

NEW JERSEY MULTI-ETHNIC

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH

Mildred Arnold

August 19, 1980

Interviewer: Giles Wright

Transcriber: Pat Thomas

Cassette #1, Side #1

Wright: Could you tell me your name?

Arnold: My name is Mildred Arnold. I live here at 133 James Street, Apt. 2B.
I've been living here about. . . .

Wright: This is in?

Arnold: Baxter Terrace. I've been living here in Baxter Terrace since they were
built. I was one of the first people to move, families, to move in here.
That was in May. . .

Wright: This is Baxter Terrace?

Arnold: Yes. This is Baxter Terrace. I moved in here May the 20th, 1941. One
of the first ones to come in here with my family. I'm the mother of
three daughters. I was married when I moved in here but I'm not married
anymore. I'm divorced now for many years. I worked hard to raise my
girls. Course, you know, I had all the prejudice and things to go up on job
wise. Now, my mother and father, they brought us children, my mother

and father had five children when they came to Newark. That was back in 1924. My father left the South a couple of months before we did. But he had the foresight, I'd say, not much education, but he had the foresight to see what was going on in the South at that time. And he wanted to get his family out from down there. He had a brother here, was in Newark, was working and had a job for him. And I know when my father left us one night. We're from North. North, South Carolina.

Wright: From where now? What's that?

Arnold: North, South Carolina.

Wright: The name of the place is. . . .

Arnold: North, South Carolina. Believe it. That is on the map. That's where I was born. My dad got ready to leave from the South and, you know, he just couldn't go out there and catch the train and leave. North was like what they call in those days a whistle stop town. Between Florida and Columbia. The special went down to Florida. If it had somebody that had to get off at North they would stop the train and let you off, if you had to get off. Or if somebody was getting on then they would stop the train. Black people, Negroes couldn't get on and off that train in North at that time. They couldn't do it. The white folks would stop you. You could not. . . . like my daddy, when he caught the train for up here he had to leave North in the night. He had to get somebody with a horse and buggy to drive him from North to Columbia, South Carolina. And they had to be back to North that next morning time enough so the man don't know what they did that night. In other words, they had to drive my daddy and get back there the next morning to be, just like, go to work, just like he hadn't even been no place. That's what my daddy had

to do when he left us down there. He had, like I said, he had the foresight enough to prepare and leave enough money for my mother to bring us up here. Cause if he didn't we wouldn't have never got up here. Because a many families, they never go out of the South. Men got up here but they couldn't send back for their families because the crackers would open their mail and sent it back.

Wright: They would open the mail?

Arnold: They would open that mail and send it back. Send that mail back. And tell you if you were up here to come home where you belonged. Because with them you belonged to them. Otherwise, it's like my name is Arnold and I had this place and people working, sharecropping on my land. And say, this is the Arnold's place. A colored family over here, one over here and one over here. These was Arnold niggers. All of them. Do you understand what I mean?

Wright: I understand.

Arnold: You stayed there. You had children, your children worked for me. It was this kind of a thing. You went no place.

Wright: From generation to generation.

Arnold: From generation to generation. This went on. When my daddy, he did come up here, he went to work. He worked about a month, he sent the money back for my mother. He sent the tickets. And crackers took them tickets and sent them back up here and came down to the village we was living at and told my mother to write Eddie and tell him to come home where he belonged.

Wright: So this actually happened to you?

Arnold: These things actually happened. This is not nothing that I'm fabricating

or anything. This is, I was about 8 years old when we come up here. So, I was old enough to know these kind of things. That's what they told her. "You write Ed and tell Ed to come on back home where he belongs. Cause this is where he belongs." Other words, they take a man's family and keep them there to bring him back. You understand? Since my mother had the money already for us to leave, she knew what had happened. She knew what had went down. So, what she did. . . got us all ready. Come out on a Saturday morning, was like the Fourth of July was the holiday coming up. And there had been a lady, she was like you hear about the underground railroad. You see, people talk about these things. But this lady was a stopping off place. She used to live there at North. Cause we were living in her house when we left. North station. We were living in her house. Her name was Minnie Durant. You went to North, when you went to Columbia, that's where you went. She was famous for her ice cream. She had a ice cream parlor up there. And everybody was, if they went to Columbia, they had to go get some Miss Durant's ice cream. That's the way she made her living. One of them kind of things. But she also, when you come out of the South and you could get to Columbia, you could lay over there until you, with her, she would put you up until you could get out. And see, like when my daddy left, he had to stay up there in Columbia until 5 o'clock that next afternoon before we could catch a train to come up here. Cause that's when that train went through. And it got in Columbia about 5 o'clock. Coming from Florida. And then he could catch that train to come on up here. But you couldn't catch it down around North no place. They wouldn't let him. It was one of them things, "Where are you going Eddie?" "I'm going up Columbia." No, you

can't go up there this time. You got to wait." You know. "What are you going for?" They would ask these questions. You know.

Wright: Who would ask this sort of a question?

Arnold: The crackers. They would ask these questions. If my daddy would walk out there to the station in North to get on the train to come up to Columbia, "Where you going?"

Wright: This would be asked by the person working at the station?

Arnold: Them crackers would come up there.

Wright: Just any. . . .

Arnold: Any of them. "Where you going? You're Mr. so and so. Your supposed to be on Mr. so and so's place this hour in the afternoon. What are you doing up here? Is he sending you someplace?" You understand?

Wright: I understand.

Arnold: "If Mr. so and so is sending you someplace alright. Let me see your papers, what you got to go and do." This is long time after Reconstruction. But this still went on. Now when my mother got us out, she got us from out there, out from down there, because it was getting on to the 4th of July weekend. My daddy had been up here since May. It was getting on the 4th of July. So Momma come up to the station that Saturday morning, we all dressed. Not too much baggage. The baggage was gone. Our clothes was gone. They left the night before. They was up to. . . Miss Durant had our clothes. Cause somebody had to drive them clothes out. Momma had just enough like she's going up for the day. "Well, we figured we'd take us a holiday. We going up to Columbia for the holiday." "Alright Minnie. See, you when you get back tomorrow afternoon." That would have been that Sunday afternoon when that train come through, you see.

All of this. We children on the platform, I'm the oldest. You didn't talk to nobody. Because they didn't want you to let them white people know what was going on. You didn't dare. All Momma wanted to do was get that train that morning so she could get in Columbia. She had us. She had to get the train. So, we had to be very quiet. Because them white people was always watching you, all the time. So they were satisfied Momma was coming to Columbia for the holiday and one of them kind of things. My Aunt Rosa was there to see us off. "Bye Minnie, I won't see you Sunday when you get back. I'll won't see you till Tuesday night sometime. When I get off I'll stop by." This kind of thing. You left the shades drawn in the house so nobody could see the furniture and stuff was all gone. You had to leave that house like, you know, somebody was still there. You understand? So, that's the way we got out of there. We got in Columbia about 11 o'clock that morning, that Saturday morning. We had till 5 o'clock that afternoon to stay right in Columbia before we could get near, get that train then to come up this way.

Wright: How did you get from Columbia?

Arnold: From North, that's the train I'm talking. We got the train.

Wright: You took a train from North?

Arnold: We took a train from North but we had to get that train early Saturday morning but we had to have a reason for getting on that train. And my mother's reason was we was coming up, "Yeah, I'm going up. I'll be glad to get up there and eat some of Miss Durant's ice cream. You know she have some of that good old ice cream. I hope she got some made up." You know, all this kind of stuff we had to hand them. They had to be had.

Wright: And then someone there saying that, "I'll be seeing you."

Arnold: Yeah. So, my aunt was there. "Yeah, well, Minnie I'll see. I won't see you Monday. I'll see you about Wednesday when you get back. Give you a chance to do this and that." You know, farm work and stuff. So that they don't get suspicious. We got on the train. When we got on the train and got up in Columbia, then we had to lay in Columbia till 5 o'clock that afternoon when that special came through. Passed right through North coming up this way. It stopped in Columbia. When it stopped in Columbia, that's when we got on the train. And we were quiet then when we got on the train. You got on the train, you sat down and you didn't hardly speak to nobody because you didn't know who you'd be talking to. They'd take you off the train. You understand? "You're Mr. so. Where do you think you're going. Your Mr. so and so's nigger." You understand? And if the man left the family down there, they would hold that family so he'd come back. But since my mother had the money, my daddy had seen these things happen and he had the foresight to see that Momma had the money to bring us. All she had to do was get to Columbia. She got to Columbia, Miss Durant's husband went out there and bought our tickets while we was in his house.

Wright: Once you got to Columbia it was no problem?

Arnold: Once we got to Columbia you just played it cool and be quiet. Not a lot of ballyhoo about where your going or one of them kind of things until you got out of Columbia. And you get out Columbia. But you could get out Columbia easier than you could North. North, you just didn't go to the station to get on no train. Unless you was Mr. so and so's nigger and you didn't go out there getting on no train unless Mr. so and so was sending you someplace.

Wright: So, you stayed with this Mrs. Durant's?

Arnold: We stayed in Mrs. Durant's house till about 5 o'clock that afternoon when that train was due in. We was there at the station. They got us to the station and we got on that train. And my mother didn't breathe good until we hit Washington. That was the next day. By one o'clock we got into Washington the next day. That was that Sunday. And we had to change trains in Washington. And we changed trains in Washington and then we come on here. We got down here, Penn Station about. . . .

Wright: What about your food?

Arnold: Food? Miss Durant packed us a lunch. There was a lot of fixing. You couldn't pack no lunch from North because. . . .

Wright: It would have been obvious?

Arnold: You couldn't pack no lunch from there. They would know you going someplace. She packed a lunch for people. This is what she did. Go up there and she had that lunch packed for my mother, for us.

Wright: What was it in?

Arnold: She fed us. And one of them kind of things in Columbia, until that train come that afternoon. And then she got us on that, she got us, her husband got us on that train.

Wright: Do you remember what the lunch was, how it, what sort of container was it?

Arnold: She'd fixed you a basket of food. And my mother had plenty of food in that basket. Of course, she had all of us. She put everything in the basket. Give us a basket of food. That should bring us on through. We had food. But, you see, there was other people who sat in, naturally, who sat in the Negro car. It was all black people in the car we was on. You

saw these white people all around. But you was in that car that the black people sat.

Wright: What part of the train?

Arnold: What part of the train? Right up next to that engine. That's where they went. That's where you went.

Wright: That was for blacks?

Arnold: That's where the blacks went. Right behind that engine. Other words, you catch all the smoke and stuff. That's where you rode. And we come here and my daddy, he worked for Joe Nesco, I'll say May, 1924. And my daddy just died about 2 years ago, in 1978.

Wright: So, you came here in 1924?

Arnold: Yeah. And he worked for Joe Nesco till he was about close to 80 years old. And they just told him that he had to retire because they, you know, they don't have no records like we do about birth and one of them kind of things. And they just said, you got to be old enough to retire. Because his oldest child was getting on. You understand? They said, you got to be. We figured my daddy worked till he was close to 80 years old.

Wright: What sort of work did he do?

Arnold: Construction work. My father. . . .

Wright: What kind of work did he do in the South?

Arnold: In the South he was a farmer.

Wright: Sharecropper?

Arnold: Sharecropper. After he come up here, my father laid just about every curbstone that's laid in Newark. He set the scales for them curbstones. All these streets out here, my father. . . . when this was built. I had moved in here and my father was out there laying the curbstone for

James Street. He laid the curbstones for just about every street in Newark. Because that's what Joe Nesco, at that time, was doing. Joe Nesco Construction Company.

Wright: So, he had his own business?

Arnold: No. That was Italian. Joe Nesco is the name of the man that had. . . .

Wright: I see. . . .

Arnold: Yeah. He's dead now but his sons, his family still carry on the construction company. But my daddy had, he couldn't write his name but he could make an X. But he could lay them curbstones.

Wright: What was your father's name?

Arnold: Eddie Mack

Wright: Where was he born?

Arnold: He was born down there around North someplace. I don't know that. Because that was back before my time. You know what I mean. Before I can remember. Like me, I can vaguely remember when my father and my uncle, my uncle went to the service. That's in the First World War. And my father was supposed to go and he left home. But the day that he left was the Armistice Day. And then he came back home, he came right back home. They didn't send no, they didn't need him no more. Send him right back home. And that was on Armistice Day that he left that morning. Then they sent him back home. I can remember him coming home and he was so happy. Cause he came back home and he thought he was going to have to go away. You know how kids is. My father was going away. You don't know whether your going to see him anymore. My uncle, he went over seas but he came back and he settled someplace in Virginia. We never could find him.

Wright: You lost contact with him?

Arnold: Yes, we lost contact with him. And I heard years after we was up here that he had passed away. Somebody got word of that. Now, me myself, I had the hard road to go here. First school I went to in this city was Newton Street School.

Wright: Did you start school earlier?

Arnold: See, when I was home, when I was down south before I come up here, I always went to school. I went to school, like most people say down south you went to school 3 or 4 months out of a year and you had to work a field. Momma never let us work in the fields. And I was the oldest and I went to school 12 months out of a year. When the school closed and the other kids went in the field to work there was a school teacher there that had private classes in her home. Private school, and I went there for the rest of the time. Now, my mother washed the white folks clothes and scrubbed and boiled anybody's clothes to get up that money, that little money, to send me to school. Cause she always said, she did not want her children working the fields. And we didn't work in no field. We never did. None of us. My mother had 9 children.

Wright: There were 9 of you?

Arnold: There was 5 of us when we came up here and she had 4 more after she came here. But that's just one of the things.

Wright: Was your mother born

Arnold: My mother was born someplace down in that area. I can't say from where because my mother's mother was an Indian girl. I don't know from what tribe or what but I know she was Indian. I know this from hearing my people talk. We hand down our history but it's handed down through talk.

Like some young people today say, "I didn't know we had no history?" All colored families has a history. Goes way back. You got to go back to the oldest one just like me. There is things that my oldest child will be able to tell the rest of them that I sit down and tell her that I never bothered to tell them because she knows it. That's the family history. Carrying on. The oldest one gets that history. When they get a certain age they get that family's history. Regardless to anything.

Wright: And you've done this with your. . . .

Arnold: I did this with my oldest child.

Wright: You told her as much as you know?

Arnold: I told her as much as I know.

Wright: About your family?

Arnold: About my family. So, my history, she will know about it. Of course, she lived through it. You understand?

Wright: What was your mother's name?

