

Interviewer: ...the 20<sup>th</sup>, 1976. My name is Edward Scott, of the Black Archives of Mid-America, and I'm interviewing Dr. G.T. Bryant at his home at 2626 West Paseo. The time is approximately 4:05 p.m. Dr. Bryant is presently a major educator in the Kansas City, Missouri area.

[0:00:35] Dr. Bryant is presently retired from Penn Valley. President of the Penn Valley Community College. Dr. Bryant, when and where were you born?

Bryant: I was born on the edge of St. Louis in a community that was called Wellstone, in 1905.

[0:01:02] My mother's name was [Leida] Thompson Bryant. My father's name was Sylvester Bryant. He'd just returned from the army in the Philippine Insurrection, where he'd spent quite a bit of time in the Philippines. My mother was born in Bridgeton, Missouri. And at the time I was born, they were living with her parents.

[0:01:31] When they moved out, I elected to stay with my grandparents at 15230 Grove Avenue in Wellstone. And my grandfather was a coachman for a family named Boyce, in St. Louis. And my grandmother was a cook at that place.

[0:01:57] And I sort of spent my earliest childhood on the Boyce estate. And then Bill Boyce lost his money, so we moved out to a house that my grandmother owned at 15230 Grove Avenue. And we were the only Blacks on that block, but there were a number of Black people who lived a mile or so away.

[0:02:30] And there were a number of Blacks who worked at the brickyard that was relatively close. Now, we weren't wealthy. We were basically a poor family, but we always had enough to eat and good clothing to wear, and this kind of thing. I never knew what want was, nor did any of my family.

[0:02:55] They were great on owning their own homes. And I went to school at a little place called Normandy, to the Normandy Consolidated School, which was a one room school. It was about a mile and a half from where we lived out further in the county. And we had a very good teacher, Miss Ella Holliman. And when I graduated from that school, I went to Sumner High School in St. Louis, starting out by staying with an aunt who lived at 4224 Finney Avenue in St. Louis.

[0:03:36]

Interviewer: What were your grandparents' names?

Bryant: My grandparents were named Mr. and Mrs. Henry P. Thompson. My grandmother's name was Annie Patsy Thompson. She was quite a woman, too. One of these fine independent woman who believed in owning her own home and paying all of her debts, buying for cash.

- [0:04:05] She had many of these values. She used to often tell me, when I was growing up, there was nothing worse than a liar but a thief. She drilled a whole lot of these principles in me when I was a growing up kid. I had the usual normal life, playing baseball. I went to Sunday school and became superintendent of the Sunday school, which was a Baptist church, by the way.
- [0:04:36] Ebenezer Baptist Church. In senior high school, I made good grades and was considered for the Alpha scholarship in my senior year, but it went to a young man named Broussard, who perhaps had a little higher average than I did. And both of us went to the University of Chicago directly from high school.
- [0:05:02] I entered the University of Chicago in 1922 and graduated in 1926, joined the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity while I was there. I was president of the University of Chicago Club, which was made up of the 125 negro students who were on the campus. I was also polemarch of my fraternity, the Iota chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi.
- [0:05:30] I majored in history, minored in education. I also had a minor in English and a minor in political science. That was that up until I graduated. And I had a job given to me by the placement service up there in North Carolina, but in August, they wrote to me that the job hadn't matured, and I had one month to find a job.
- [0:06:01] And I went to a little Baptist convocation or Baptist conference out in Kinloch, and the man who was speaking was president of Western Baptist College. So after he finished, I asked him if he had a job, and he told me he surely did. He wanted to know if I could teach negro history, and I told him yes. He wanted to know if I could teach Spanish, if I could teach English.
- [0:06:32] All of which I answered yes. So I got a job for the munificent sum of \$70 a month, room and board. And they didn't always pay the \$70 a month. And it was at Western Baptist College, which was located at 2119 Woodland, I believe.
- [0:06:58] It was in an old mansion, the Ridge Mansion. And the dormitory where I stayed and the boys stayed was the old stable on the mansion grounds. We had a very good time. Actually, I enjoyed my experience that year. My best friend was Clarence Bacote, the son of Reverend Samuel Bacote, who was pastor of one of the largest churches here, Second Baptist.
- [0:07:27] Bacote now is head of the department of history at Atlanta University, or at least he was for a number of years. He may be retired now because we're both the same age. And that's the way I happened to come to Kansas City. It was primarily an accident. And I didn't plan to come here. Mr. [Richardson] went to Kansas Vocational School in Topeka in 1927, the year after I came.

