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Interview with George Booker

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Interview with George Booker, Wednesday, October 31, 2001

Today is Wednesday, October 31, 2001 and I am Peg Tazewell, here with Mr. George Booker in the Olin Library at Kenyon College.

PT: Now I've never done this before so you'll excuse me if I stutter a little bit.

GB: That's okay.

GB: You know I've been to a couple of weddings over at the Church.

PT: The Holy Spirit Church?

GB: Yeah.

PT: It's a beautiful church.

Gb: It is beautiful.

PT: It really is.

GB: I was over there one time and they had a lot of black choruses singing. I think there was some from Wilberforce over there.

PT: Yeah, they bring gospel singers every year. Close to Christmas time I think.

GB: Yeah, it was cold.

PT: I'm going to tell you a little bit, I started to tell you about what we are doing. You know, the Columbus Art Museum presented an exhibit of Walter O. Mayo's carvings and Walter L. Mayo's paintings and his homecoming banners that he had done for his church in Columbus. And what we're doing is Kenyon is going to bring that same exhibit and perhaps more of the materials to the Olin Art Gallery downstairs in November of next year.

GB: Well that was Walter, JR., you're speaking of the father.

PT: Well actually we have some of both. This painting, the father did the carvings but this painting was done by Walter L. and what we're trying to do is that we're trying to build on the work that was done previously in the Community Within project.

GB: Yes.

PT: And research their lives as much as we can here in Mt. Vernon and kind of make some connections between their lives and their art. Like one of the things I would never have known that this was a local company, Schliaret.

GB: Schliaret.

PT: Is that how you say it.

Gb: Shlar et.

PT: And so obviously Prof. Sheffield too has helped with a lot of this.

GB: I grew up with the Schliaret's boys.

PT: Was it a dairy company, or

GB: No, they were really a hauling firm; it might have had a dairy at one time too. ...they got small trucks and they had the old Schliat, I think they called it, old hard rubber tires.

PT: Oh, how about that.

GB: I know he he used to decorate all the trucks, Walter Jr.

PT: Did he really?

GB: Yeah he had scenes and everything on it. He was pretty good. I know sometimes you have things and you don't save it. You know we used to go to Columbus when we wanted to with him, Walter, and he'd take us to the state fair and we'd go to the state fair and he'd tell us where to be when he was ready to come back. He'd go to Columbus nearly ever day when he, after they closed the place here they went to Columbus. He was a very, very brilliant man. And he could just about do anything, math, medicine, drawing, as you see there. I think that's pretty good for a man.

PT: Yeah, in his house...we've met Mrs. Jeannette Mayo, his second wife, and in his house, he has a room in the basement of the house, he called it the doghouse that he, I think it was his place that he retired to and, but just paintings everywhere and beautiful...he did the Homecoming Banners every year for his church, for Bethany Baptist Church and we can even see the sketchings that he did to prepare for the banners. The banners were really large and just beautiful and they went to the Holy Land in the 70s and he's done a lot of paintings of his wife, of Mrs. Mayo, Jeanette, in the Holy Land by the River Jordan and some young boys playing in Jerusalem and, um, just really beautiful work.

GB: As an artist he used to sell everything. I met his granddaughter, I think it was his granddaughter, over at Mount Vernon Avenue Calvary AME Church. She's the head secretary or whatever it is over there and we were having our 58th annual reunion, was it 58th? 59th I think it was, at the Easton Center and she was quite forward and she let us have the church for our Sunday meeting there and then they fed us too. I can't think of her name; I should be able to remember. You can see her any time you want to at the Mount Vernon Avenue AME Church.

PT: And Mrs. Mayo might be able to help us to.

GB: Yeah she'd no doubt help you. And she talked about grandpa; I'm old enough to be her grandpa too. She was articulate and a very wonderful person. Bud Mayo, that was his name, Bud.

PT: That was his nickname?

GB: Yeah.

PT: Isn't that funny, that's what I call my husband.

GB: I don't know whether it was Buddy or just Bud. Walter "Bud" Mayo. He made money, and he was tight with it in some ways. He had the first car he bought brand new was a '32 Ford Coupe. Oh it was quite a car.

PT: That was a nice car.

GB: It sure was. And I remember he always dressed meticulously. Everything had to match and all the women was "Bud, Bud, Bud." And he was a nice man, you know, pretty nice to everybody.