Arnold: My mother's name was Minnie Strohman before she married my father. She was a Strohman. Now, she had quite a few sisters and brothers. But you know, in them days lot of the family died out before I was born. My mother was the baby girl. And I only knew one of my mother's sisters real well. And she's been dead now a good many years. But that was my Aunt Pearlle. I knew her. I knew all her kids. Her kids settled in New York. And we settled here. But we keep in touch. My Aunt Pearlle had 22 kids. She had 22 kids by one man. Her husband. She had 20 kids and then she had a set of twins at the end. After about two years after her set of twins she lost her husband. She didn't have no more kids. But that was enough. She did have 22 kids. My mother had 10 altogether. One died in the bed as a baby. She had 10 children.

Wright: Could you give me your age and where you were born?

Arnold: I'm 67 years old. Now, I'll be 68 December 23rd, this year. I was born in North, South Carolina in 1913, December the 23rd. I came up here in 1924. That's when my mother and them brought me here. I started Newton Street School in 1924. I got here, it was about over. You know, them days kids go to school all year. You had summer school.

Wright: You came up. . . what time of the year was it that you came?

Arnold: We got here about, during the 4th of July weekend. Over that weekend. I went to school that, whatever day that school opened after the 4th of July, I went to school.

Wright: Prior to this you were going to a private school?

Arnold: I went to a private school.

Wright: Assuming that it's operated by a black person?

Arnold: Yes. I never went to school with no white people. I didn't have no dealings with them. No more than see them--you know, Mr. So and so and his family--until I got here. And that's when my Momma told me I had to go to school with these kids and I would have to learn to deal with them. And of course, you know that was my problem. Because I had to fight my way through the Newton Street School. I don't know if I graduated for being the best fighter or whether I graduated because I was

Wright: What kind of people attended that school?

Arnold: The principal at that school at that time was a Mr. West. I will never forget him. Lovely man. Lovely person. And he knew--he was white--but he knew much of the problems that I had to go up against in that school. And he would take up for me. Because you had the children to fight. That was an everyday thing. Besides the children to fight, you

had these little incidents that the teacher would put on you. You understand? You're black and you get back and all. You know what I mean?

Wright: The fights with the children would be because of the color too?

Arnold: That's right. Because you were black. But today I can sit and look at that. It wasn't because these children did this, because they were just children doing it. This is what they were taught. This I have learned over the years. With children. You teach a child, "That's a black man over there, that's a black woman over there, you don't deal with them." Then they are not going to, you know. They don't know how to take you. You know, "She's a Negro. Knock her in the head." You know. This kind of thing. This is what these kids. . . it was Italian kids.

Wright: That's what I was going to ask you.

Arnold: They were Italian kids. An ethnic group too. They were having it just as hard as we were. But, they people, they skin was different and this is what it was all about. As you get older you begin to look back over these thing and you know what was going down. And like I said, I had to fight my way through Newton Street School. I don't which. . . what I got.

Wright: So, it was in an Italian community?

Arnold: It was in an Italian community. Cause when I come here, the first house I lived in was 153 Newton Street. And that was all Italians over there. The first church I went to here was Saint Rocco's. I went to Saint Rocco's when it was a cellar. Wasn't no church built up there. It was a cellar. They had just bought the cellar and was using the basement for church services. That's the first church I went to. And when my mother found that I was going up there with those kids and going to that white church, she had a fit.

Wright: This is a Catholic church?

Arnold: Yeah, Catholic church. It's church but, "What? Going to church with those white folks?" She had a fit. My uncle and my father had to get out and find a church for me to go to. And my uncle brought me to Bethany.

Wright: How were you received at this Catholic church?

Arnold: When I got in with those Italian kids I was going to school with, when I beat up a couple of them real good, one of them kind of things, then I was in. "You one of us now." But you had to go through these changes. And I got in with them kids and them kids liked me and we went to church together.

Wright: No problem?

Arnold: No problem after then. But I had to fight my way up. I had to fight my way through that. And then, you know, "you one of us now. You go up and talk to the father." And I stayed in Bethany until about 20 years ago when my mother died. When my mother died I joined the Catholic church. Now I belong to Saint Patrick's.

Wright: What

Arnold: Bethany Baptist.

Wright: You're a Baptist?

Arnold: Uh-huh. That's the church my father and them found to put me in and I stayed there in Bethany until my mother died. And my mother died and I went into the Catholic Church. I belong to Saint Patrick's. But I liked it from when I first went to church with the kids. Well, my mother wasn't having none of that. That would just about kill her. Me going to a white church. No way. So we had our little things too. You know what I mean?

For not understanding. You understand? But my father worked. My mother sent us to school here. Now, these schools was prejudiced. You better believe it. I had a teacher, when I got to the 5th grade, in Newton Street School, her name was a Miss Messina.

End Cassette #1, Side #1

Begin Cassette #1, Side #2

Wright: You were saying a Miss Messina. . . .

Arnold: Miss Messina stayed out the school the whole year. Not to teach me. She was determined. She wasn't teaching no black children. She wouldn't come to school till the day I got promoted out of the class, she came back to school to teach. But she stayed out, honey.

Wright: This was what grade?

Arnold: Fifth grade.

Wright: What subjects would she have taught you? Did she teach you all of the subjects?

Arnold: In them days the teachers taught all the subjects.

Wright: She would have had you the entire year?

Arnold: Yeah. She would have had me.

Wright: In her class and that was it?

Arnold: That was her class and that was it. She wasn't having none of it. That was it. We're not dealing with it. So, I made it.

Wright: How did the other teachers treat you?

Arnold: Well, they all, they were working women. And when I think back over it, they were working women. They didn't want to deal with me. But they dealt with me. And, of course, I was never no trouble in the school because my mother used to tell me. "You go to school to learn. And if

you sit in the back of the class," And usually that's where I was. "You way in the back of the class and you sit there and you listen." She used to always tell us this. "That white teacher is going to teach them white kids. And if you listen you got to learn. There's no reason for you not to learn. Just listen." That is one thing my mother always stressed with us. And that, I think, carried me a long way in life with the roads I had to go through. Because when I was working, I got my kids and I was by myself with my kids. And I got out there and I know I had my children to work for. I had to keep a job. And if I, you see, you could go on these jobs then, in them days it was very, very prejudiced. You go on a job, especially in these factories, the man, the boss, or the foreman or something, come around. He tell this white girl or white woman, "Show her how to do such and such a thing." She wouldn't show it to you. They would not teach you right. I know about it. Cause these are thing I. . . .

Wright: What sort of work did you do?

Arnold: Well, when I first went in the factory I went in Celanese.

Wright: How old were you?

Arnold: Well, I was grown then but I was married, I had moved here. That's when the war broke out. Around '42 in May. I went down to Celanese Corporation, 290 3rd Street, and I got a job in there. What was I doing in there? For the hired. . . the government was saying you got to hire everybody. That's when President Roosevelt said, "You hire everybody." And Celanese is, to them, they are living up to their standard. They hired me, one person. And this is, "Yeah, we hire colored, white and colored. We hire men and women in here." One of them kind of things. But then, this I remember. When the government sent General Arnold to inspect these plants that

was getting government contracts--saying they were hiring these people and wasn't hiring the blacks like, you know--I know when they did that because I met General Arnold down there in Celanese. In Newark. Now, I'm the first black woman to work for Celanese anyplace in the world. The man that owned that company come from England when they hired me. To see what I looked like. This I know.

Wright: What sort of business was this?

Arnold: Plastic business. Just like DuPont. DuPont and Celanese was always competitors.

Wright: What did you do there?

Arnold: What they had me doing? Cleaning the toilets. The matron. Wash up the toilets and clean up behind the women. But, see, I always was a stinker for education. And before the war broke out, they had a program over here, the College of Engineering. College of Engineering started, they built it right beside Central. I know when the building went up and I went there. And when I went down to Celanese to work I could cut you any kind of tools you want cut. I could read blue prints and I could use a lathe. But them jobs, you know, they didn't want us on them kind of jobs. Until the government sent somebody in there to investigate. And they sent a crew of people down there to check everybody that was working down there. And they had to send us across the street to the office at that factory. Everybody. And when I went over, oh yeah, they told them, they hired colored women. And then I went over there the man asked me where was the rest of the colored women? When was the rest of them coming over? You understand what I mean? "Where are they at? We done went through the whole plant. You the first one we come up with.

Now, where's the rest of them?" I told them, I said, "I don't know. I ain't seen nobody but me. Of course, it's a big place." But you see, you had to use this, you had to do these kind of things. It's to get over the white folks. I'm keeping my job. So, now I got to play the dumb part. I can't just jump up and tell the man, "Look ain't nobody over there but me." Like I could today. You understand what I mean?

Wright: I understand.

Arnold: I had to use, "Well, I don't know. Maybe they is over there. It's a big place, you know. I don't go in all them buildings." You understand what I mean? "I be working in such and such a building and I be in that building most of the time. I ain't seen nobody over there but me. But they can have somebody down there. There's such and such a building back over there. I don't go down there." You understand? You got to cover for yourself.

Wright: Just a completely different situation?

Arnold: That's right. But this is me getting over. I'm keeping myself in the clear. So, then they start to ask them where's the rest of them. They ain't had no more there. That's when they start to hiring black women in Celanese. Because they didn't hire them. They hired me and when they hired me down there, I tell you, the man that owned that Cleanese Corporation, he was an Englishman, and he come from England just to see me. See what I looked like. That I was able to get a job in his business. You tell some people this and they won't believe it. But this is the truth.

Wright: And this was in the '40s?

Arnold: This was in the '40s. I worked down there until the war was over. Well, when the war was over you know what happened to us then. They want

to put me in--I, of course, maybe worked there--but they going to put me in a room where I'm standing in water all day. I got arthritis bad enough now. I'd be standing in water up above my ankles all day. And I got sick and told them I couldn't come back. They gave me my severance pay and everything and one of them kind of things. But they was going to let me out anyway. That's why they put me over there in that. . . . Now, that part where they put me in where that water was, I hadn't been over there. I had never been even in that part of the plant, until the war was over.

Wright: So, you worked with them

Arnold: After they found out that I was the only one working there, black, and the government. . . and what I was doing. I told the man just what I was doing. I say, "I clean the bathrooms. I clean up the toilets. And keep them nice and clean." I'm trying to make it good for myself. You know. And after that they started to hire colored women on them jobs. And then I started to looking at the machines. And I'll never forget, this foreman, he was a Jew. Mr. Miller. Mr. Miller was looking at me one lunch hour watching the machine. It was my lunch hour. I was off on my lunch hour but I was watching them run this machine. And he was looking at me watching them run the machine. And he asked me, he say--this is when they start to find out what I knew. He said, "Would you like to run that machine?" I said, "I don't know." Don't want to be too anxious--glad to get on the machine; you can make more money. I said, "I don't know. I might be hurt on that thing." He said, "Did you ever try it?" I said, "Now, you know ain't nobody going to let me work on their machine. They trying to make the piece work, as you all call it." I knew what it

was. I could tell him better than he did. But you got to play that dumb part. He said, "I think you can run it. I'll tell you what I'll do. Would you like to give it a try?" I said, "I'll try. I'll try." I know how to run the machine. I had been know how to run the machine. I could run the machine better than the man that was running the machine. Making screwdriver handles. And I always was fast with my hands. I got little hands but I was fast with my hands. He let me try the machine. He said, "How do you like that?" I said, "Yeah, that feels good working up there like that. All you got to do is just stand there and push the little lever and the machine would catch the screwdriver handle and one of them kind of things." And he's the one that took me out of the bathroom. Put me on the machine. And I went out that bathroom; I went on a man's job. That was a man's job. And I went on that machine. When I went on that machine, then they started to move me from one machine to the other. Honey, I could operate them machines. I was the best operator they had down there. Because I knew what I was doing with them machines. And if my machine broke down, I could fix it. I didn't need the man to come and fix it. I'd get me a screwdriver--and I carried my own screwdriver--I fixed my machine. Go back to work. I could keep them machines going. And they made bomb busters. They hired these colored women down there.

Wright: What was this again?

Arnold: Bomb busters. This was what. . . in the bombs that you drop. We made the little bit of a thing, about as big as your tip of your finger there. And that's what the explosive went in. That went in them bombs; it blew them. Just that little, wee little bit a thing that they put a little

bit of stuff in. And you made the top to go on it. And he wanted to keep them machines running because they had to get out a quota for the government everynight. And them women used to come down there and they wanted to be slipping back in the bathroom and what not with the different white men and one of them kind. You understand. With this kind of deal and one of them kind of things. And that man didn't know how to get that quota out. They'd be tired and all sleepy and one of them kind. . . Come in there, they done partyed all day. Can't work that night.

Wright: What was the ethnicity of these workers?

Arnold: These was colored girls that they had down there. But as long as they kept a white man in there over them colored girls, he couldn't get no work out of them. So, Mr. Miller come to me and ask me, could I keep them machines running all night? I said, "You want them running all night, I'll keep them running all night." And they put me over them machines in the night time. And when he come in the next morning that work was laying there. What I used to do, what they didn't know about, them girls come in there, they were high all up. Like I always say, to be a boss you got to know how to be a boss. And everybody can not be a boss. And it's hard work to be over people. That's your hardest job. What I used to do is when them girls come in there, I'd say, "You done had a few today. I know you did. Go in there and take yourself a couple of hours." I give different one of them a couple hours off. Go take a few hours sleep. And one of them kind of things. And you'd get up. . . three or four go in at one time and sleep. Give them a break and one of them kind of things. And they would keep them machines running.

Wright: How long did you work with Celanese?

Arnold: I worked like that until the war was over.

Wright: So, these were black women. Were they brought in after

Arnold: Yeah, they hired them after the government come sent investigators down there. They they started to hiring.

Wright: You were first that was hired?

Arnold: I was the first.

Wright: Then ultimately they moved you into working with the machines?

Arnold: They moved me into working with the machines. But then they moved me in a kind of a boss position because I could get that work out where that white man was over them women and he couldn't get them women to do that work.

Wright: These are the women that they brought in later on?

Arnold: Yeah. These colored women that they hired? Naturally you're hired last, you work on the late shift. And them women would come in there and they would be up with the kids all day or be out partying all day. Cause it was something else in that time for young women. Because they had just come out of the kitchens. You understand? From working in the kitchens all day and now here they got money. They got. . . You know, this was something itself. This was history itself. And now this kind of a job? Easy job.