[0:07:59] I went to Prairie View that summer and taught English, and then I came back and went to work for Mr. Richardson of Kansas Vocational School. Then I met my wife and married her, who was the daughter of Clement Richardson. And since he couldn't employ family, I had to find a job again. And this time, Reverend Baker brought me back to Kansas City as president of Western Baptist College.

[0:08:28] And I stayed there for about four months, from August to the latter part of December. I went to work in the Kansas City public schools. It was the same problem. They couldn't pay. They didn't get enough money so they could pay regular salaries, and I had a wife and in November a baby to support, so I went on into the public schools and started to teach English at Lincoln High School under a very fine man who was principal, [H.O. Hook].

[0:09:09]

Interviewer: And Western was one of the original college here in this area.

Bryant: Yes, it was an old negro college. It really wasn't much of a college. It was more of a high school. But it did have some ministers who were taking courses in theology, and I think that's what gave it its title of college.

[0:09:39] But they had students all the way from the elementary grades through high school, and I think the largest enrollment they ever had was about 165 students. But the morale and the esprit de corps was very – I actually enjoyed working with those people.

[0:10:02] Going in the public schools was an entirely different experience. These students were different. Some were delightful, and some were bright, and then there were others who were dull and cantankerous as they could be. And this didn't make teaching all a pleasure like it had been at Kansas Vocational School or Western Baptist College.

[0:10:30] My first year there, I was elected president of the Secondary Teacher Study Club, and the same year, I went into the Cooperative Teachers Association, which was the clearinghouse for all of the teachers in Kansas City.

[0:10:58] I held some kind of office [unintelligible] I believe. But bit by bit, I didn't become head of the department of history. And I should have said I switched from English to history when we moved into the new building on the site of old Western Baptist College. It's where Lincoln High School is now, 2121 Woodland, on the hill.

[0:11:27] And I became head of the history department about 1938, I believe. Either '36 or '38. And in 1941, December, the dean of Lincoln Junior College died. His name was Matthew Carroll. And Mr. Cook named me the dean of Lincoln Junior College, which was also in the high school building.

[0:12:00] From then on, I had various educational experiences, most of them quite interesting. The one thing I did that not all the teachers did, each summer, I would do some work other than work with local youngsters around here. I would go to some other school or take some workshop or something of that sort.

[0:12:31] And then I started working on my master's degree about 1932 at the University of Kansas. And I got that degree in 1938, just attending in the summertime.

Interviewer: What are the differences in the way children were educated at that time?

[0:13:03] What was the kind of education at that time?

Bryant: Well, there was no difference, except that we were rather thorough. The faculty was a particularly good faculty. In fact, they were in all of the Black high schools in those days. They were recruited from graduates of the Big 10 schools, or the Big 8 schools.

[0:13:29] Some came from Harvard. I don't remember any up here from Yale, but there were a number from those eastern schools like Brown and some of the finishing schools like Mount Herman and Bowdoin College and so on. So they came from good schools. Mr. Jeffries, who taught math, for example, was a graduate of Tufts College in Boston.

[0:14:02] And this was to the youngsters' advantage. We had students leaving Lincoln in those days who were able to make Phi Beta Kappa at some of the top universities in the country. You do know, Mr. Scott, there are two types of students, the youngsters who really are in school to learn.

[0:14:34] And these got the advantage of a good solid high school education. And then we had a number who didn't want to learn. They would clown around and play and waste their time. Consequently, they got no more than the youngsters today. But the principal difference as I see it is that in those days, we had more students who wanted to learn and less who wanted to clown around.

[0:15:02] And this made things a whole lot different. Also, we weren't always [alibi-ing] for youngsters. They were there to get an education, and this is what we tried to do.

Interviewer: What do you think was the reason for there being more who desired to learn at that phase in history?

[0:15:28]

Bryant: Well, I think it follows the pattern of our race's historical background. At the time we were freed from slavery, almost all negroes wanted to get a good

education, because they looked upon an education as something to relieve them from freedom and poverty. It was a goal towards which they all worked. And even those who weren't educated wanted to see that their children were educated.

[0:15:57] And there was nothing they would spare their child to see that he was educated. And if he even attempted to come up with a whole lot of foolishness, the parent would punish him. And as they became more educated, this spirit or this feeling of wanting to be educated was gradually lost, and we had many youngsters who didn't care, and their parents didn't care too much whether they got an education or not.

