members had all passed away. That was way back in the seventies, sixties or something like that.

POLLICOFF: So you still had a tiny little building?

SHERMAN: Yeah, my husband worked there. He was trying to get through before he passed away because he'd go over there and he'd stay a long time. He'd be sitting on the floor working on the floor. Trying to get things together.

POLLICOFF: So you found that church and moved it to Fourth and Travis?

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EVELYN: Eventually it had to be torn down. But that was the original church. It used to face Fourth Street, initially. When they moved this in in 1969, that's the present church. For moving the church we had a lot of help from the George Foundation and donations from Mr. Richard Joseph. Mr. Wessendorff, he stepped up because some of the members worked for them. Mr. Schultz, my uncle Reverend Horace Scott, he was one of the ministers there. Eventually we were able to get (hand claps softly), a grant from the George Foundation.

SHERMAN: We got a $6,000 grant over a period of three years; $2,000 a year. Mr. Gibson was a teacher over on the North side of Richmond. He helped my husband a lot. A lot of his school friends didn't approve of him, but he did.

EVELYN: They didn't want him doing it. What is he helping THEM out for? My dad's brother, Uncle Calvin, was not a member but would come and be with us a lot of times to attend his programs. He was a great soloist.

POLLICOFF: At the height of the church, when would you think that you had the most members, or it was the biggest it ever was?

EVELYN: When Bishop Clay was there. I think he probably had over a hundred members. We were always gone, we had a great choir, you know. It was just really something back then.

POLLICOFF: The music was obviously very important. Tell me about the music and the choir.

SHERMAN: Well, she was the musician. She was playing the piano since she was twelve years old.

EVELYN: Aww, when I played for that funeral that was awful. I was so scared. I was shaking, and it used to be Reverend Payne had a church, not too far from where the county jail is. And he would go down this little alleyway and his church sat right there by the bayou. You wouldn't have ever known it was a bayou there, but that little ditch that runs there behind the park and stuff now, there by the jailhouse – it was houses all through there. That whole street was houses. And Reverend Payne's church set right there by the bayou. It was Baptist church. But Reverend Payne, he brought his first message at the Church of the Living God.

POLLICOFF: So you guys were responsible for launching a lot o these folks?

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SHERMAN: Yeah. Reverend Payne, he'd tell it everywhere he go, he'd say we were the ones that gave him his start.

SHERMAN: Yeah, and I guess sometimes he'd call, "Can I come to preach?" And I say, "I hope they say no." And they'd say yes. (Pollicoff laughs)

POLLICOFF: So at age twelve you were playing the piano for funerals? Do you play other instruments, too? Tell us about the Calendar Dinner and Operation Homegrow.

Annie Sherman is a member of the Church of the Living God, in Richmond, Texas. It was founded in 1918 and the Texas Historical Marker was unveiled on October 4, 2015.

SHERMAN: It was back in the sixties. This Calendar Dinner was back in that time, too. The American Legion Hall used to be out here on the Thompson highway. Right where the library is at.

We dressed formal. A lot of times, when you wear a dress to a wedding or special occasion, you don't wear that dress again. This was a way for people to dress, you could bring out all those dresses and they'd have on their nice suits, or they would get tux for that particular night. And what we did, we would decorate the tables based on the seasons.

My months to decorate were September, October and November because my birthday's in November. On my table in September, I'd put a football on mine. And November I'd put a pumpkin. And October, Halloween, Fourth of July stuff! Red, white and blue! (laughs) For spring, whoever had those particular tables, they would always have pretty flowers, you know, because that's when everything is blooming.

We would have a program. We would always have a guest speaker that would come. But it was of our choosing. We had various speakers. A lot of times you'd have a soloist. Someone was always singing. You might have a group or two there to entertain during the time that we would have dinner. It would give us a way to socialize with other people.

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We would always have turkey and dressing in the fall months. But I think the most fun thing about it was that you would get to dress up. Really dress up. And I think that the last two or three when Father Madden was at Sacred Heart. He let us have it in their fellowship hall. He sure did. And we even sang at the Catholic Church, something that had never happened.