Wright: Most of them were domestics?

Arnold: Yeah. Most of them come out of the Jews' kitchens. Out of the Jews' houses. And now they got these kind of jobs. And it took something else to handle it. White men all around and laughing and talking with them. They wasn't used to this. Where me, I don't know. I guess my first, I always say my first years of education helped me through a lot of

things--that's the education I got in the South--helped me through a lot of things. I know when to play, when to laugh and when to be serious. At all times. These things was important in my life. I don't know about other people but they was important in my life. I never, with all the jobs I had and all my working around, I never had no white man on no job to get out of line with me. He knew when, how and when to say anything if he got out of line with me. And I know just what to tell him to put him right back in place.

Wright: There was a lot of this going on?

Arnold: There was a lot of that going on. Because that's all. . . Celanese, for a while there, that's all was going on, down there. But it didn't happen with me. Cause I didn't deal with it. White man, "You the boss?" You the boss, you stay in your boss's place. And I'll stay in mine. And I didn't grin in nobody's face. Like I say, I know when to laugh, when to smile, and I know when to be serious. And I was always serious about my job. All my life.

Wright: So, you. . . Then after the war you

Arnold: After the war I got out here and my kids was young coming out of grammar school. They got to be educated. And I'm by myself with these kids. I took their father downtown to welfare. I didn't want my kids on no welfare. That I did not want. And they didn't go on no welfare either. I worked. I sent my three daughters. I got them through high school. Every one of them. With a CP course where if they wanted to go back to school and go to college at any time they could. And two of them has went back. One is a RN and the other one is a teacher. And my oldest daughter, that's my oldest girl right up there. She got a little boy.

Wright: What's her name?

Arnold: Her name is Ruth. Ruth Arnold. Thompson now. She stays home. Of course, she got one boy. And we found out when he was about 4 years that he had sugar. And of course, she's concerned with fixing his food and things like. Of course, now he's 15. He'll be 16 his next birthday. Smart as a whip. He goes down there to the university. He's a smart boy. He's a straight "A" student. And he's interested in interesting things. When I say interesting, like what went down with Nixon. You understand? These are kind of things he's interested in. Or what's going on in Washington. What's happening down there. He come in that door right now and he can tell you more about what's going on in Washington than the President can. Cause he knows. He keeps up. He's met Nixon. Been down in Washington and met Nixon. He met Carter when Carter was down there. I don't know what he's going to be when he gets grown but he's strictly a politician.

Wright: This is one of your. . . .

Arnold: That's my youngest grandson.

Wright: This is your oldest daughter?

Arnold: That's my oldest daughter's only child. My daughter, over there, that's. . . .

Wright: The daughter you were just talking about, is she the RN?

Arnold: No, that's the RN over there. That's my baby girl. She's a RN.

Wright: And her name is?

Arnold: Mary Smith. She works out of College Hospital. She works down at the WIC program down on Broad Street. She's one of the head people down there, the WIC program. Her name is Mary Smith. They call her Smitty.

And my other girl, she's not up there. But she got 6 kids. Six kids and she went back to school and finished Rutgers and now she is trying, I know she is going and taking some extra courses cause she is working on her master's. She's in education. She taught last year at Whitman. She's been teaching now about 2 years.

Wright: What's her name?

Arnold: Her name is Barbara Jenkins.

Wright: What's the age. . . .

Arnold: Her kids? Oldest child is 30 years old. That's her daughter.

Wright: What's the age difference, the span between the girls?

Arnold: There's almost 3 years between the oldest one. They are about 2 years apart. Barbara, she got her daughter, she's 30 years old. She's married and got one little boy. She did 4 years in the Air Force. She's Air Force personnel. Now, my daughter, my second girl, she got a son and he's married, one of her sons, he married. And he lives down in North Carolina. Right out side of Fort Bragg because his wife is in the Army.

Wright: Career soldier?

Arnold: Yeah. His wife is a career soldier. They are going to Germany in January. So, he said, "Uncle Sam got to get me a job over there." But this is, you know, my family. Me, I worked, after the job folded at Celanese and I was knocking around, just to pick up a little here, a little there, you know, job you work a couple of months, in plastics, one of them kind of things. I worked down on Wright Street in Clear Mold Plastics for a while. That didn't last too long because they would hire you and then soon as they get their orders up, one of them kind of things, they laid you off. So, I said, "I got to have me something with money coming in every

week. Little bit but something coming in ever week. This you could bank on." And I went to work. I got a chance to go to work for Tom's Caterers. And I worked for them 25 years. I worked for Tom's until the doctors told me that from arthritis, he said, "Lifting them pots and things, can't do that no more." He said, "Because you can either scald or hurt yourself or hurt somebody." So, I had to come out of the kitchen. That was in 1967. So, I said, I'm too young to get unemployment or anything like that. That was right after the riot. That's when they started Manpower. I was running around trying to find something to do. Went downtown, the woman down in there--it was at 1004 Broad Street. That's where they sent me to be rehabilitated. She looked at me and told me that she would send me up here to the Skill Center to work in the kitchen with a man they had cooking up there. I could be his assistant. But what they wanted to pay me was what I was getting for unemployment. That's all. And I wouldn't take the job. I refused the job. And then when Manpower got on her about me refusing the job, she said. . . see, they sent me there at 1004 Broad Street because that was so I could be rehabilitated. I had went to 309 Washington Street. But the woman there sent me to Clinton Place and I took the test. And they said that I. . . I wrote to Trenton to try to get permanently disability. But Trenton says I have too much on the ball and they had to retrain me. And you know, that white woman, she wanted to get. . . she didn't want to bother with that. Me with no retraining and one of them kind of things. And this woman down on Washington Street said to me, did I ever have any manager's training. One of them kind of things. I said, "Well, not in school but I worked at it." I had run the place for Tom and them 3 or 4

years down on Gobal Street by myself. Nobody down there but me. I run that place. Send out all them trucks. Got that food ready. Saw that that food was ready. Got that food on them trucks and got them trucks out there in the morning. And a lot of times I'd be there to check them trucks back in. And check that money. And I used to do this. So, she said I could be a manager. But then this woman at 1004, she didn't want to be bothered with that. She didn't want to be bothered. So, they was running me around. So, I told that woman I wasn't going to be bothered. Because I wasn't going up there to the Skill Center and work in no kitchen for that kind of money. I wasn't going to do it. So she she told the people that I refused a job. And they came up here to check that I had refused a job. I hadn't refused no job and told the man what happened. They got on her about that. That's when Manpower first started up. And I went to 37, they had me come over to 37 Broadway, at the Manpower Center over there. And from there I went to school. I was going to school out to the Skill Center taking up typing, management and stuff like that. When I got a job. . . cause when I was doing that, I was day care sitting, because I had to do that at night. And I got in with the day care people on 37 Broadway. And I got in with the Newark Day Care people. Right here in my house. And they had put some children in here and I took care of them children in the daytime. And that's how I got in. Because I used to sit down and make the toys for the kids to play with. You know. The mother's brought the kids in here in the morning and I didn't have them mothers bring me no food. I fed them kids. In here. I fed them. You don't bring me nothing. You just bring me the child. I had their breakfast waiting when they come in here. And the milk and

stuff would be here, the lady's milk and stuff would be here because I didn't want no child going out of my house getting sick from no food you brought me. You understand? And I know how young people will bring you food. If there's some left over, you know, one of them. I said, "No." I had it fresh right here. Everything fresh for them kids. I cooked their lunch. Made their lunch and made their food in here. Fresh. I had stuff in here for them to have snack in the afternoon. One of them kind of things. And Miss Mary Willis used to come in here and she used to. . . because she was head of day care then. That's before they started that Springfield Avenue Community School. And I said. . . I was getting the nurses, the state nurses. Everybody that had anything to do with children was running in here. I had 3 children in here and you couldn't tell that they wasn't all related. You thought they was all related and they was all family. And I used to keep them like that when I was taking care--'68 that's what I done. Sixty-eight, I got a letter from day care that they wasn't going to pay no more for the day care mothers in the home. Because they was going to open the school. And I had asked Miss Willis, I said, "If I ever got the right setting you could teach little children a lot of things." Because I was teaching the children in here. Me, myself. This was on my own. In the meantime I was going to night school.

Wright: Where were you going to night school?

Arnold: Central Evening High School. I went back to Central Evening High School in '67 and I was finishing '73. I did the whole 4 years in Central Evening High School at night. And I got a college education. I need 9 more credits to graduate Essex County. Someday I'm going to go back and get them 9 credits.

Wright: So, you are. . . Then what happened?

Arnold: Well, after Miss Willis gave me a chance to work in that school in that setting with those children and I. . .

Wright: So, from taking care of them in here. . . .

Arnold: . . . took them out of here and when I went to school and I taught up there 10 years before I retired. I taught them kids.

Wright: So, you've had about 3 or 4 jobs in your. . . .

Arnold: That's right. I didn't jump around with a whole lot of jobs. If

End Cassette #1, Side #2

Begin Cassette #2, Side #1

Wright: So, you were saying now that, what was your. . . what did you think of your philosophy about working in jobs, saying that you would stay if a person gave you a job?

Arnold: Yeah. If the person gave. . . that was my philosophy about work. If a man would give me. . . If I went to a man for a job, naturally I'd need the job. And if he was good enough to hire me, that's giving me a chance to work, then I felt this way. You work, you give that man a good day's work. I mean, you don't go there and--like these kids I see them goof off today on jobs--mess up. I go on a man's job, when I was finished, he had a 8 hour day or 10 hours or whatever he was paying me for; he had that much work done. He had that work done. I know when I worked for Tom's. . . .

Wright: You don't think that's true today?

Arnold: No, no. Black people today with jobs, they are very careless with the jobs. Jobs--see, my job was my livelihood. Without the job you figure I couldn't pay my rent; I couldn't feed my kids. You understand what I

mean? Nowadays, that doesn't hold true with the young people of today. They have a job. Who cares? I'm going to eat, the rent going to get paid. But that come under the heading of one thing. The welfare system. If this man lay me off or I get fired or he don't. . . Go downtown and get me a check.

Wright: You disapprove of it?

Arnold: Yes I do. Especially for young people. For elderly people, like myself, I'm sick now, I done worked all my life--I ain't able to work. Food stamps and welfare? Yes! I can see it for them kind of people. But for these young people? Let these young people go to work. Back in my time, you go out and you have a baby. Maybe it wasn't the best thing. Cause there was a lot of babies born at that time. But the law would tell you. . . go down there and talk about some, "Oh, I got this baby now. I can't go to work. I got to get me some welfare." Go down there and take that baby down there to get some welfare. You know what they did with you? They gave you a job and put you to work and told you where you could go to work. And they took that baby. "We'll take this baby. We'll take care of this child." And it's going to come back to that. Because it's getting so now, they tell these women in a minute, "You take that baby and carry it to such and such a day care center. They'll take that baby. And take care of that baby. Go to work." That's just like what the President said. This they will say Reagan started. But he didn't. Carter started it. You get that welfare check, you work so much. Or you don't get it. Now, see me, I didn't want that. I'd go out there and get me a job. I didn't want that for my kids when they were coming up. They saw too much of it. And I didn't want that for my kids. And I'm glad that I was like that with

my kids. Because I'm going to tell you. My kids, today, ain't going to deal with no welfare and their kids ain't going to deal with no welfare. Know why? Because I didn't deal with no welfare. I was talking to one of my grandsons here Sunday. . . Saturday, they had a picnic and I went on the picnic. They took me on the picnic with them. Put me in the salt water, you know. Went down to Sandy Hook. And I was talking to this grandson of mine. And he telling me, "Grandmamma, just look at you. You done work all your life. You got nothing now. You know, they don't want to give you nothing." I said, "Well, I'm old now. Things I used to do because I wanted to do them, I can't do them now. But I did them things when I wanted to do them. Now, my enjoyment in life is to see you all make a life for yourself. See, you get out. Look at you. You're down here? You can get a bus and have a bus ride and take me on it. When I was young, your age, I couldn't do that and take my mother. Me hire a bus to go someplace?" "Jess," I said, "if the white man didn't tell you you could get on that bus and go someplace, you didn't get on it." I said, "This I know. See, you talk about. . . " He said, "Well, I see the changes from when we were younger and what you did then and what you do now." He says, "But, Grandmamma you over there and you by yourself." I says, "But I'm happy. I don't have a whole lot. But I got so many fine memories, so many fine. . . I said, "You all young men out here in the street doing your thing now and one of them kind of things." I said, "You got friends all over the city." I say, "I be sitting out on the bench a lot of times and I see some of your friends coming." "Hi Miss Arnold. How you doing?" -- talk to me. "You seen such and such a lady?" They be talking about something. "Do you need anything from the store? I'm going to the store."

Or, "You want me to tell one of your grandsons something?" I say, "This is my life. It makes me think of the years when I could get out there and could run around and do. When I was doing for you all." And I said, "Now, you and your friends can do for me." I said, "What more can I want out of life? I don't have to get up and go to a job no more. Because I'm not able. But I don't have to do it." I said, "Could be that this is something that. . . I could not have nothing, and would have to be either from hand to mouth, to you all or what." I said, "I'm independent. I'm on my own. I don't have to worry. I don't have much but what little bit I have. . . ." Yes, but welfare? I could see welfare for elderly people, disability people. I mean, maybe people will say, "I don't know who she thinks she is?" I can see it for them. And get these young people out here and teach them how to work. I've been down stairs this morning teaching young kids they got working around here. They put these white fellows over them. You know what I mean. You know, "I'm scared to say something to them." (said in a whisper) They supposed to teach them how to work. But that ain't why they do that. They don't want to teach them. You understand? They don't want to teach our black kids how to really work. I'm out there this morning; kid, he out there. He going to pick up a few papers with his hand. I said, "Don't pick that paper up with your hand like that. Take that rake and rake that yard. Take your shovel and take up that dirt." I said, "You don't put your hand down in that dirt. That white man ain't going to put his hand down in that dirt." He's going to stick his hands up there and pick up a few papers from around the edge. He will leave the rest of it there. See, these men are supposed to be over them and see that they do the job

right. This is what our kids today need. Not so much that they go downtown and get the welfare check. There should be somebody down there with. . . just handing out jobs when they come down there for them welfare checks.

Wright: Do you think there is enough work, there are enough jobs?

Arnold: I've always found in my young life and I find it today with a lot of young people. If they want to work, they find something to do.