PT: Did you all go to High School together?

GB: No, no, he was older than I was. Let me see; I think he was about four or five years older than me. So that put him in a different category. It don't mean much when you're eight years old and someone else is 14 and they're little kids to them, but all the sudden age goes up and you're all the same age. Especially after you get married.

PT: Yep,

GB: Yeah.

PT: Yeah, that's true.

GB: Ah, Bud was, but he would take us places. Sometimes we would go to dances and stuff. He had a jump seat in the back. I don't know what they call it. Anyhow you climb up in the back and three people could ride in it and put three people in the front and then one person sitting on the floor, and they could haul out for the night ??

PT: Where did you go dancing?

GB: Oh, we'd go to Marion, and Columbus. Newark mostly. We'd go to Mansfield. We didn't like Mansfield because they liked to fight up there too much. We'd go to Newark and that was kind of our place down there.

PT: How old were y'all then, when you would do that?

GB: Oh as I grew up, I suppose I was starting in around 13 or 14 years old going places. That's the reason why the first year of high school I flunked because I was too busy running around. I didn't have time to study. So I got through that first year and I said, Oh, I better start studying. It took me five years to get out of high school but it was fun. My problem in life has always been I've never taken things to seriously.

PT: Um, hm. That's why you look so good at 88 though.

GB: People running around with their head hanging low about this 'thrax whatever.

Pt: The anthrax?

GB: Anthrax, stuff. I don't have any time to worry about that. If it's gonna get you it's gonna get you. That's it, but you don't want it and you don't want the children hurt, you know that. You lay down your life like that for them, but there people they haven't experienced. You know my girlfriend and I went to Baltimore to the 59th Army Reunion this year, and we stopped somewhere in New Jersey and we stopped in this place and there was Arabs and whatever they were in there, and they could hardly speak English and there was hardly anything in the store and I wanted a road map was what I wanted. And they wanted about \$10 more than I wanted to pay for it and when I didn't buy it he looked at me. I went out in the parking lot there were two fellows who almost had my truck, it was just like this, with that type of cab on it, you know they were making a fuss over it. And I heard them say, Okay. And I've often wondered since it was in New Jersey near where the anthrax is coming out know. Of course with that kind of a group you get suspicious of things and of people and a lot of them are very, very good people. Very good people. But then again there's always this, these people, and in the station they were so inconsiderate of you, they didn't even want you in there.

PT: And that makes you suspicious, a little bit.

GB: Yeah, and there's nothing I could do about that. But I did wonder about it. They could have backed it up to somewhere and blow it up. I guess they don't care too much about life anyhow. But just think, if I was up in that airplane and I've taken over the controls. That's all they'd studied, how to fly that thing at high speeds..

PT: For years.

GB: Yeah.

PT: Yeah, that's so hard for us to comprehend, that kind of suicide mentality.

GB: Well, it's I'd say if you were chosen to do things, if they chose your husband to do this, and he was part of that group. He'd better not fail that mission because he's going to be dead anyhow.

PT: Yeah,

GB: Cause they're gonna say alright you let the faith down so bang, you're gone. That's the way I look at it. Where are we at know.

PT: Well tell me a little bit about yourself. When did you graduate Mt. Vernon High School?

GB: 1932. I was supposed to graduate in 1931, but I had a good time.

PT: But you didn't always live here? You said you lived in Wilberforce for a while.

GB: No, no I was born and raised here and I went there to try to get into college. I already had it set up I had....but I came back home, I decided I didn't want to go to college. My grandmother wanted to send me, my mother wanted to send me, they had the money. But I said, Nope, I'm no student. If you're gonna throw your money away. But now I look back and I say boy how dumb can you get?

PT: Well it's hard I was like that when I was 21 too unfortunately. That's why I'm here.

GB: Sometimes people, and then sometimes you resent to be pushed into things too. So I grew up. I was born in 1913 down at 205 Howard Street, the house is still there. And I had a grandmother, and an aunt, and a half sister, like a second family, and went to the AME church, you've probably seen it there on West High Street. That's where I was started crawling up the aisle and everything.

PT: How did your family come to Mt. Vernon?