[0:16:33] And I think that's the difficulty we're in today.

Interviewer: They sort of just took advantage of the newfound freedom, the fact that education was more available.

Bryant: Yes, I think so.

Interviewer: There has to be some keys that would help to bring back that kind of zeal for an education.

[0:17:06]

Bryant: Well, I don't know if we'll ever recover or if we'll ever go back. As you know, there is a tendency not to go back. We always go forward. We can't look back. Often, we're going downhill when we go forward rather than uphill, which is tragic. But the only hope I can see for our people is that they improve their economic situation.

[0:17:37] There, they need the cooperation of the majority in the United States, because we lack jobs. There are too many of us unemployed and the morale of the family has gradually been going down in the younger [unintelligible]. Until these vital things are restored, I don't see much hope for an improvement in this direction.

[0:18:02] Although more numerically, more Black youngsters are being educated today than they were at that time.

Interviewer: There's just a lot more people.

Bryant: Yes, that's it. At the end of the Civil War, there were about four million Blacks in the United States. Today, there are 25 million or 26 million.

[0:18:30] So you can see how we've increased in numbers. I should tell you that I think the big break came at Lincoln when I got this Fulbright grant to teach in Bangkok, Thailand. And my wife and I were over there a year. I taught at the

college of education, which was called Prasarnmitr. And it was one of the most interesting, one of the happiest years of my life.

[0:19:01] If you can imagine living in a place for an entire year with nothing unpleasant coming up. Everything a pleasure. It's really nice. We had enough money to take care of us and had a really comfortable home. The children, the youngsters, were very pleasant to work with. We got to see quite a bit of the countryside.

[0:19:31] We had a delightful nice of the landlady who practically adopted us and became our daughter, and she took us many places. And we had an automobile that we got around to the feasts and the fiestas and the religious ceremonies and this sort of thing. So there was something new coming up all the time. I think we got more of a benefit from the experience in Thailand than the students that I taught, although I think both of us benefitted a great deal from it.

[0:20:05] When I came back in 1955, the famous Supreme Court decision of Brown vs. Cooper had been made, and they were attempting to integrate the schools here. And so they sent me as a vice principal to Manual High School. I forgot to tell you, I was vice principal at Lincoln in addition to being dean of the junior college.

[0:20:34] And the first year at Manual wasn't too bad. We had whites, we had mostly Italians, and we had Mexican Americans. At that time, they didn't call themselves Chicanos. And we had Blacks. And by the second year I was there, there were just about the same proportion of numbers, about a third of each.

[0:21:04] But by the third year I was there, there were far more Blacks than any of the other two groups. The Mexican students started going out to Westport. And I don't know what happened to the whites. They started moving out of the district. So Manual gradually became a Black school.

[0:21:29] At that time, they transferred me to Central because it was having its problems. And here again, when I first went there, there were relatively few Blacks. And it was a pretty nice place to teach. They had a very good faculty at Central. And by the time I got ready to leave Central, there were far more Blacks than any other group out there. Then I left Central and went into the Junior College of Kansas City, Missouri at 39<sup>th</sup> and McGee, where I was assistant dean.

[0:22:07]

Interviewer: That was during the time that there weren't very many Blacks that I could see, because that was around 1960...

Bryant: It was 1960, the fall of 1960.

Interviewer: I was out at Junior College in 1962, and I remember [unintelligible].

[0:22:33]

Bryant: There were barely 100 Blacks out there at that time, less than the number who attended Lincoln Junior College. But gradually, the Blacks were increasing in enrollment, up until about 1963. In 1963, there were so few Blacks who graduated that I became very much concerned and started asking questions.

[0:22:59] And after 1963, the Black student population started building up. At the present time, Penn Valley has about 8,000 students, and one third of those students are Black. In fact, more than one third of the students are Black. So people in Kansas City are beginning to appreciate the community colleges. They changed from junior college to community college in about 1964.

[0:23:31] And there are a number of Blacks attending now.

Interviewer: What was determined was the problem concerning the failure of the Blacks [unintelligible]?

Bryant: Well, I think motivation and the fact that it was difficult to pass. Those old teachers at Kansas City Junior College prided themselves on being tough.

[0:24:00]

Interviewer: Oh, they do?

Bryant: And they gave you no help. If you could pass the work, good. If you couldn't pass it, you just failed. And sometimes we would have 1,800 freshmen enter, and the next year, only 200 people graduated out of the 1,800 who had entered. So you can see that it was a big attrition, a great loss. This included Blacks and whites.