Wright: Are many of the jobs that you had, did you, were you a member of a union? Did you have to. . . .

Arnold: Yes, when I was at Celanese I was a member of the United Mine Workers.

Wright: Were you active in the union?

Arnold: Yup. I was active in the union. They'd call a meeting and I was right there.

Wright: You attended the meetings?

Arnold: I attended the meetings regularly and strike when the rest of them strike.

Wright: Were there strikes?

Arnold: The first time I was at Celanese and they struck about 3 weeks after I got the job down there. I didn't know nothing about no strikes. I worked every day. They was out there on the strike on the picket line. When I knew it it was all over. But then I was cleaning the toilets. They didn't bother me. But the next time they struck, I was right out there with them.

Wright: Were you ever an official in the union?

Arnold: No, I wasn't none of the officials but I was in with the officials? You understand? It was like this. I was the first black woman to work down there and one of them kind of things. And for that alone it carried some

weight. I mean, they would talk to me about, you know, what's going on with you all. And you know, these kind of things. You understand what I mean? They would come to me. They never appointed me officially nothing. But still and all, my word of mouth was something. They'd talk to me.

Wright: I'm curious about this strike. What was the strike about?

Arnold: We struck for more money. We struck during the war.

Wright: During the war?

Arnold: During the war. Celanese struck during the war.

Wright: What year was this?

Arnold: This was in '44? '44 or '43. But they struck during the war.

Wright: How long did the strike last?

Arnold: They were out for 3 weeks. Pulled that factory out, honey. Yes, they did. And stayed out till they got more money. And they got more money and we all went back to work.

Wright: By that time were there many other. . . .

Arnold: Many colored was working there.

Wright: At that time?

Arnold: Yeah. At that time many colored.

Wright: They were all in the union?

Arnold: Well, mostly all of them did, had joined the union because when they struck, they all was out. Pulled the whole factory out.

Wright: Any sort of violence or anything?

Arnold: No, no. They just struck, picket and stayed out till they got what. . . I walked the picket line. I walked the picket line here in '77. The Springfield Avenue Community School. We struck up there. And I was right out there with them.

Wright: This is another union experience?

Arnold: Yes. Well, that wasn't a union. But we struck. We pulled that school out. Springfield Avenue Community School. Just before I left there, a year before I left there. We pulled it out.

Wright: What was the

Arnold: The grievances? The grievances was that for me being a teacher, I was teaching the babies. They youngest kids in there. I got them when they came in. And the children were supposed. . . First place, the children were supposed to be 2 years old and toilet trained when they came into that school. And it had gotten to be that it was all over town. "You want your baby toilet trained, get it in Springfield Avenue Community School. And the school toilet trains your baby." And all I had. . . They were putting them in there, year old kids--year old babies. They were too young for the situation. Things change like everything else. And there was quite a few grievances with the conditions and we struck.

Wright: So, you didn't have a union? (laughs) You went on strike anyway.

Arnold: We had Joyce Carter. Joyce Carter was our director up there then and we wanted her out. And we wanted that contract read to us so we could pin-point things that was going down. Cause I knowed they was giving me babies wasn't 2 years old. And I knew about it. But then when we struck, that's one thing that was on the agenda--them babies coming in there. They had women, your friends, you put your baby in there. The baby ain't quite a crawling baby, crawling around on the floor up there in school. And see I had been going to school and studying. I didn't take that job to teach those children and tell them that I could teach those children without it. When I first went up there my doctors, my nurses,

my daughter that's a nurse, people I knew in the business, teachers in high school. . . I talked to a many people about teaching little children. Anybody I knew that knew. Pediatricians, I went to them and talked to them to learn about the little children so that I would know what I was doing. I studied pediatrics and geriatrics down at Lyons Institution. I can tell you just about what could go could go down with your child till it gets 5 years old. Any kind of way, any situation. I could tell you just about, if a baby cry, I know why he's crying. I'd tell you such a thing wrong with that baby and 9 times out of 10 that would be what would be wrong with it. And I would know. But I studied all the time I was teaching those kids I steady studying. I was, in fact, I think I was the only one up there when I left. There was maybe 1 or 2 women that had been there that was getting their certification. I was certified. I'm a certified early childhood teacher.

Wright: That was the final job you had?

Arnold: Yeah, that's the last job that I did.

Wright: When did that job end?

Arnold: That job ended and I retired in 1978. That's when I retired. They gave me a gold wrist watch.

Wright: This is the Center?

Arnold: The Center. Springfield Avenue Community School. I was the first teacher in that school.

Wright: You mentioned you husband several times. Let me ask you something now about your marriage.

Arnold: Well, I was married a pretty good while. I had the 3 children.

Wright: Where did you meet your husband?

Arnold: I met him right here in Newark.

Wright: Where's you husband from?

Arnold: He's from Georgia. His mother had moved up this way. She moved into New York. And he was over here with some young people and I met him over here in Newark. Then he had a first cousin living here in Newark and he moved over here and was living with his cousin and them over here. And on Sterling Street. And kept on going, me and him got married.

Wright: Did you know each other long?

Arnold: We got married in 1932. We knew each other about 6 months and we got married.

Wright: So, you married in 1932? During the Depression?

Arnold: Yeah, right during the Depression.

Wright: What was your husband's name?

Arnold: Joseph Arnold. And we separated in '43. And I got my divorce in '44. Cause, well, I put it this way. He was young and I was young and he was working for the Army Air Force. I mean that's the first time he really got a decent job. And you know, a young man got a decent job and he ain't never had a job like this before. Get that money. You know what I mean? You wasn't making no money like you make today but that was big money.

Wright: This was during the war?

Arnold: Yeah, this was during the war. And he started to stay out and come home. Then he want to fight me and one of them kind of things. And I'm like this. If you suppose to be loving me and you hit me, honey, you ain't loving me. Cause I can't see no kind of love like that. And I think it was just a matter of. . . that broke us up. . . was just a matter of we were

young, inexperienced and I find a lot of this today. Young men seem to don't want to go no place. Other words, what I'm talking about is where education is concerned. They don't seem to want to go no place. I know when I was down at Essex County College, it's full of black women down there going to school. You can count the men, you know. We need our black men to go out there and get this education. But they don't. I don't know what it is. And I don't say I had more education at that time than my husband did or one of them kind of things, but I was forever studying. I read a lot and I was forever studying something. I'll sit today and I'll read an encyclopedia where you or some of the younger people, they'll go get one of these magazines and read it. I get just more fun out of sitting and reading an encyclopedia. I'm learning something. I think that is what really broke us up.

Wright: What sort of work was he doing when you met him?

Arnold: When I met him he was working at Whelan's Drug Store in Elizabeth. Right there on the corner of Broad and East Rand Street in Elizabeth. That's where he was working. And that's where he was working when we got married. And he worked there a good while after. Oh, until after I had my third child he was working there. He was working there when I was carrying her. But he lost that job a little after. Well, they closed out. They sent him to another store. They sent him to a store up in South Orange. On South Orange Avenue and that didn't work out. Anyway, that's when he got out of that. Then he knocked around through different little jobs and he was on the WPA and we was on the welfare. You know, and I think all that helped to, you know.

Wright: Affect your relationship?

Arnold: Yeah, affect the relationship. Because I guess, he wouldn't have the money all the time and one of them kind of things. And, you know, I was under the impression, like my mother always told me, you do what your husband want you to do. I said back in them days young women did too figure, "Well, a man is supposed to go out and work and you stay home and take care of the kids." You know. But I was doing house work and trying to make it and he was scuffling. You know what I mean?

Wright: So, you weren't working. . . from the time that you married you didn't work after?

Arnold: When I married I did housework. Whatever I could do.

Wright: When you say housework, do you mean with your own house or for

Arnold: No, outside. I went out and did housework. Until I went into Celanese.

Wright: So, in between having your children. . . .

Arnold: In between having my children I did housework. Working for somebody here for a while and somebody else. Like that until, you know. Try to keep things going. Because we did get married right during the Depression. And you had to do every little thing, you know, to try to make ends meet. Women used to do housework and live around. Well, I get you a day's work and I go do that days work. Make that little change and help out. I never was a lazy person but I always wanted, I always wanted more in my brains. I wanted to know more.

Wright: So, then your husband was working for Whelan's Drug?

Arnold: With Whelan's Drug. He left Whelan's Drug and he knocked around with the WPA a while and this and that and the other, you know. Little things like that until he. . . When I went to Celanese, just before I went Celanese, I think he got his job down at Port Newark.

Wright: Do you remember the year that you went to Celanese?

Arnold: Celanese. I went to Celanese in '42.

Wright: So, a little bit before that?

Arnold: A little bit before that, cause the war had just started and I went to Celanese in May and he went to Army Air Force. He got a job at the Army Air Force driving a 60 foot trailer in the same year. But he went to work in April and I went to work in May.

Wright: And made considerably more than he had?

Arnold: Oh well. Hey, Army Air Force. You working for. . . If you had a job down there to Port Newark working for the Army Air Force, you were a big deal. And he started to going out and drinking and too, you know, partying and whatever. It was just one of them things. I just say, always said that that is what, you know, some things to lead up to our breaking up.

Wright: The children remained. . . .

Arnold: The children I kept when I got my divorce; I kept my children with me. I got a divorce because I didn't want to be married and not married. So, I never married again but I didn't want that kind of life for myself. And I saved up my money and went into court and got my divorce. Like I see women and they be married and they be running back if something happen to the man and they running back to the man, something happen to them. Then I felt that I was a head of a family. And I had myself quite heavily insured. Because I had my kids and they were young. And I had myself heavily insured because I always felt that if something happened to me they would at least have enough that would take care of them until they got out of school. You understand? And I had that insurance with the

Metropolitan. I had it set up that way so that until they got of age they would be, they could go to school until they got old enough. At least one of them got old enough to take care of the rest. You know, to see one of the through. But I saw too much of. . . I didn't want. . . With this insurance. . . what made me divorce my husband is because I didn't want him coming in, stepping in and taking nothing from the kids. And I saw too much with women come in. . . Something happen, the woman die or the man die and the man come in, he the big deal. And he ain't been there, ain't put nothing there. I saw too many kids get robbed that way. You understand?

Wright: I see.

Arnold: And I was insuring that my children didn't get robbed because I set up this insurance for them and made Metropolitan Life Insurance Company their guardian. I had it together. There was no way that they had to worry about nobody out here, whoever took care of them would have gotten so much money for their. . . until, you know, they would have, that trust company would have seen to those kids would have gotten an education.

Wright: What sort of roles did you and your husband play in terms of your family? .
Was he the head of the

Arnold: Well, after we separated and one of them kind of things, of course, even before we separated, when my husband started to mess up and one of those kind of things, I saw. . . I guess I'm a kind of predominate person. Because I saw something had to be done. A family has to have a head and I was that person. And that's the job I took and I handled it. When I took it I handled it. I never went back home crying on my mother and

father's shoulder. Whatever went down with me and my kids was with me and my kids. I handled it to the best of my ability. But like I said, when I went to work for Tom's, I went to work for Tom's working nights for 80 cents an hour. But it was something steady coming in everyday. And for that particular reason. . . .

Wright: This was Tom's Caterers?

Arnold: Tom's Caterers, yeah. I stayed with Tom's and then because of the fact that I had that money coming in every week. And a little bit of money coming in every week will mount up more for you especially when you got little children. In the run of a year it mounts up, it counts up more for you than you got a big job making big money 3 or 4 months out of the year and then the rest of the year you ain't doing nothing. Cause I don't care how much money you make, you going to spend it. You need it. You're poor and you need it and you going to spend it when you get it. That means them other months you ain't got nothing coming in, you ain't going to have nothing to spend. But if you got a little bit coming in all the time then you got something to go on. And that's why I stayed with them so long.

Wright: So you must be a very good cook?

Arnold: As I grandkids say, I can burn. I can cook up some food. But my oldest daughter, she started to cooking when she was 5 years old. She's a good cook. She used to put our little step stool, she used to put it up to the stove and she would try to cook and I would let her.

Wright: So, all your children are Newark born?

Arnold: All of them are Newark born and raised. Although my middle girl, she was born in Elizabeth. Elizabeth General Hospital. But we moved right back to Newark.

Wright: What places have you lived in Newark? I'd like you to tell me about the different places that you lived in Newark and what those particular neighborhoods or communities were like.

Arnold: Like I said when I first came here, I lived on Newton Street. That was predominately Italian.

End Cassette #2, Side #1

Begin Cassette #2, Side #2

Wright: When you came here from South Carolina

Arnold: We lived at 153 Newton Street.

Wright: Before we talk about that, let me ask you a few questions about the trip itself. You came up on the train?

Arnold: We came on the train.

Wright: And you went through Washington?

Arnold: Washington. We had to change trains in Washington to come and get the train and come on up here.

Wright: Did anyone meet you when you got here?

Arnold: Yeah, my uncle met us down to the station and my father. They met us down there at the Penn Station.

Wright: Your uncle was here before?

Arnold: Yeah, my uncle had been up here for years. He'd write my father and tell my father, "If you come up here, I got a job for you." You understand?

Wright: Un-huh.

Arnold: But, you know, my father didn't. . . but everybody had started to come up this way at that time. So, my father hadn't seen his brother for years. Wanted to see his brother. So, they decided, he and Momma to come up here to live, you know. And when we come, Daddy, my uncle lived in 153

Newton Street. He lived on the first floor. So, the landlord was an Italian and he let my father have the second floor. And that's where we come when we come. He already had a place for us.

Wright: So, he provided you with a job and a place to stay?

Arnold: Yeah, and a place for us to stay. And we come on up.

Wright: So, he met you?

Arnold: My father and him met us down the Penn Station. I was so glad to see my daddy that day. Lord, I was so glad to see my daddy.

Wright: And then what happened?

Arnold: That's all I could tell Momma when we was home. I wanted to see my daddy. I was crazy about my daddy and that's all I wanted to do. "Oh, child," she said, "You going to see your daddy soon." She'd tell me. You know. Cause they didn't tell us nothing. Cause they didn't want us to be talking, "When is my daddy coming home?" You understand?

Wright: I see.

Arnold: This is what they want us to be doing. You go out there and the white folks would ask you, "When is your daddy coming home?" "I don't know but I asked my momma and she said he'll be home soon." That was for their benefit. "I hope he hurry up. I waiting for him. My daddy's going to bring me something." You know how little kids is.

Wright: Do you remember anything else about the trip here?