GB: My family came to Mt. Vernon. My mother was born and raised in Mt. Vernon. And my grandmother was born and raised in Roanoke, Virginia. And how she got here I don't know. But my grandfather on my mother's side, her father was Jewish, and of course she was really high, I'd say high yellow... what is it, octoroon or some kind of person. And he came through on one of those carts. He had the pots and pans jangling all over. I don't know what they called them, tins man.

PT: Tinker. They used to call them tinkers.

GB: So he found my grandmother. I have her picture at home, she was a very, very beautiful woman. And they got close to each other and got married, but she didn't like the traveling life like that, so she got divorced and came back to Mt. Vernon and married another man. And they had two boys and a girl, and of course my mother was a step daughter, and they were very, very highly churched. Really close to the Church. And my grandmother founded it, the AME Church in Mt. Vernon. She's a charter member. And my grandfather, he was born and raised down in McConnelsville. I think, south of Marietta. And that is not the town. It's a little town I've been there several times. Quakers brought him or his father come through the railroad. You know, the underground railroad, they were Quakers and they took him in so he was raised up in the little community down there, the farm community. And then he went over into Belmont and

Barnesville, um, to see my grandmother. How they met I don't know but I think they had kind of district meetings,, they had trains so you could get from Mt. Vernon to Barnesville. They had a direct line into Wheeling. So I don't know exactly how they joined but they did. And they had, I don't know where my brains come from because I don't have any. And they had these two sons, and a daughter she was a musician, she played down there in ??? and she played all that classical stuff. And one brother, one of her brothers. Both of them graduated from Oberlin College. One of them in business administration and the other in pre-med. So he went on through the med thing, and all through the, what you have to go through to get a diploma. And an internship and had it up through, and had a degree, and he came out on the steps and fell on the steps going down at Western Reserve where he finished up and of course I guess he had a compound fracture in his skull and died. And the other one he was an accomplished musician and had business and everything, and had the most beautiful handwriting I've ever seen. Anyhow, he couldn't get any place in Ohio to teach, and so he went to the black college at Wilberforce, and he started in in Virginia, and went to Tennessee and to Alabama and from there on went to Texas. And at that particular time in the Civil War when you got sick the first thing they gave you was morphine. And I think he liked that real well, and he got hooked on it. Like he had an illness, and he just never got over that. So he died. He was here. I've got his pictures; I should have brought them from home.

PT: Maybe we can get together another time.

GB: This is the kind of the story from that side. The other side I don't know anything about. My daddy's father was German. German slave owner. So in us there was so much different blood in us I don't know whether to go forward or fly up in the air. There's nothing I can pinpoint relativity to.

PT: I noticed when I was reading the Community Within that a lot of people mentioned having Indian blood in their family in Mt. Vernon as well. My son's really proud of that. He thinks that's great.

GB: Yes, yes. I have Indian blood too.

PT: He's proud of everything, but I think at the age of 8 Indian blood sounds really cool.

GB: Yeah. Well culturally they're a different man but they love things. Love flowers, love nature, and I think that really that their culture is better than ours, they had a good culture.

PT: A little bit more respect, sometimes it seems, for things.

GB: And there elders they were taken care of pretty well, I think. I can tell you a story about one man who said here, take this blanket, this is for your grandfather. Take it up on the hill and let it go. He said that's the way the did it when people couldn't carry on anymore. So he gave this beautiful blanket to his son and he took it to his grandfather up on the hill, set it down but he tore the blanket in half. And just gave him half the blanket. So when he came back his dad said, so did you take your grandfather the blanket and he said what did you bring half the blanket back for? And his son said, that's for you, Dad.

So that brought him down to earth didn't it. So I look forward to it anyhow.

PT: Do you remember anything about Bud Mayo's father, Walter O. Mayo?

GB: Walter Mayo was a distinguished, very distinguished black man; he wasn't black, he was kind of Indian color, He was just a very distinguished man. And he was a good thinker. And like you say he was artistic. He could do anything. He was one of the first black clerks in Mt. Vernon. He worked in a hardware store down in there called Smith's Hardware, I know you've probably heard of that.

PT: Yeah, G.R. Smith.

GB. He worked in there for years. He knew where everything was. He was head of the warehousing, and a lot of times he clerked in there. Course at that particular time to be a clerk in a store was quite a thing for a black man. There were... Mt. Vernon's always been good. And that's where he worked at. Along with his. And he was very religious. That Baptist church down there. He was an outstanding leader and..