POLLICOFF: Was that a culture shock for them? Your music is more engaging, lively, with the tambourines and drums, piano?

EVELYN: Yes! Now we fellowship with Pastor Lockhart, it has been almost 14 years.

SHERMAN: (Chuckles) Yep, yep.

POLLICOFF: But did they enjoy it?

SHERMAN: Some of them did.

EVELYN: I don't know, some of them did. It was so funny! It took a while, a few songs, but then some of them just didn't...they weren't particular about it, but the rest of them, they sure didn't.

POLLICOFF: Because your music is more engaging, lively, with the tambourines and drums, piano?

SHERMAN: Laberta Scott had a little store. I told you about Mr. Sidney Sanford's store. She had a little store down Travis Street, years later. It was a little grocery store with cigarettes and canned goods and stuff. I remember Prince Albert tobacco, and all that stuff. You'd roll your own cigarette. Then Mr. George Dupont opened up a barbecue place there on Sixth Street and Travis. That was back in the fifties.

POLLICOFF: Was it typically mostly the blacks who went to this, or did everybody go to these stores and the barbecue place?

SHERMAN: Mostly black and Spanish people.

EVELYN: Because all these things were on this side of town.

POLLICOFF: So, whites didn't even come on this side of town?

SHERMAN: Yes, they did. Mr. Ned Gibson. He used to be up here. He stayed right along with all of the black people. He used to live down here on Austin Street. We welcomed him in.

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SHERMAN: We didn't have policemen we had sheriffs. One of the sheriffs was Mr. Cotez and his grandchildren are over here now. Still live over here. A Mr. Flores lived down the street. He was one of the sheriffs too. But we didn't have any black policemen that worked then.

POLLICOFF: Would you consider this now still mostly a black neighborhood, or is it mixed?

SHERMAN: No, it's well mixed. We don't have any black folks, about five or six houses of black people.

POLLICOFF: That's a really big change. When did that occur, about?

EVELYN: Over the last ten years or so?

POLLICOFF: It's a great location. It's so close to town and all the major thoroughfares. It's a beautiful, quiet neighborhood.

EVELYN: The neighborhood's changed a great deal. You don't have that same sense of community. You don't have the sense of appreciation for your community. Even the children. We don't have many children over in this area. Used to be, everybody knew where their children was. My father would come home from work, he'd have to step over the children just to get in the house.

They liked my dad. Daddy used to be out on the porch all the time with the guys. I didn't have any brothers, so most of the young men would migrate to our house in the evenings and my dad would play checkers with them. My daddy was a great checker player. So when they would lose, he'd tell them, okay you lost, you need to ride that bicycle around the corner until I tell you to stop. (everyone laughs)

SHERMAN: I remember once, we had to take him to the hospital, and those young men, they followed us to the hospital. So we got him in bed and everything, and the nurse said, "All those young men that was lined up against the wall, they said this was their father."

She said, "Yeah, they called him Cool Pop." Dad was just like their father. He was always available to all of them. All the people knew where their children were. They called and said, "Are my son's over there?"

EVELYN: They ARE your sons. Dad was just like their father. He was always available to all of them.

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EVELYN: But it's not like that anymore.

SHERMAN: We had a 4H club. I worked with them. Taught them how to do things. Took them to camp. We went to Huntsville, to Camp Stern, I think it was. I couldn't get the people to help. They'd send the children here and sometimes I wouldn't have room. I'd ask some of the children, ask their parents could they take us to the fair or something, and they said they didn't have gas. "Do they think we do?" The children would tell me they had money to get in. We'd get to the fair and they didn't have money and we had to pay for it, me and my husband.

But we kept on doing it. But nobody else took that up! And I said, "I wish they'd just kept going with that." But they didn't. None of the young people did that. But we always had a house full. All the time.

POLLICOFF: Well that speaks volumes. It really does. Thank you for your time and your memories.

Interview ends.

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