Arnold: Coming up from down south?

Wright: Uh-huh.

Arnold: I know we had plenty to eat in that basket. Lord, that food was so good.

Wright: What sort of food did you have?

Arnold: Oh, the chicken. You know the chicken was in there. Cake, pies, that

basket was just packed with the goodies. And we was eating it too. When we got here that basket was empty. Cause when we had to lay over a little while in Washington till the other train pulled out, well, you know, we ate then. Get us some water.

Wright: So, you came into Newark, met by your uncle and your father?

Arnold: And my father.

Wright: And then they took you out to where they both were living?

Arnold: Yeah. They brought us up here to Newton Street in Newark. Right across the street from the school.

Wright: You took a taxi or. . . .

Arnold: No, we got the trolley car. That's what they had then here--trolley cars. And, oh Lord! To come up South Orange Avenue on that trolley car, good Lord, I was in. . . Never rode on. . . Never even seen a trolley before. What is this? My uncle and them brought us out there and put us on that thing. Oh Lord. "What! We can ride like that?" This was just too much. Just fascinated. And we had to get off. We weren't too far from where the trolley went up South Orange Avenue. We lived right there. We used to stand out and watch that trolley car every day going up South Orange Avenue and coming back down, going back up.

Wright: So, this is your first impression?

Arnold: Yeah, this is amazing. It was just something else. Of course, then you didn't have electric lights like you do now in the city. But you had gas lights in Newark. Lot of gas lights was in Newark then. When the lights come on in the night time, that was another thing. The streets lit up. Never seen nothing like that. We had never seen nothing like that. Of course, down there when the sun went down, it got dark. And it gets

dark down there now when the sun goes down. Because I just come back from South Carolina a couple of weeks ago. I was down there to see my. . . .

Wright: At your home?

Arnold: No, a different part. But I was about 40 miles from my home. But I was down there. And when it's dark down there it dark down there with the lights on.

Wright: So, you came out to Newton Street?

Arnold: Newton Street School. I went to school.

Wright: What sort of house was this that you and your uncle

Arnold: This was just a little two-family house. They was mostly in that neighborhood was little, you know, little two family houses.

Wright: Row houses?

Arnold: Yeah, little houses. You know, up there around Newton Street. Up in that neck of the woods.

Wright: It was predominately Italian?

Arnold: Italian, that's right. That's back in the days when if you was black you didn't go up 14th Avenue in the night. I can remember. You did not go on 14th Avenue. Not at night. You didn't go up there. The Italians would get you.

Wright: They would?

Arnold: That's right, they would. You weren't allowed up there at night. And you didn't go up there. And that went on for years. Until I beat up a couple of them up there and sap them up good and then they took me under their wing and I started going to church with them then. That was a good deal for me. But a colored man walking through up there in the night. He didn't do it.

Wright: So, you got along quite well with the kids?

Arnold: I always got along quite well, it seems, with anybody in my life. Because I'm going to tell you the truth. I know I'm black and I don't even, I ain't never denied that. One of them kind of things. But I think I got along with white people just as good as I did colored people because I think white people just didn't know what nationality I was. Because when I was younger, if you notice now, I have small eyes. And, of course, my hair ain't so hot now cause I don't take care of it. But my hair is real long. And I used to just comb my hair out and wear it real long. Just hanging. And I got very small slanty eyes. And they didn't know what I was. Cause I've had many white people in my day. And see, then I come from down south and if I get upset or mad or angry about something, honey, all that South Carolina Geechee come up. Even today. And for that reason they thought I was speaking a different tongue. You understand? They thought I was speaking a foreign language.

Wright: Where is North, South Carolina located?

Arnold: It's about. . . .

Wright: Are close to the Gullah Islands?

Arnold: It's about 90 miles from Columbia. Out of Columbia going south.

Wright: But is it towards the coast?

Arnold: No.

Wright: How far are you from. . . You mentioned Geechee. . . .

Arnold: Well, I said Geechee because, quiet as it kept, one of them kind of things, if I get mad even today, all that Geechee come out. I say Geechee because that's what I always said that was the tongue I was speaking. You understand? I just say that.

Wright: I see. Your just using it in that sense?

Arnold: Yeah, I'm just using it in that sense. That South Carolina will come right to the top, honey. It will come right to the top. And then white folks could never understand. They never could understand it. They never could understand that and they never could understand my features. They didn't know.

Wright: Let me make certain I'm clear. When you. . . You would speak in a different way?

Arnold: Yeah. I can speak good English. But if I get angry or I get upset about something , honey, all that South Carolina Geechee come right to the top. I get my tongue tied up and you don't know what I'm saying. And that has always went down with me. And I think for that particular reason people didn't. . . they couldn't understand it. Cause I had too many white people in my younger days ask me what race I was. That's why I say that I think they just didn't particularly know what nationality I was. I used to tell a lot of them I'm French and kill myself laughing. You know what I mean? I just tell them that. Playing, you know how young people is. Not that I meant it or anything like that. Just be playing and I'd tell them that. But. . . After we got. . . We stayed on Newton Street a long time. Till after I graduated that school.

Wright: You stayed at that particular

Arnold: Right at that address.

Wright: Was you uncle renting?

Arnold: Yeah, we was renting. We were all renting, yeah. The landlord lived right next door. And he had a three family house.

Wright: Do you have any idea what the rent was?

Arnold: No. I was a child. I didn't deal into that. All I know, I had a place to sleep and something to eat; I was happy. And I could go to school.

Wright: This house was quite different from what you had. . . .

Arnold: And the school, and that school building across the street from me, oh, that fascinated me. The big red school building.

Wright: You'd never seen a school that large?

Arnold: I'd never seen a school that big.

Wright: What about the size of the house and the shape and structure of the house?

Arnold: I didn't particularly like the house. Because see, home, I was used to plenty of room, a big yard to play in. There was no yard, big yard to play in, plenty of green grass and stuff like that. I wasn't used to that. But what fascinated me was that big school house across the street. I wanted to go to that school.

Wright: And ultimately you did go?

Arnold: That's right. Honey, when I seen that big red school house, I had to go to that school, honey. I was just fascinated with that school. Newton Street School.

Wright: So, you went on there and

Arnold: I went on there and graduated and got out of there. I walked over about a year.

Wright: You were still living on Newton Street?

Arnold: No. My mother moved to Vicar Street.

Wright: Before you finished?

Arnold: No. After I had finished, she moved to Vicar Street. And then after Vicar Street, we moved to 13th Avenue. And I got married from 13th Avenue. And then, you know, I moved.

Wright: What were these communities like?

Arnold: They were. . . Well, I'll tell you when we moved to Vicar Street there was some whites in the neighborhood but. . . Mostly whites in the neighborhood. But we had a few black families down there. And when I moved up to 13th Avenue, that was mostly white. Most of Newark up until after the war when the white people started to moving out, most of Newark was predominately white. But you know there was some . . . This was just like anything else. If the colored moves in the neighborhood, all the whites moved out. You know, this kind of thing. Even right here. I know when I first moved here on that side of the street over there was all white. It wasn't like this. The colored had this side over here and you stayed over here on your side. And the whites had that over there. You stayed over there. And this is a government project. That's the way it was. This was just, it was back when Reverend Hayes was at Bethany Baptist Church. That's when they broke it up. He was on the Board of Housing and he said for federal monies, he fought that. For federal monies to be spent, then white and colored should live in the place together. Not no separation. And that's when they broke that up. Reverend Hayes broke that up. He fought that thing because he was on the Board of Housing and he fought that thing and he got that bill passed. If it's federal money in housing, federal money go down in there, then you got to rent it to everybody. You can't make no separation. That's when they broke it up here. That's when the white people. . . That was after the war. That is when the white people decided they was going to move out. Rather than to live over here with us, they moved from over there.

Wright: Where were you living now when you got married?

Arnold: I was living in 193 13th Avenue when I got married.

Wright: What ethnic groups were in these last places you lived before you got married? You started off living in a predominately

Arnold: Well, I'll tell you. Like I said most places where I lived back in them days in Newark, it wasn't like here's an ethnic group here and here's an ethnic group here. You understand? It wasn't like that. White people, they was mostly all white in Newark. I don't care where you moved. Like I said. When we moved to Newton Street, there was a building across the street from us. A three-story building. Three families in that building, they were colored. The man had the store on the first floor and he had just started to renting them buildings to colored. And Hampton Street, quite a few colored people from the 13th Avenue Church had bought up there. And that made that a little colored community. But most of the people was Italians, Irish, Polands and people like that. Most of them.

Wright: This was true of all. . . .

Arnold: This was all through the city, all through the city. Like right in here where we are, until they tore these buildings down and built Baxter Terrace in here, there was a lot of black people living in here. But this was predominately Italian. Cause this used to be the North Ward. This here used to be the North Ward. Now they say make it all, everything across the bridge, make it all the . . . the North Ward don't want to be. . . there's too many blacks in here. They don't want to be bothered. Make it all the Central Ward; let North Ward be back there. That's what broke that up. That just happened here in the last 20 or 25 years. This here used to be the North Ward. When I first moved in here I moved in the North Ward.

Wright: Once you got married where did you live?

Arnold: Once I got married I lived on Sterling Street for a while. We had a couple of rooms there. And I moved from there to 13th Avenue, in a room and I stayed there a while. I stayed there till I got me a bedroom, living room and use of the kitchen with the lady on Howard Street. That's where I went housekeeping. That was in '33. That was before my first child was born. My first child, after she was born I moved up 193 13th Avenue over my mother. My mother was still living there and I got the apartment up over her and a friend moved in there with us to help us pay the bill. But they didn't stay there long and they moved out and left us. And we were young and trying to make it. And my husband had to commute from Elizabeth here. So, we moved to Elizabeth. And that's where my second child was born there. I was carrying her when I moved out there. And Dr. Brown was my doctor out there. I had her in Elizabeth General Hospital out there. And I got a job working in Chico's, a white beauty parlor. Up by the drug store on East Grand Street. And I worked there until, let's see, 2 months before I had my baby girl. But when I left that job I moved back to Newark. That's the only time I was out of Newark. Cause I said I would never live where I couldn't walk where my mother was. And see, I used to get out, even from here and walk. When my mother was living and I'd walk to Morris Avenue--210 Morris Avenue, I'd walk over there to see my mother. And I stayed in Newark then.

Wright: So, you haven't moved out of Newark since that time?

Arnold: No. I haven't moved out of Newark since. I've been out of Newark. I've traveled after my kids got up and what not. I traveled a lot. Went on trips. I've been all out west, you know, and around. One of these kind of

things. But I worked hard. When I was with Tom's, I used to be on 24 hour call. And something went wrong and one of them kind of things, they would call me. I used to come home with 5 and 6 thousand dollars of that man's money. And then call him up to come and get it. After I get home I found out I had it around me here. And then I'd call up and tell him to come and get it. Because I would have it and then I'd be scared, you know, that I got it. Scared to go back. And Joey, which is his younger brother, he'd come up and pick it up and take it to the bank. People used to come down there and pay off on catering jobs. And there wouldn't be anybody down there in the night but me. And I'd be in there and I'd take the money. And then I'd put that money on me. And I'd go on and do my work. I'd get off the next morning, I'm tired, I'd be getting home. And when I come here and start to bathe, you know, shower to lay down and I'd find I had that money. I'd call Joey up and he'd come and get that money. He was the youngest brother. He'd come and pick it up. I wouldn't give it to nobody else. He would take it to the bank. I did that a lot of times when I was on 24 hour call. If something come up or one of them kind of things, they'd call me. I'd go back and go to work. They didn't have to worry. If they got stuck and got. . . they didn't have to worry about somebody because they know I'd come. They'd come and pick me up and I'd go to work.

Wright: So, now when did you move to Baxter Terrace?

Arnold: Baxter Terrace? May 20, 1941. Just before the war broke out. The war broke out that December.

Wright: So, you are saying that you had moved back to your mother's?

Arnold: I never moved back to my mother's to live after I married.

Wright: No, but you moved to the same house?

Arnold: Oh. That's when I left, when I got married and I had lived down on Howard Street and I took, I had 2 rooms and the use of the kitchen. And then I moved up there because then I had 4 rooms.

Wright: Same building?

Arnold: Yeah, same building. I had 4 rooms and I had my own kitchen.

Wright: Where did you move. . . .

Arnold: And when I moved from there I left there and I went to Elizabeth.

Wright: I see.

Arnold: When I moved back from Elizabeth, I moved 51 Lankin Street in 4 rooms. And when I moved out of 51 Lankin Street, I moved to Lafayette Street. Right on this side of the brewery. I lived down there about 6 or 7 months. I didn't like it down there. Wasn't too many colored people down there when I was down there. But I didn't like it down there because from that brewery there was big rats. Rats used to come up in the yard and fight the cats. Big tom cats. Run them tom cats out that yard. They were big rats. A lady down the street. . . See, my baby was very young then and a lady right down the street and she had twins. A rat got in the bed with them twins and ate their ears off. You know, chewed them off. And I used to sit up nights. I couldn't sleep because I'd sit up and watch my kids, you know. All night I'd sit up and watch my kids. So, we moved from there and we moved up on West Street. Now, West Street that was, cause that. . . Bloom Street was around the corner and it was pretty much predominately black people living up there. And then I moved from there and I moved up to 328 Morris Avenue. That was a black neighborhood. Newark then was starting to separate. You know what I mean. Like the

blacks started to come in here and you move out and go over there. You understand. That's when they started to separate themselves.

Wright: This was around like the late '30s early '40s?

Arnold: Yeah. Late '30s early '40s. This is in the '40s. And when I left 328 Morris Avenue I moved here. I moved to 141 and raised my kids there. And when my kids started to leaving home and my baby got married, and one of them kind of things, I moved right here and been here ever since. And my baby has been married, I guess, about 23 or 24 years. My oldest girl, her next birthday she'll be 50. I've been here a long time.

Wright: I want to ask you a little bit, something about your parents. Tell me about. . . It's a large family, right? You were saying you had 9 children?

Arnold: My mother had 9 children living right here in Newark. Up until this year. Buried one of my brothers, the first Monday in this year.

Wright: Are most of your relatives here?

Arnold: All the relatives are right here.

Wright: They are all here? None of them left Newark?

Arnold: One sister, she went back down south. And she settled right out from Columbia. Blythewood, South Carolina. She settled out there. But she got a good deal. She got this, this lady wanted somebody on the place, to work the place. And she's down there working that lady's place for her. Otherwise she'd be here too. But she raises dogs. She raises Samoan huskies. Otherwise all of us is right here.