PT: Rick says, Prof. Sheffield remembers him. He was a deacon.

GB: Yes, he was.

PT: He remembers him from when he was young.

GB: Yes, stern. No foolishness with him.

PT: That's what he said.

GB: No foolishness. Bud liked fun, but he was no stupid man. He was handsome. But his dad, he liked to laugh, he liked fun, but he had a way about him. You knew you could just go so far with what you were saying and that was it. And he always helped you. I think he belonged to some of the organizations they had at one time. They had Masons, Knights of Pythius, Odd Fellows.

PT: What were the Odd Fellows?

GB: Odd Fellows is similar to the Masons in some respects. The Odd Fellows that was just a name they had, because they were all intertwined. There weren't too many black people here in Mt. Vernon. So therefore they belonged to the Masons, they belonged to the K of P, they belonged to the Odd Fellow, and whatever else they had there, they belonged to that to. So that made that all intertwined. Just like everything else. I don't think any organization you joined to serve God and your country and love your family and don't do unjust things to each other. Respect your husband's and your brother's wife. And women, same things, respect their husband's. It's all the same things. It's all the Ten Commandments. I think, don't you.

PT: um, hum.

GB: I can't see any difference in organizations and maybe the new organizations are different but I don't think they are either. Muslim, so forth like that, they just call it something else, maybe a mosque is what they do. Three or four times a day they stop to pray. What do they say sometimes when they pray? Oh, Lord, let me cut that man's throat cause his messing with something right? What can you say that they're praying about.

GB: So now where are we at?

PT: Did you know Bud Mayo's mother, Mrs. Mayo?

GB: Yes, Etta. No that wasn't his mother. That was Mr. Mayo's second wife. Yes, I knew her. She was kind of what you'd call a laid back church woman. She didn't have too much to say. But she was always cordial. But she looked. Well I can't tell, she's about your stature. And always done everything she could for everybody. And that's when they had, when you got sick someone would bring you a big pot of soup or something like that. Yeah, I remember her very well. She was kind.

PT: Did your parents socialize with them at all?

GB: Sure, at church. See the AME church and the Baptist Church, there were so few people here that when they got ready to have programs and so forth like that they always joined. There was a woman named Gertrude Jones and my aunt was involved. So if they called you, you better come. George can you sing a solo. Yes ma'am, I'll sing. I couldn't sing anyhow, so. Yeah, they had. Let's see, what am I trying to say now.

PT: Did they, I saw in the Community Within that sometimes the churches had picnics together.

GB: Yes, we had picnics. A lot of people intermarried between the churches. One was a Baptist and one was a Methodist. That was more or less the outstanding things, so, if you had one, you had to go to the other, you had to take a horse and buggy to take them. I remember when they first started buying cars around here. Well I remember the Model T, but the second one was a Chevrolet, and then they had the old roof on them.

PT: What was your first car?

GB: My first car was a 1928 Chevrolet Coupe. My grandmother bought it for me. I was 16 years old. Boy I was something. I kept that thing sparkling.

PT: I bet you did.

GB: I wouldn't allow some people to ride in it, because they didn't take care of my care. I learned a lesson that way one time, I loaned it to a guy I didn't see it for three days and when I saw it he had too flat tires. So he said can I borrow your car again, I said yeah when I'm dead. So that was my first car. I never had too many cars. I always bought new ones and when I got

through with them there wasn't nothing left of them. They always had 260 – 270,000 miles on them and the engines were still running good but the body was rusted and falling off of it.

PT: Did you know how to take care of them yourself?

GB: Oh, yeah. Well you had to. You didn't have money, and they were easy to take care of then. But you can't get anything with these new ones.

PT: You need a computer.

GB: Yeah, that's right. You don't have a \$100,000 machine to analyze them you might as well forget it.

PT: Yeah, that's true.

GB: We had a lot of church clubs. There was one, the 20th Century Club. You belonged to that one whether you were a Baptist or a Methodist.

PT: Were there women's clubs too? Did they have an Eastern Star here?

GB: Yes, there were women's club's. They had an Eastern Star with the masonic lodge. I know my mother one time was the district grand ?? In Eastern Star. Of course my dad was in there. He was a Knight Templar and all that stuff in Mt. Vernon. The women were mostly missionaries. Being a missionary didn't mean you go to foreign countries. A lot of it was done in your own home town. If someone was ill, and they were having a hard time, like one woman had to stay awake night and day, and some women would go to that house so she could get a night's rest. My wife just died and I wish they had that then because that was 2 ½ years. Well, God took care of her. He really did. He gave me strength. I don't see how you done it. Well, you probably took care of your little boy when he gets sick.

PT: Yeah, when my dad was sick we all shared. My family doesn't leave people alone when they're sick and they might die.

GB: What's your maiden name?

PT: Prendergast. It's an Irish name. And my mom's maiden name was Duffy. Prendergast, it is kind of an unusual name. There's a lot of variations of it. But it's interesting because my dad's family is from County Mayo in Ireland. I kind of wonder where the Mayo's got their name, if there was an Irish connection somewhere.

GB: I imagine there was. Um, I know I got my name from the plantation master. The preacher, would use this machine and he'd put it under you and whenever you talk. So he'd say you want to hear something funny, and you'd hear yourself talk.

PT: And you didn't know he was doing that?

GB: No, you didn't know he was doing that. So I bet that's where Mayo would come from.

PT: Yeah, we're going to see what we can find out. Maybe from MR. Mayo's daughter and grandchildren, we'll see what we can find out. Now, did Bud Mayo, your friend Walter L. did he get married in Mt. Vernon do you recall or did he get married when he moved to Columbus?

GB: I think he married after he went to Columbus. But she came here quite often his first wife.

PT: He joined. In his house he has a lot of plaques from Bethany Baptist Church which was his church in Columbus and I know he joined there in 1947. So we're not quite sure when it was that he moved to Columbus.

GB: I think he moved to Columbus. In '47 I don't know if Bud was still here or not, because I went in the Army in '41. It jsut runs through my mind that he wasn't married yet, or if he was that Chris was his first wife's name. I remember her, Christina I think it was. And, I think he couldn't make it here with her because I don't think she wanted to stay in a small town, and after all they moved the Terminal to Columbus, and he was really the head honcho in one of them in the Terminal there.

PT: Was that the trucking company that he worked with?

GB: Yeah, they had a dock out here in Mt. Vernon, down there where the telephone company is, you know. And then they got rid of that and moved the whole bit to Columbus, cause they was running in and out of Columbus all the time anyhow.

PT: And did he drive for them, too. He drove as well?

GB: Yeah, he drove for years.

PT: But he also painted the trucks as well?

GB: Um, hum. He could do anything.

PT: He must have made a good living.

GB: Yes, he must have.

GB: He wasn't a worker. He was part of the family . When they had dinners and all he was right there, a part of the family. The Schliaret family was like that anyhow. I knew one real well. Charles was my friend. He was a pitcher and I was a catcher. And I used to go up to their house and they had about eight children, sitting around the table. And his mom would bring in a great big pan of fried potatoes, and biscuits and that kind of stuff. I ate dinner up there two or three times when I was a kid growing up. And they were kind. I had a nice time. And girls, I don't know, I think one of them, her husband just died. One of the Schliaret girls. What was his name? I'm getting old.

Pt: Oh, I can't remember names half the time either.

GB: Kempton. And I think she's still living. Kempton. So if you want to talk to her she might tell you more about the company too.

PT: Did you ever see Deacon Mayo, the older Mr. Mayo, carve?

GB: No, there's a lady down on Walnut Street and her name is Pearson, and if you want to call her she might enlighten you on some of the carvings because Walter Mayo is the one that started her husband on carving. He carved quite a bit of stuff. And of course they lived almost next door to Mr. Mayo, He had his garage down there.

PT: Is that where they lived, on Walnut Street?

GB: Yeah, I think it was 205 if I'm not mistaken.

PT: And was his garage where he?

GB: He had a big garage where he did most of his carving and stuff. And he had band saws and a little bit of everything down there.

PT: So he didn't... You know it's funny, we saw so many of his carvings are farm animals and we thought maybe he was still living on a farm.

GB: No, I don't think. Not at that particular time he wasn't. He had access to all sorts of farms around here. Maybe he just loved animals. And the carving of his horse drawn wagon, it was very artistic.

PT: The 20 mule team?

GB: Yeah, each horse was different too. I saw it down there.

PT: It's amazing. And even the leather starps, the harnessing, it's just so intricate.