Wright: Some of you were born here. I think you said 5?

Arnold: Five. . . My mother came up. . . Five of us was born down south and 4 born here.

Wright: And all of you raised here?

Arnold: All raised here.

Wright: So, you're early Newarkites?

Arnold: Yeah. All raised here. All my kids and all my daddy's grandchildren and great-grandchildren were all born right here and around Newark. I mean, he ain't got none off no place. All his grandchildren are right here in Newark.

Wright: Both of your parents died here?

Arnold: Yeah, both of them died here. They're up in Woodlawn Cemetery.

Wright: Your father died first?

Arnold: My father died. . . No, my mother died about. . . My mother has been dead about 20 years. Close to 20. Not quite 20 but close to 20. About 18 years she's been dead. She died when I was 50. I'll be 68 in December. My daddy just died in 78. My daddy, he didn't die from sickness or nothing. My daddy was just too old. He got too old.

Wright: How old was he?

Arnold: My daddy was liking 5 months from being 100 years old. Liking 5 months. And we were counting on them 5 months. You know we was doing everything to try to keep him. We gave a birthday party when he was 98 years old. Because we knew we couldn't keep him forever. And he was 98 years and he and Joy. . . there's pictures around someplace. Him dancing with his great-grandchildren.

Wright: He lived to be nearly 100?

Arnold: Oh, honey. He had a party that night.

Wright: What sort of man was your father?

Arnold: He was just a little black man.

Wright: You liked your father?

Arnold: I loved my father. I loved my mother too but. . . Oh, Lord. Like I said. When we was down south and my mother would always tell us, "Your daddy coming home." Oh, Lord. I guess she got sick of me asking. "When is my daddy coming home?" That did bother me. And Lord I was so glad when we got to Penn Station. When she said, "Well, we're here now." I couldn't see nothing. I didn't see the station. Cause I was looking for my daddy. I wasn't studying about that station. I was looking for my daddy.

Wright: Was your father the sort of strong person in the family?

Arnold: Well, my mother was a strong family head. You know what I mean?

Wright: Who made most of the key decisions?

Arnold: They made them together. Especially where we was concerned. It wasn't nothing for her to say, "Alright now. I'll have to tell Eddie about so and so when he come in." You know, if she had any trouble with any of us and mentioned Daddy. I mean, you know, it just wasn't no problem, you know. We just knew better than to. . . See, my daddy never beat us or nothing so much. . . But see honey, "Now, didn't I tell you? I told you boy or girl. Didn't I tell you now I don't you to be doing so and so. You don't be giving your momma no hard time or no lip. I know I have to just get on you." But if he got on one he was on him. You better believe it. But he didn't do that too often. Once in a while he'd have to. . . My oldest brother, he had to tightened him up all the time. Lord, my oldest brother used to get into some things.

Wright: Where were you among the children?

Arnold: I'm the oldest.

Wright: You are the oldest?

Arnold: I am the oldest. That's how come I can know how the history of our people was passed down because I'm the oldest.

Wright: I see.

Arnold: My daughter. . . See, out of all my sisters and brothers having children and one of them kind of things, my daughter gets the history. Because I'm the oldest. I hand it down to her. Now, with her, her son is the youngest of my grandchildren but that history will go down to him.

Wright: I see.

Arnold: You understand?

Wright: I understand.

Arnold: That keeps the history of a family alive.

Wright: Did you have to perform a variety of duties as a child growing up around the house?

Arnold: Well, I had to mind the baby. That was my job when I come out of school. Get the baby and take the baby out. Cause, see with all them kids Momma had to cook. Momma cooked and when we was coming up, what we call white bread--like you say white bread today--we call that light bread. You didn't go to the store and get no loaf of bread. Momma would make that bread, honey. She made that bread. When Momma came here from the South, Momma made that bread. And she was raised. . . .

End Cassette #2, Side #2

Begin Cassette #3, Side #1

Wright: We were talking about your parents and so forth. You were saying that your mother would, used to fix. . . .

Arnold: Yeah, she cooked that bread. She cooked all our food.

Wright: . . . that you didn't know what the store bought bread. . . .

Arnold: The store bought bread was in them days was light bread. And we didn't know. . . I mean, that was a treat for Momma to ever go out there and

get a loaf of bread and we had that kind of bread for a meal. I mean, that was like. . . She'd say, "Go out there and get me a loaf of bread." You could get a loaf of bread then for a nickel. But you get a loaf of bread and you got a big loaf of bread. "And I think I'll make you all some, get some bologna. Make you all a bologna sandwich." She'd give you a quarter, you'd run out there and got the loaf of bread and a pound or so of bologna and you come back and you had change left over. Out of 25 cents. That was a treat. That was like an extra something. Because Momma cooked biscuits and made that corn bread. And once in a while, like Saturday and Sunday she made them hot rolls. Momma made our bread. That's what she did home. And that's what she did when she come up here. She didn't go out and work.

Wright: That's just what I was going to ask. Whether she

Arnold: She didn't go out and work. She was home.

Wright: She took care of you children?

Arnold: She took care of us. She was home with us.

Wright: So, you being the oldest child you were sort of, almost in a sense, a second mother?

Arnold: That's right. The responsibility of minding that baby. Taking them young ones outside. Keeping them on the sidewalk. Or if she said you take them on the porch. Well, we called it the porch--the little stoop. You take them there. That's where you took them. And if she said don't go on the side walk, you didn't go down on that sidewalk. You stayed on that little porch with that child or whoever you was taking out there. And if one run out there in that street. You call Momma and, honey, Momma going to get him. Cause he don't be running out there.

When my mother was having her children, one thing, the health of the child started with the nursing of the baby. Momma nursed her babies. They would tell you, "Don't be feeding that baby that kind of milk, that's no good for him. Nurse that baby." And twice a year Momma would get that molasses and sulfur and she get that spoon and mix up that molasses and sulfur. And you got a dose of that sulfur in the spring of the year and you got one in the fall. When winter time come she would sit down and make them asafetida bags and them camphor bags. Hang them around your neck and you ain't going to catch nothing. I say you ain't going to catch nothing because that's what we wore and we didn't have nothing. We didn't catch nothing. The disease and things like kids get today, you got to be taking them to the doctor for a needles and whatnot. We was never sick. Because twice a year you got that sulfur and molasses to clean you out.

Wright: That was to clean you out?

Arnold: That was to clean you out. You got cleaned out the spring of the year and you got cleaned out in the fall.

Wright: This is sulfur and molasses?

Arnold: Sulfur and molasses.

Wright: And this was a laxative sort of?

Arnold: Whatever it was, that's what we got. If you got sick that dared to be talking about calling the doctor, "We going to give you some castor oil." Ain't going to call no doctor. Going to fix you up with that castor oil. Daddy going to out there and get that orange. Squeeze that orange and get that juice and put that castor oil in it and you would drink it. And when the oil get through with you, whatever wrong with you, you be

alright.} Those are the things that my mother always thought that just took care of everything. There wasn't no spending no money for no doctors. Now like in the winter time. . . .

Wright: All the children were attended by doctors or mid-wives or what?

Arnold: Momma had mid-wives for all her children but the last two. Dr. Bells took care of her with the last two. She had them at home. She wouldn't go to no hospital.

Wright: She had all the children at home?

Arnold: All the children were had at home.

Wright: What about, you were just talking about the taking of sulfur and molasses.

Arnold: Sulfur and molasses in the spring of the year.

Wright: That was even here?

Arnold: Even after she brought us here. That's right. And she put that asafetida and camphor bag around you neck.

Wright: She would put the two of them around together?

Arnold: She made both separate bags, but she put them around your neck.

Wright: So, you would be wearing two bags?

Arnold: ³ You would wear the asafetida year round. But in the winter time she put that camphor bag. You didn't catch no cold. And you didn't catch no cold. Didn't have no cold. I say those things must have done some good?

Wright: How about with your own children?

Arnold: With my children? I took them to the doctor. With my children, even when I worked I took my children to the doctor. My children when they was little, Dr. Henge was their doctor. He was up there on South Orange Avenue. He was their doctor. They were grown when he died.

Wright: You had all of your children in a hospital?

Arnold: I had all my children. . . My youngest child. . . All my children was born in a hospial. I didn't have no mid-wife and stuff like that. That went out by then. You didn't have no children at home. I had my children in a hospital. My mother had her children at home. Even the last two. Cause by then everybody was having them in the hospital but she wouldn't go. And Dr. Bells took care of her. Dr. Bells delivered my baby brother and he told my mother then that she had had. . . That was her 10th child. And he told her that she was good for another 6 or 7 more kids. She said, "I ain't having no more." That was it. Cause then you couldn't hardly get a doctor to deliver a baby at home. See, Dr. Bells was getting old. He died a little after that. He was old then. But he came out and did that for Momma because she wouldn't go to no hospital. There were no mid-wives around. She wouldn't go in no hospital. Had all her babies at home. They believed in nursing them babies. And they give them that molasses and sulfur. Molasses in the spring of the year and the fall of the year. That's to get all the impurities out the body. And they do that. Then if you got sick with a cold or something or you come down with something they give you a dose of castor oil. Put a few drops of turpentine in that castor oil. That's for the aches and pains. They could cure pneumonia with that. And I know Momma used to, if we sniffle, "Ed, this child got a sniffle here. Trying to catch a cold. Bring me that kerosene back there." She'd get that kerosene and drop it on some sugar and you ate that sugar with that kerosene on it and the next morning you got up and went on about your business. Ain't got no cold. "I'd better give this one over here some. He's been trying to catch a cold." You didn't catch nothing. You just didn't catch nothing. But it's like if you study a lot of books like

I have, old books and thing like that. You'll find that a baby that nurses from it's mother, when it's a baby, is immune to most diseases that man has. Nowadays, these kids have everything because they don't nurse them. They say putting them on the bottle is the best way. But, honey, that is. . . Believe me when I tell you, that is a commercial gimmick. That's what that is. Breast milk immunes that child from a lot of things. That's what it does. Now, me, I nursed all my children. And look at me. I didn't get really sick, never seen a really sick day in my life, that I just couldn't go, until January in 1979. I was in college. I was getting my last. . . . That was in '79. Just fell in like a ton of bricks. I was never sick in my life. That's a long time to go and not to be sick no more than having your children, catch a cold. You know, something. . . Nothing to stop me.

Wright: Slow you down.

Arnold: No, nothing. And I've had arthritis since I've been 29 years old. I worked with it. Standing on my feet. Doctor tell me, say, "You a good woman, we couldn't have done it." I went down there last year in Saint Michael's Hospital in October, and I had an operation. I had a major operation. I was operated on one Monday and they sent me home the next Monday. And I went to the doctor two weeks after that operation and I was healed up like I never been cut. The doctor said -- and I got sugar -- and the doctor said he never saw anything like it. He says, "I never saw nothing like this. This I don't want to believe." Just like I never been cut. He said, "Miss Arnold, I don't know what to say. You so healed up. I just don't know what to say. You just healed up completely." But I heals like that. I'm a person with sugar. And I can cut or bruise myself. They

don't make no sore. I just heal right up. He said he never saw nothing like it.

Wright: Do you recall any other remedies?

Arnold: That Momma used. She used. . . it used to get cold in the winter time. "I think I'll make you all a little tea." We wasn't coming down with nothing. But she just wanted to give us a little sassafras tea. She make up a pot of sassafras tea and sweeten it up. We liked that. And all of us would have our litle cup of sassafras tea. "Now, drink up that tea while it's hot now. Cause it's good for you." You didn't need to drink nothing. My kids, all this soda and stuff. You didn't need to drink nothing that wasn't good for you. Sassafras tea was good for you. So she sat down and made a pot and everybody had some sassafras tea one night. Keep the cold out of you. She used it if especially if it get cold outside. That's sassafras tea. I know one time me and my sister got sick and we had fever. Something like diptheria or something. Had a hot fever; running a hot temperature. My mother trying to break the fever and daddy got the doctor to us. "These children are very sick." This fever, he gives us some medicine and one of them kind of things. My mother went out in the woods. My daddy took my mother out in the woods someplace. And she pulled some leaves off a tree. Pulled the leaves off the tree and come back and band them around our head, all around our arms, all over us. She got enough to just band us in, wrap us up in them leaves. When them leaves come off of us, they was like parched. They drawed every bit of the fever out of us. We got up next couple of days and went on about our business. I don't know what kind of leaf that was. But it was a tree leaf. That's what they did for any kind of sickness. They didn't

bother to go to no doctor. There wasn't no doctor. Always find something. After she come up here, we had to start going to the doctor because the things Momma could go out there in the woods and find then and use, up here you couldn't find them. If you go in the park you better not pull a bush out of there. They want to lock you up. But sassafras grows wild down south. My sister go out there in the woods and pick off some sassafras.] Get the root up and what not and dry it out. Ship it up. You know, when I come down there I want some. So, she go out there and get some. That stuff is still there in the South. And them people down there, they go to the doctor. But most of them still very much do like they used to. You understand? They go to doctors and all this, but not like up here. A lot of them go right out there in the woods and get what they need. Especially them older ones. They do it today because I've been down there.

Wright: How did your family celebrate holidays and birthdays?

Arnold: The 4th of July was our big day. Our big day.

Wright: Not Christmas?

Arnold: Christmas, Thanksgiving. Them was our big days. You know, the holidays. But we brought that from the South. Those was our holidays in the South. Christmas, Thanksgiving, New Years, 4th of July. Now, the 1st of May, there'd be a little something around the school. But that's the spring of the year, you know, crops getting up and. . . . But the 4th of July one of them crops getting in, the watermelons are ready. Big day, big day. They had a big barbeque around the school. We did that after we come up here.

Wright: You still?

Arnold: Still 4th of July was a big day.

Wright: What would you normally do on the 4th?

Arnold: Well, after we got up here. . . Well, down south, the 4th you had a barbeque.

Then after we got up here we couldn't have a barbeque. Everybody would get together and have the cookout. Like everybody is cooking out now.

When I see everybody with the cookout now that's where that originated from, in the South. 4th of July, honey, big cookout at the school. Everybody went to the school that day. That's down south when I was little. Everybody went to the school. Maybe my daddy or so many of the men would bring in the meat. Who got the hog or who got the goat.

Wright: You would have goat too? You would eat goat meat?

Arnold: Yes, we would eat goat meat. You never eat goat meat?

Wright: Yes.

Arnold: Delicious.

Wright: Yes, I know. I love it.

Arnold: Who got the cow? Some would bring a cow, some would bring the hog or how many hogs or one big hog or whatever. They had food going and them women would be cooking and baking cakes and pies and stuff like that. They'd be baking about a week each. Cause everybody come. They didn't bring their buggies. They brought their wagons because they be done scrubbed them wagons out and clean them down good. Cause that food would be in there. And everybody would bring food when they come to the school on the 4th of July. Because that's the big barbeque day. Them men would get together, they'd be out there all night. The night before barbequing that meat. And when we get there the next day, honey, that meat would be ready.

Wright: How would they. . . What would be the. . .

Anrold: They would make. . .

Wright: The barbeque. . . .

Arnold: They'd make ice cream.

Wright: I'm saying, how would they barbeque it? What would they use?

Arnold: They'd dig them pits in the ground and the built that fire down there in that ground and take palms and put that meat up on a thing. You know, where they could turn it. Whatever they call them things.

Wright: Spits.

Arnold: Spits. And they'd make them spits. Go out there in the woods and cut them a tree limb or something down and make them spits. And they would have maybe a hog cooking here and maybe the cow was cooking over there and maybe a goat was cooking over there. What ever you want you get there the next day and they kept them spits with that heat. Kept cooking that meat and that meat would keep warm. And this way you go get whatever you want to eat. Get your plate. Go to such and such a wagon over there. "It's some clean plates up there. Get your plate and come." Don't buy no paper plates. One of them kind of things. Got your plate

Wright: What else did you have besides barbeque?

Arnold: You'd have roasted ears, you know, corn. You'd have sweet potatoes. You'd have greens. You'd have vegetables of all kinds. They were all out there. Candied yams, baked yams, watermelon. You'd have all that stuff out there. That would be the time of the year when everybody's stuff was ready. And who got the peas over here and who got the string beans over there and who got the whatever else over here. They'd gather up those vegetables and stuff and cook them. Mothers would be cooking

them up. And the sweets, they would make the cakes and the pies, custards and you name it and they had it there.

Wright: Once you came to Newark, what would happen on the 4th of July?

Arnold: Well, in Newark then the big thing here was to go downtown to Broad Street, to the parade.

Wright: Quite a difference.

Arnold: Yeah, it was quite a difference. No big to-do and one of them kind of things. When I first come to Newark you went downtown for everything for a parade. Parade for the 4th of July. Parade for the 30th of May. And Easter Sunday everybody was parading down Broad Street. Would show off your clothes. And that was the big thing here. You know, these things. You used to see all the parades with everybody all dressed up and prancing. This used to fascinate us, you know. It was all new and everything. So, after a while we got used to it. After you got older, "Who wants to go downtown to a parade." It's one of them things. Like anything else. Parades ain't so popular anymore. Honey, when I first come here, that was the thing. That was the thing. Go downtown to the parade.

Wright: What about Christmas and Easter? How were they celebrated in both places?

Arnold: Well, down south we used to just celebrate Easter, the churches had egg rolls and egg hunts for the children. You know, about like they used to do here. When I first come here, Military Park down there, no Washington Street Park, right down here, that was the big place to go to have the egg hunt. They used to hide the eggs down there. And they take the school kids down there and they'd hunt the eggs. They don't do that no more, you know, like they did. All the eggs you find you could have.

And this was a big thing with us. But that's what they did; the churches had it. The different churches had it.

Wright: Did they have a big feast or something?

Arnold: Easter Sunday you come to church, everybody on the back of the wagon. They had their food because you didn't go back home. And the children would have a program at the church and all of this. And you didn't go back home. Once you come out of the church in the morning you stayed there.

Wright: Normally you would go back?

Arnold: Yeah, normally you would go back.

Wright: You'd just go to church and have the services and go back home?

Arnold: The children would go to Sunday School early in the morning. Like, Momma would be finishing the dinner. Daddy would bring us to Sunday School. Then he'd go back and get Momma and bring her. They'd come to church. That's down south. While we in Sunday School he'd get her. She'd finish dinner and get the baby and come on to church. And then after church you wouldn't stay. You'd go back home for dinner and everything.

Wright: Come back if there was evening services?

Arnold: Yeah, if there was an evening service if you wanted to come back you'd come back. Maybe Daddy would come back to evening service but usually one of them stayed with the kids. They wasn't too much with bringing the kids out.

Wright: When you came here?

Arnold: When Easter or Children's Day or 30th of May, stuff like that. You come that. . . you bring your food because everybody stayed at the church. Cause you'd stay there that afternoon. Afternoon they'd have a service.

And then come the BYPU and you stayed the night service. You'd be there all day. So, you didn't go back home.

Wright: So Easter was celebrated by everyone bringing. . . .

Arnold: Everyone bringing in

Wright: It was like a big meal at the church?

Arnold: That's right, at the church.

Wright: A big dinner?

Arnold: Big dinner and everybody'd have all their layout. "Oh, come over here I got some so and so today." Whatever they'd be eating. You know. Okra, corn and whatever. Everybody shared. There wasn't no I'm over here with my lunch and I'll stay here with my food. Ain't none of that.

Wright: So, everyone came and they put the things out on the table?

Arnold: Put the food out there. "Go to my wagon. I got some good. . ." And we children playing around. We got fed. Wasn't necessary that I had to be fed at my mother's wagon. Understand? I was over there playing with sister so and so's children. "Come on here child and get you a plate." You understand?

Wright: I see.

Arnold: Whatever children, if some children was over by my wagon playing with me, my mother fed them just like she fed me and fed us. Wasn't no you over here. . . You know, like people today. . . "This is mine and I'm keeping mine over here." None of that. It's everybody's. Everybody enjoys. And then you go back into the afternoon meeting, the afternoon meeting over, well you done eat that big dinner. This about 4 or 5 o'clock we'd be out in the yard, out on the church grounds, talking and one of them kind of things. And, "Yeah, well I made such and such kind of cake last night

I brought with me today. Come over and have a piece with me." And them people drank milk then. They drank milk, they drank ice tea.

Wright: Lemonade?

Arnold: Lemonade and stuff like that. Everything belonged to everybody.

Wright: What about how you celebrated Easter in Newark?

Arnold: Well, Easter here you got dressed up in your fine clothes and you went to church. I went to Bethany to show off fine things and then I went back home to eat. That was the big thing. Then Momma used to have us, after I got grown, my kids, I used to dress them up and take them to church and then we'd go to Grandmamma's and she'd have a big dinner. And have all her kids, all her grandkids. This was the big thing. That went on for years. And then my kids started to get up and I started having the big dinner. And then I stopped having the big dinner. I passed it on to my children. What they do now, they have the big dinner and the grandkids come and get me. They have the big dinner. You understand? But the big dinner is still in the family. Now my baby girl last year, her family, when she come and got me. Her kids come and got me. She had the big dinner. She had the big dinner at her house Thanksgiving and Christmas. This is the way they do it now because, see, now I've gotten old. And I can't do all that cooking. Course I cooks, you know. I help them cook the dinner. Somethings I make for them like cakes, pies and stuff like that. I'll make up for one of them kind of things. But the big dinner still goes on in this family. I don't do it no more. My mother handed it down to me when we started it, my sister and brothers with the big dinner. And then we done got old. Too old for it and one of them kind of things. We handed it down to our kids. They make the big dinner.

Wright: What about Christmas?

Arnold: Christmas is the same thing. It's the big dinner. Some of the grandkids will come here and get me and take me where the big dinner is. And I'll have my big dinner. They they will take me in the car and take me around to see the rest of them. And one of them kind of things. And I'll come on back home. But they have a big dinner.

Wright: When you were growing up, how was Christmas celebrated?

Arnold: Christmas was always. . . Like I said, Momma always made a big dinner. Even when we was coming up. Christmas that was the big dinner.

Wright: So, that day was more of a family. . . It wasn't too much of going to church?

Arnold: No, no. It wasn't so much go to the church. Especially after we come up here. Because the traveling wasn't the same. And my mother didn't like to get out there to travel like that. She went to church. But my mother like she belonged to. . . she lived up on 13th Avenue. . . She used to get out and walk down to High and 13th Avenue to church. That's where she belonged to the church, Saint John's over there. And she used to walk down there. As long as she. . . Rather than to come out and take the bus to go down there, she'd walk down there. But this goes back from when, you know, "Go to church on my own," and she'd walk down there. When she got sick and then she couldn't go down there no more. My mother was sick about 15 to 18 years before she died. She couldn't go down there. Because she didn't bother because she didn't want to be catching no bus and one of them kind of things. She used to walk down there with the grandchildren that would be over there around her. She'd walk down there to the church. Take them to Sunday School and stay to service.

That's what she used to do. But that was before. . . That was her way. Like me, I take them to church and I go out there and catch me a bus. You know. She walked to church.

Wright: Do you have any heirlooms or anything that's been passed down from your mother's generation or grandmother's generation to you?

Arnold: No. Cause most of the things my. . . we had to leave them in the South when we left from down there. Because you couldn't bring them. You know. We had to get out. Because even at that my mother had to get somebody to bring our trunk to Columbia the night before. And she had to pick it up when she got in Columbia.

Wright: Let me go back to the celebration of particular days, birthdays, were they celebrated that much?

Arnold: Birthdays, my Momma always made us a cake. She had a lot of kids. But we wasn't so much to get ice cream. But Daddy would always try to get some ice cream for each one of us birthday. Because we could have a party within ourselves. Nine kids. We didn't need no outside kids. Especially during them days. Thank the Lord.

Wright: But there was an importance attached to the birthday?

Arnold: Oh, yeah. Everybody knows it's a birthday because you would come in and see that cake, you know it was somebody in the family. If she make a cake during the week, you'd know it was somebody's birthday. Because she'd make a cake on Sunday. She'd make it Saturday for Sunday. My mother was good for cooking on Saturday for Sunday. Not too much for cooking on Sunday. That come from down south. Cause they cook. . . .

End Cassette #3, Side #1

Begin Cassette #3, Side #2

Wright: You were saying that in the South that they would cook on Saturday?

Arnold: Yeah, they would cook up on Saturday. My mother cooked breakfast on Sunday mornings. Sunday morning she'd get up and make breakfast. But that dinner, that dinner is just about ready. And when she come in from church and everything to heat up everything, that heating up would finish out that dinner. And there wasn't too much cooking on Sunday. They didn't believe in that. That's the Lord's day.

Wright: Ironing?

Arnold: You didn't do that on Sunday, no. You didn't sew on Sunday. If your dress had a rip in it and you didn't find that rip on Saturday and fix it, if you want to wear it Sunday, you didn't wear that, you wear something else. Cause you ain't getting no needle and thread and sewing nothing on no Sunday. You didn't cook, you didn't do no sewing, you didn't wash nothing, you didn't iron nothing and you didn't clean no house. You clean that house on Saturday. You clean all around that yard. One of them kind of things. My Daddy would go out and feed the stock on Sunday and give them fresh water but that's all. There ain't no getting out there doing no work. The horse and the mule, they just stayed in the yard.

Wright: What about once you came to Newark, how were Sundays treated?

Arnold: Sunday, when we first came to Newark, like I said, we didn't know where the churches was. My mother didn't know how to get around here and one of them kind of things. She didn't particularly put any stock in trying to find out right away. Because first thing it soon turned winter, turned cold and we wasn't used to the cold. Wasn't used to no ice and snow like that. That took its toll. We was here about a year or year and a half before she started to look around to see about churches and get herself into church and what not. One of them kind of things.

Wright: During this period were you more inclined to do certain things on Sunday that you hadn't done in the South?

Arnold: No.

Wright: That still was observed?

Arnold: That still was observed. It did not matter that you didn't get to church on Sunday. Cause Momma tell you. "You can worship the Lord anytime." And what you didn't do on the Lord's day you just didn't do it on the Lord's day. That's all there is to it. And Sunday was the Lord's day. And there were certain things you just did not do.

Wright: Since we're talking a little about the church and so forth, you mentioned the fact that you were, I guess, born in the Baptist church?

Arnold: Yes, yes.

Wright: But you ultimately were converted to Catholicism?

Arnold: Uh-huh.

Wright: Anything you'd like to say about what interested you in the Catholic church?

Arnold: I like. . . I'm not knocking religion. Because I believe everybody do and go to church for their own self. But what I find in the Catholic church that I didn't find in the Baptist church is this. As long as I was clean and I didn't go there dirty and one of them kind of things, if I was sick. . . . I'm not trying to knock no religion. But go to the Baptist church, if you can't come in there on Sunday morning looking better than Miss so and so, you ain't nobody. And the Catholic churches don't care who you is, what you got on and where you come from. It's like you in God's house. That's his mansion. And that's what made me go into the Catholic church. I don't want you looking at, when I go to church, you looking at the dress

I got on. Or the shoes I got on my feet. Or what kind of hat I wore. You understand. I'm not interested in that. I go there to pray. To go in God's house. And that's what you get in the Baptist church. The Baptist church, especially Bethany, honey. If you couldn't come there looking better than Miss so and so, you was nobody. I know one Sunday I just put on my plain clothes, my plain clothes. You know, wash dress like this. And I went to church. And them brothers and sisters in the church didn't hardly know who I was. And the next Sunday. . . And you know, I did this for a purpose. And the next Sunday--I was a young woman--I got dressed. I really got dressed. And I went to church. The same church at the same time. And everybody in church knew me. You understand?

Wright: Uh-huh.

Arnold: This is the kind of thing that made me leave that church. I wasn't into that. I don't go to church for that. I go down here to Saint Patrick's. I can go down there anytime. I can go down there now. And go in that church and pray. I don't have to just wait till Sunday to go. That church is open right now. And you can go in there and pray. They have gotten so they lock the church up. But now they take and watch it a little bit closer. Because we had a few priests to get beat up down there and robbed. Right here in Newark. And believe me I don't have. . . they got relics. They got candelabras in that church standing tall as me. Solid gold. That stuff don't belong to nobody. That belongs to the church. And to ensure that that stuff stay there, they keep that church locked more than what they used to. See, those things are very, very valuable. That's why they lock that church, started locking that church. They used didn't never lock that church. Catholic church used to be open 24 hours

a day, all the time. Stayed open. Doors of the church stayed open. You could stop in there and go in there and pray anytime you felt like it.

Sometime you do feel like going into your church and praying.