GB: Yeah, he was quite a man. He was a man you couldn't tell anything. He had his own ideas and that was it.

PT: He was a little stubborn?

GB: Yeah, but then he would listen. He wouldn't act like he was listening but he'd kind of slip things in you knew he was listening to you. He was no mean fella, but he just had his way and that was it. And I respected him.

PT: Do you know did he ever sell any of his carvings, do you remember?

GB: No I don't think so. I think he gave more of them away. She might have some of them, Mrs. Pearson might have two or three pieces.

PT: That's a great idea.

GB: Hhm, hhm.

PT: That'd be terrific. Were there other wood carvers in the community.

GB: I know Whitey Pearson was a woodcarver. Her husband. Now she could tell you the other ones because they went to all the woodcarving district meetings. It might be well worth talking to her.

PT: I saw in Mrs. Jeanette Mayo in Columbus' house, there was a little clipping of a wood carving contest that Mr. Mayo must have been in. So maybe sometimes they did contests as well.

GB: But that's the only one I remember that fostered his work, because Whitey was over there all the time. And he'd tell him to carve. One of his daughters is a carver too, but it hurts her hands so much she had to quit.

PT: Really, Mr. Pearson's daughter.

GB: Yeah, hhm hhm. Patsy.

PT: Patsy.

GB: Hhm hhm.

PT: That's great. Yeah, he, I know he carved the table, Mr. Mayo carved the table at the Church.

GB: Yes, hhm hhm. What does it say on it?

PT: I think it says In Memory of Me.

GB: In Memory of Me, oh yeah.

PT: It's beautiful. We have a picture of it and I hope to go see it in person.

GB: They don't have a pastor, they don't have a preacher right now but Rick's mother would show you in there. She'd probably take you in there any time you want to go in. She's a lovely lady.

PT: I've never met her. But Rick's a lovely man so she must be.

GB: Yeah, she was young when her husband died and she brought them children along, educating them. I don't see how in the world she done it but she done it.

PT: Every last one of them.

GB: Yeah. She's a bulldog type of person. I'm gonna get it done. That's what it takes to succeed a lot of times.

PT: Sure it does. Well, especially for your children. Sometimes that's what you have to do. Do you remember if Bud Mayo had any brothers or sisters?

GB: He had a sister. Here we go – another with the name. But he did have a sister.

PT: Oh, Mrs. Mayo can probably tell me what her name was.

GB: She was a nice lady. I remember her very well.

PT: Did you get to see this when it was at the Columbus Museum?

GB: Yes, I did. I was looking for it, when I came out here I was looking for this pamphlet here and I had something else too, I'm thinking. I'll look through some stuff. I might have some stuff pertaining to this. Lord, chile, I got so much stuff up there. If you'd seen my house, you'd say ooohhh. But my wife used to be a real good housekeeper and then all of a sudden she just got tired. She wasn't feeling good then, of course I didn't see the signals. Should have. I saved everything I could get a hold of. I've got a lot of stuff in there. Never could find it when I want it.

PT: I'm the same way, I'm a pack rat. But I'm not as organized as I need to be.

GB: It's hard to stay organized when you've got so many tangents you want to go in. I think, don't you?

PT: Absolutely.

GB: You see something and say I want that, and if it's free or if it costs you go on and get it. If it's a pretty drawing, it's a pretty piece of glass or anything that you like. Clothes.

PT: Well, you might have use for it someday.

GB: Sure.

PT: You never know.

GB: What goes around

PT: That's right. Especially at a time like this with the situation in the world. Cause we don't know what's gonna come a couple of years down the road.

GB: No, don't worry about it.

PT: No, I don't worry about it too much.

GB: I went up there with mentally retarded kids that my wife, my girlfriend takes care of now. And they get into a conversation and they can't hardly talk, you know, so he'll hold out his hand and say, don't worry about it. That's one thing he can say, Don't worry about it. I say when I hear him he's handicapped and all else.

PT: And he's smarter than all of us.

GB: They are smart. Real perceptive too. They know when you're downgraded them or putting them down and everything else and they can be – they can put you down pretty well too. And

PT: Probably have a good sense about people too.