Wright: Are there many black parishioners there?

Arnold: That's all down there now is blacks and Puerto Ricans.

Wright: Initially, when you first. . . .

Arnold: When I first went there? No. Was mostly white people in there when I first went down there. I've been down there about 20 years. Was mostly white people in there. But I didn't find no sleighting of hand or, you know, because I was black or anything like that. "Come on in. You're one of us." This is the feeling you got. "Just come on in, you're one of us. We don't care that your shoes ain't shiny or you got a rag tied around your head. You're one of us." And that's what made me go into the Catholic church. I went on in. Because I always liked it from when I first came up here and it was at Saint Rocco's. And I used to go to Saint Rocco's. I liked that feeling about the church. You feel more like you're in God's house than you do when you got to go in the church and you got to be worried about if the seam on your stocking is straight and stuff like that. You're going in God's house to pray to him. You don't be going to God's house. . . . You're so vain you got to be worrying about the stocking seam and all kind of crap like that. I didn't like that part of the church. That's the part of the church I didn't like. But otherwise it was alright. Religious wise it was alright. Just I didn't like that part of the church. And I got out of it.

Wright: Politics. Have you been active politically?

Arnold: Yes, I used to be very political. And I used to work with the politicians all the time. But I'm a staunch Democrat. I ain't got nothing for the

Republicans do for me but get out of the way and let a Democrat get in where you at. I try to tell these people that when they was talking about Reagan wasn't no good. Cause he would have got in. He would have got back in if he had got them 52 hostages out. But people can never see their mistake until after they make it. That man wasn't worried about. . . That was only 52 people. He had all the people in this country to worry about. Four hundred million people. And he could not just worry, just do everything them people wanted for them 52 hostages. He was worrying about these people back here. These people in this country. People that was hungry. People that was starving. People that didn't have. That's what he was worrying about. But them 52 people had no business over there. Quiet as it is kept. Just like. . . That come about like this. I'm older than you. I can remember when they first built this house here. Forty years ago. They used coal. They had a man over there stoking the furnace. All of a sudden one day everything was oil. Everything. They had to convert and get oil because they couldn't get nobody to stay over there to stoke the furnace to keep the fire going. And this is an excuse. Like I say, an excuse for that man to make that money. Oil was cheap. But you know why oil was cheap? You know why? After the war the United States, "Yeah, we going to help this one build up this country and we going to help that one build up that country and we going to do this for you and we going to do that for you." In the meantime, I'm grabbing out everything I can get. They was over there in them far-eastern countries taking everything they could rake their hands. . . They was getting oil for nothing out of there. "We sent our technicians and our men over here to show you how to do this." And one of them

kind of things. Like I say about the white man showing you something. You understand what I mean? Those people over there ain't stupid. But they wasn't over there teaching them people nothing. They was over there for one thing. To get out what they could get out for nothing. That's what they were over there doing. They getting rich. Just like now. We don't have no jobs here. Why? Because, Singer sewing machine, Ronson lighters. These are factories that I know about. What these people say? They moved down south. They didn't move down south. They in Japan. Ford Motor Company. Why do you think they closed up that Ford up there? Not because they going to stop making and stop selling Fords. They can make Fords over there cheaper. The labor is cheap. And they bring them back here and sell them for a fortune. If you got. . . if you can make a telephone like this for 15 cents. You can get it made just like this for 15 cents. You can go downtown and sell it to the telephone company for 20 cents. You understand what I mean? The telephone company going to look at these people that make these for them and say, "I'm losing money on you. I get the same thing for so much and so much." He going to buy it off of you. That's big business. That's what happened. That's how come there's no work here. Them companies moved over seas. They moved to Japan. Now they are talking about Japan. Japan got the "know" and all of this. And one of them kind of things. People starving in Japan just like they is here. The poor people. It's only a select few that's in them factories, that's running them jobs. If they left them factories here, it'd be more of our people working. Right now today. But that's your big business.

Wright: You say you're a Democrat?

Arnold: Yeah, I'm a Democrat.

Wright: Have you ever had any official position in the party?

Arnold: No, no. I'm just a staunch Democrat all the way down the line. I've always been Democratic. And I tells my kids if you ain't Democratic. . . I ain't got but one grandson and he want to be Republican so bad he don't know what to do. And that's my youngest grandson. And I told him, "You ain't getting on to no kind of time." And I about convinced him that he need to be Democratic too. Because the Republicans ain't going to do nothing for you. They ain't never have done nothing for the black man. None of them. Lincoln was Republican and they say Lincoln freed the slaves. Lincoln didn't free the slaves. Lincoln was in the White House. He had one thing in mind. Keeping the union together. He wasn't studying about freeing the slaves. He had slaves himself. These are facts of life. You can go in a library and hunt up these books from way back. Things that they got packed back there they don't pull out for you unless you go in there and hunt them. And you can read about it. It's like they say. In this country. Who runs this country? The black woman and the white man. A lot of people say, "That's old obsolete stuff." The black woman and the white man still runs this country. They call the shots. You got laws in this country. You got laws for the black woman. You got laws for the black man. You got laws for the white man. And you got laws for that white woman. And you believe that. They got them. And they're different. The black woman and that white man runs this country. They call them shots. And that black man and that white women, they go on the totem pole. This about 20 years ago. I was working down "the Neck." And this Italian woman, she owned her own house. Her son was getting

married. She owned her own house. She riding around in a big Cadillac car and bring me home in a Cadillac car. Got everything. Fur, mink coat and all of this. And she couldn't go down town and buy a pair of stockings on time unless her husband signed for it for her. And I laughed at her. Because I can go down there and get anything I want. And she wanted a dress. It was out Berk's in Elizabeth. And the dress cost \$150. And her husband told her. . . How I found that out, her husband told her that she wasn't going to pay no \$100 for the dress to go to her son's wedding. But she saw this dress was \$150. And me, you know me. Like really, "Where he get off at?" I go get the dress. She couldn't get the dress. I said, "Why can't you get the dress?" "My husband have to sign for it. And you know if he done told me no \$100, he ain't going to sign for it." And I laughed at her. I said, "I can get the dress." I took her \$100 and she took me out there and I went in the store and saw the dress. And me and her are about the same size so I didn't bother with no size. And I said, "I ain't got but \$100." What did they tell me? "You don't have to put all of that down. Give me \$25 and take the dress." That white woman got so mad she didn't know what to do. Because I could get the dress. She couldn't get it. Her husband had to come there and sign for her. I bought that dress. I got that dress and brought it on out of the store for her and paid the \$100 down and she gave me the \$50 when she got it and I went back, and took me back out there and I finished paying for that dress. And her husband didn't know nothing about it. She took all the tags and things off that dress so he didn't find them. I could get the dress. She couldn't. We been doing that. That's economics. That's economics. That white man got sense enough to know that that black

woman going to have money, she going to take care of them kids. That black man going to go out there and, he could party, he would throw it away. He going to deal with that black woman. He going to get his money. And that's what they do. That's how come your black woman and your white man runs this country. They do. That's economics. But I'm older now. I can understand that. But at that time I laughed at her. I thought it was a big joke. I did. I was young. I thought she was sick. I told her, "I wouldn't have no man I got to. . . What! A husband signing for me? You got to be kidding." Even when I went down to get my unemployment. When I went down to get my social security. And the man was taking notes or records and one of them kind of things. He asked me, "What about your husband?" I said, "What about him? I ain't been with that man in 40 years. Don't bring him up to me. I don't want to hear nothing about him. What he doing, that's his life." He said, "I don't mean nothing." I said, "I worked. I got my own thing down here. You give me my money. I don't want to be bothered with nothing like that." He said, "No, because if you don't have enough, you still had those kids for him and you could get some of his social security." I said, "I don't care who gets his social security. I don't want nothing but just my social security. That's all I want." "Alright Miss Arnold. Alright Miss Arnold."

Wright: You've lived in Newark a long time.

Arnold: I've been here since 1924.

Wright: What changes have you seen occurring here. . . .

Arnold: Well, I've seen all the white people move out. I've seen the city just become all black, look like. And everything in it black.

Wright: When did Puerto Ricans begin to come into the city?

Arnold: These Puerto Ricans started to come in here about 15 years ago I'd say.

Wright: That recent?

Arnold: Yeah. Fifteen years ago you didn't. . . There was some here but not like now. Not like now, no. About 15 years ago they started migrating in here. Because I know when I first seen a couple of them, I looked. A Puerto Rican man, he still thinks he's. . . Back in then he thought he could come in here and he could run the black women and keep his woman in the house. Some black men told him, "You go home and get your woman and bring her out here. Let me talk to her. And you can talk to mine." I see all these kind of changes.

Wright: Was there much mixing?

Arnold: No. Anybody. . . I mean, I know like they say, maybe I'm prejudiced or whatever. One of them kind of things. But I watched the changes. And I watched the type of people. Now Rose lives here in the building. She lives upstairs. She's Puerto Rican, her and her kids. They are beautiful people. We get along wonderful. I've been sick, her kids can do anything for me. She can do anything for me. She's too glad to do it. You understand what I mean? Puerto Ricans next door and they are, they'd do anything for me. Her husband work out where he got a garden and he brings me vegetables and stuff since I been sick and been here. One of them kind of things. But them people are like this. They like you alright in your place. And your place is not running in and out of their houses. They don't appreciate that. They might accept you and they don't say nothing and one of them kind of things, but they like you better when you don't be running in and out of their house. And they used to be running in and out of their house and they think that they. . . You know, of our people,

running in. . . Them people don't like that. They don't appreciate that. But you can't tell them this. And I always say it's the ignorant ones that does it. They don't know no better. And they think they white. You know what I mean? To them they are white people. It's like, you know you white and I could look up to you. Other words, instead of looking up to me. I'm your kind. I've been through a lot of things. A lot of things I can tell you about. Teach you. They wouldn't look up to me. But they will go out there and that Puerto Rican woman that don't even want to be bothered with you in the first place. So, she ain't going to tell you nothing good because she don't want to be bothered in the first place. And this is who you going to look up to. And you will find a lot of that. You understand? These Puerto Ricans know they in here and they can't come in. They working people and one of them kind of things. But I know that they don't want to be bothered. I know the kind. I worked with them and I know them. They're nice people. But they're nice people in their place. And you stay in yours. And your place is not running in and out of their house. Cause I'm like this. If you live next door and I don't be running in and out your house. I see you, "How you doing? Yeah, can I do such and such for you?" And one of them kind of things. We're good neighbors. That's a good neighbor. But now when you got to be running in and out and I got to be running all the time in your house. Everytime you come in here I'm sitting up there. You understand what I mean? These people don't appreciate that. Quiet as it is kept. They don't say nothing about it. But they don't appreciate it.

Wright: Do you think Newark of today is a better place to live in than the Newark that you encountered when you first came here?

Arnold: No, no, no.

Wright: Do you think it's just the reverse?

Arnold: It's just the reverse. We didn't have the crime we got today. We didn't have it. There was crime but not like this. These black brothers out here going over there in the senior citizens and robbing old people like me. What can they do? Look at it this way. We got a colored mayor downtown and he don't do nothing. You know, I'm here a long time. I've seen a many of them come and go from downtown. But, honey, if an epidemic was like that, when one of them white mayors was downtown in that city hall, they'd flood that place with cops out there. They'd catch them niggers climbing up them trellises. Going up there and robbing them old people in that place. They would rob them old people over 2 and 3 times every. . . They rob 2 and 3 of them every night. It ain't no. . . like this. . . I do this and then I'm. . . You get away with it today you ain't going to come back and do the samething the next day the same place. That don't make sense. The housing right here. They put, they get empty apartments they put new stoves and things in there for the people. They go in there and take them out. Carry them where they want to carry them. Up the street they robbed an apartment; they just put the stuff in for the people to move in. They went in and took the ice box and stove out of the place the night before. The lady upstairs called the cops. What the cops do? Take the fellows around the corner and turn them loose. They come right back that same night and got that stuff out that place, out that apartment. Too much corruption in the. . . I wouldn't say Gibson is corrupt or one of them kind of things. But he can't watch any and everybody. Got too much corruption in his police

force. They are not doing the job. Like he said down there when they were talking about sending the state troopers in here. Give them more money so they can hire more men. He said, "I got enough men." He said, "They don't do their job. They don't do their job."

Wright: What future do you see?

Arnold: What future do I see? Well, I see one day they going to put a white man down there. Not only that, the government, the federal government is going to do something about this crime. These white people are not going to have these niggers. . . You see, when they start to ripping off places, old people like that and one of them kind of things. See, this is going to go on for so long. And then they are going to get tired of ripping off then. Then they are going to go outside. As soon as they start that that white man is going to put a stop to it. He could put a stop to it if he got to start shooting wholesale. I always said that's why they wanted to put the state troopers in here. I didn't want to see the state troopers in here. I'm like Gibson about that. I didn't want to see them state troopers in here. Cause I knew what that meant. A lot of our young fellows would have got shot on the spot. And they wouldn't have been doing nothing. But they would have got killed. Cause that's what the state troopers are going to do. From the state troopers, they can put this city under martial law. The federal government can do that. Put it under martial law and they'll stop some of this crime. Because they'll start killing these people.

Wright: What do you think of the future of the black people in this country as a whole?

Arnold: As a whole? There is a few, like yourself, there is a few. . . I say you

because you younger than me. I'm on my way out. There is a few that's going to hold on. They are going to keep fighting the right way. Not getting out here. . . You fighting, you can't fight the system getting out here and robbing me. I ain't got nothing. You understand what I mean? And robbing and stealing and killing people. That's not the way. There's still going to be some that going to get out here and try to get it together the right way. And they are going to succeed. It's going to take time. But one day. One day. You'll say, "Well, I never thought--you might live to see it--You'll say I never thought that old lady knew what she talking about. We don't have crime like we did back in them days." Understand? It will come to pass. But the federal government can do a lot too. Where they can do it is take these young men off the street. They out here and they ain't got nothing to do. Like Reagan want to get up this army. And everybody talking about him want to put them. . . Put them in something. Put them in something. Then when they get a dollar they can say, "I earned it." Let them know what it is. Let them feel what it is to earn a dollar. Not just keep giving them. . . going out here. . . just giving them money. And they going getting that dope and stuff. They ain't doing nothing but killing themselves. And a lot of them is killing the future generation because they are the fathers and mothers of the future generation. And they are killing off a generation before it even get here. You know? But one day. One day. . . .