GB: Yeah. They followed me back from Columbus they went over to that Olympic bowling team or for the mentally retarded. They were pretty good. And they were following in the bus, out there the New Hope bus and so I was going on up to Mansfield after that to dinner, after that so I was coming on up the road and what I got there he said, George you craaaazy. I said, "Don't you like my driving." "George I like your driiivin." You swerved right off the road twice. You weren't thinking he was paying any attention.

PT: They were watching you.

GB: Yeah, they were watching me.

PT: Were you behind them or in front of them.

GB: I was in front of them.

PT: You were in front of them, they were watching. That's fun. Where do you go to dinner when you go up to Mansfield?

GB: I go up to, what's the name of that thing down there, Ryan's. Up on Springdell. And then last night my girlfriend took me up to, what do you call that, Olive Garden.

PT: hhm hhm.

GB: That was nice.

PT: We go there.

GB: That food is good.

PT: It is good.

GB: Yeah.

PT: Yeah. We go there, Olive Garden, and there's a Red Lobster up there too.

GB: Yeah there's a Red Lobster. We've been to that one too. I don't like to go to them they cost too much.

PT: Yeah.

GB: But there worth it.

PT: Yeah.

GB: If you don't love yourself, if you don't treat yourself once in a while.

PT: It's nice to go out to something special.

GB: Yeah, so.

PT: If you think of anything, if you think of. I'm going to try to get in touch with Mrs. Pearson, um, if you think of anything else about either Mr. Mayo or their family, um.

GB: As I said before now Betty Proffitt's Aunt was married to him.

PT: Her Aunt Etta. I read that in the transcripts.

GB: Yeah, Etta. Etta Mayo. You might contact Betty Proffit at 701 East Chestnut, 392-2406.

PT: Now Rick's mom says that she's not been doing so well, Mrs. Proffitt.

GB: I think she's probably okay.

PT: Is she feeling okay now.

GB: She's feeling fair. She had a stroke and so forth but and then it inhibited her some, but she still gets around and does things. She still plays the organ at our church. She plays the organ and I try to play the piano so we fight. I miss her when she's not there playing the organ because the organ drowns the piano out and you can't tell how many mistakes you're making playing the piano.

PT: That's funny. Well I have a card too. I hope I have one here. Wait here it is. If you think of something. And would you like me to give you a call when the gospel singers are coming back to Kenyon.

GB: Yes I would.

PT: Okay, I'll do that.

GB: I think they have about four different choirs down there.

PT: Yeah, it's really nice. A group of Kenyon students started one too.

GB: yeah they used to sing down at the Baptist church there a couple of times.

PT: Yeah, there's some really nice young men and young women who are here right now. Good singers. I wrote my home number on there too.

GB: Okay, thank you. I like your name. Peg Tazewell, that's a lovely name.

PT: Yeah, I'm a lucky woman.

GB: You are.

PT: I have a real good family. I, my husband's grandpa worked for the Urban League for years and years.

GB: The Urban League.

PT: Yeah, the Urban League. They lived in Omaha, Omaha, Nebraska for years and years but then they came back to Akron and he taught at Akron U. He had a second career when he was in his 60s he became a teacher of African American studies.

GB: Are you in a bi-racial marriage?

PT: Yes, um. And he was just one of the most wonderful men ever. He was a real good man. He was an alpha. The alphas did a real good thing at his service.

GB: Well to be a part of something is nice. To be on both sides of something is nice too, because what people don't know they don't know. This girlfriend of mine, now. She's a white lady. And I say don't you get scared sometimes when you're going around with me and everything, people look at you? And she says, no, I love you. I don't care what they say. And she says, what can they say? You're dressed up, you look good, you got money, just like that, so, and we don't do bad when we go places.

PT: Yeah, in some ways it brings you together more. We lived in Greensboro North Carolina for three years.

GB: I love North Carolina.

PT: Yeah, I do too. But we used to get looks.

GB: It's kind of fun.

PT: My husband's grandparents, we brought them to live with us in North Carolina, and they were ill often, on and off, and they would have to go to the emergency room. And I happened to work closest to the Emergency Room so I was often the first one to the hospital and grandma used to get such a kick out of. I would get there and I would say I need to see Mr. And Mrs. Brown, can you take me to their room and they would take me back, and I would say it's my grandparents and they would kind of stop and they'd look at me and say, "This room?" And I'd say, "yeah, this room." And grandma would just be hysterical laughing she thought it was the funniest thing. We used to kind of play with people.

GB: You do play with people don't you.

PT: Sometimes. It's a little. I worry sometimes about bringing my son up here. Only because, um, there aren't as many black families, even as there used to be, here.

GB: Well I wouldn't worry about it, because I was theoretically raised white. So was Rick. I never had any contact with black people till I was about 15 years old. In the churches and places like that. But as far as dating, things like that, you don't start, usually inter-racial dating and at that time was verboten almost. But you'd slip around and love each other and so forth like that. Now you can do what you wish it you wish. But, I had two or three girlfriends when I came along. A neighbor girl and I were madly in love with each other, and her brother thought it was alright, but her mom and dad, when they found out...

PT: So it wasn't accepted even in a community like Mt. Vernon?

GB: No, no – Mt. Vernon was a terrible community at one time, inter-racially. But it was good too. As long as you stayed in your category, in your place, and, cause year's ago we used to have I used to sing in a quartet and we'd sing all over the county little churches, and they'd – they'd say the AME Church Quartet's coming and they'd fix food, in the afternoon and everything like that and a, I think now since they have inter-racial things, they think this is something new. But we were doing that when we were little kids. My mother, she's a forward woman. She always worked in the Church and everything like that. She's beg money for it. And one time she came up the street, and on an errand of mercy, she said would you give me some money for the church, and he said yep, he said here's some money and he gave her 18 pennies, and she said, thank you, this is the biggest help I've had today because you smiled when you gave it to me. She said, that's nice, I appreciate it. Three days later he wrote her a check for \$25 and sent it to her.

PT: That's great.

GB: Don't you like to see people and say, Hello there how are you. Or say, Good morning, Good evening. And just look them in the eye and see what their reaction is. Some of them react real nice too. Some of them say, they don't know me, what are they speaking to me for?

PT: And it's something that, living in the South, I kind of got into the habit of doing. You know, you always make eye contact with someone and say hello. But some of the students here sometimes get – you can tell the students here who come from big cities, cause they kind of do,

they get shocked when you look at them.

GB: I believe in loving everybody, I do.

PT: I do to.

GB: If they do you wrong, you don't have to let them do you wrong again, but you still can love them. Cause they've got problems. You don't have their problems because you love them.

PT: That's right, Martin Luther King said, nobody ever said I have to like everybody, they just said I have to love them. I used to do a reading with that.

GB: I stopped down there to Memphis, where he got killed. Then we went all through Alabama to his church there in Montgomery, and we went to Selma where Martin Luther King, JR. preached. It was quite an odyssey we went to. We went to Arkansas to our army reunion and we got to see Bill Clinton's place and things like that. Travel is lots of fun. I like to fly, but I like to drive too don't you.

PT: I like to drive too. Now where did you work when you came back from the army?

GB: Oh, I did everything. I did janitorial work. I worked in restaurants as a dish washer. I worked on the rail road. And the first job I had when I came back I was a garbage man. I really enjoyed that. "Garbage man, you say?" And I say, yep, garbage man, I say it wasn't what they paid, there was always free clothes and shoes and dishes and Lord knows what people threw away. Some of them dishes they threw away are collectors items now. I've got a few of them, got some Heisen(?) And some Goshen china.

PT: We collect Fiestaware. Do you remember that?

GB: I do. A long time ago, truly it was carnival glass. You'd go to a carnival and they'd give you a prize, they'd give you a glass dish or things like that. Now that's a big item.

PT: That's true. There's a lot of stuff like that. Now I saw something, that you got an award. Were you named Mt. Vernon Citizen of the Year or something?

GB: Yeah, I got that one time, yeah, boy that was a big deal.

PT: Were you involved in any of those clubs, like Kiwanis?

GB: No, I never joined any. At one time you couldn't join them. And now, they let you join them. They didn't search you out. Now, Rick, he's a professional and then there, one of my best friends just died, Charles Chancellor, he ran the City Tire Shop down there.

PT: Yeah, I read about him. He passed away recently?

GB: Yeah, he was quite a man. They asked him to join the Country Club and he went home and

asked his wife. He said I don't want to join no Country Club, when I wanted to join it they wouldn't have me, and now they want me and I'm not going to. Sometimes we do things to our own detriment.

PT: It's a funny world

GB: It's a wonderful world.

PT: Well thank you so much...

GB: I haven't said a thing...