[0:24:30] And the reputation was that the junior college is tougher than UMKC. And they took pride in saying if you can pass junior college, you can pass anywhere in the United States.

Interviewer: I think it was rated quite high in the United States, that junior college.

Bryant: At least that's the reputation it had in the city.

[0:24:58] Many people would say it's the best junior college in the United States. But actually, that was mostly people talking. I don't think there was ever any official rating of this sort. It was just a pride that they had in the old Kansas City Junior College that had been in existence since 1915.

[0:25:26]

Interviewer: You've probably seen a lot of the changes that have been made in education, the type of education [unintelligible], the growth.

Bryant: Yes. There haven't been too many changes, except in the quality of education that has been going downhill, I think. Theoretically, it should have been improving, but as we added a whole lot of extra frills to the curriculum, we didn't add substance.

[0:26:00] So consequently, today's student, I don't think, is as strong as the students were 20 or 30 years ago. That's just my personal opinion. By way of evidence, their scoring on the college entrance examinations have been going down. So there is some scientific evidence for the assertion that I made.

[0:26:29] But we're hopeful. The biggest change that came in the junior college situation was in 1964, when we started introducing vocational technical subjects. The establishment of Metropolitan Junior College, which was just another name for the Kansas City Junior College, except that we were independent from the Kansas City school system by this time.

[0:27:00] We hadn't had any vocational tech work. And now, there are over 39 courses in vocational tech, the terminal educational courses, which is new for Kansas City. They've been going on in California and other places for years before this new thing in Kansas City.

Interviewer: Is this move geared to really help the deprived individual?

[0:27:33]

Bryant: I think it was. The idea was to give everyone an opportunity to get the type of education to which he was best fitted, and through counselors and testing and other ways, we determined in a large measure what type of training would benefit the student if first we had his cooperation too. If he didn't want to take this kind of training, then we let him go and take the type he thought he wanted.

[0:28:07] Because we certainly haven't hoped at anywhere along the line to hold students back. Let them go ahead and work out their potential.

Interviewer: I know there's probably some more [signs] there in dealing with the growth of education and things that have been necessary in order to cope with the problems in education.

[0:28:40] Maybe later on you'll mention a few more.



Bryant: Well, I don't know that I can enlighten you on that aspect of education except to say what I've already said.

[0:29:01] One of the things that may interest you is that I've always considered that a person's horizon should be broad, so I haven't confined myself merely to the classroom. I've always become involved in what the community is doing. And one of the things that I'm proud of is that I'm a charter member of Fellowship House.

[0:29:26] When I came here, this city used to brag about its prejudice and statements like, this is a western city with a southern exposure. And many of the white families were bragging about their wealthy backgrounds or their Confederate backgrounds and things of that sort. There was very little contact between the Black community and the white community when I came to Kansas City.

[0:29:55] So in 1943, we set up an organization called the Committee on the Practice of Democracy, and the person who took the lead in calling us together was Virginia Oldham, an English teacher at Central High School. A white woman and a Quaker. And from this committee, which we nicknamed COPOD, we formed Fellowship House, which was modeled after an organization in Philadelphia which was sponsored by the Quakers Fellowship of Reconciliation.

[0:30:35] And the sole purpose of this organization was to break down racial barriers. And I think we did a pretty good job with this in picketing, and we did some going together in mixed groups to the Philharmonic and restaurants downtown and to theaters downtown and this sort of thing.

[0:31:06] Sometimes we ran into a little bit of difficulty. We never did have any trouble with the police because we didn't stop to fight or anything like that. If people wanted to make an issue of it, we simply walked quietly away and then tried the next week. But over a period of two or three years, we were able to break down segregation [unintelligible]

[0:31:35] And this was one of our first successes. In the meantime, after we started, there were other groups that started too, and they worked on the department stores downtown and some other things. Julia Hill played a part in that movement. I was very proud of that, because Kansas City is a much better place now than it was when I came here.

[0:32:01] Naturally, I was interested in the fraternity, became polemarch of the chapter here. Ultimately, I became a grand historian in Kappa Alpha Psi, which was one of the grand offices. We have had a grand polemarch in Kansas City, Carl Roman Johnson, and then I'm the other grand officer from Kansas City.

[0:32:32] I also became interested in the YMCA and became vice president of the board, headed up the drive for memberships down there in 1955. And believe

it or not, at one time I was president of the Trustee Board of Second Baptist Church. In 1958, I became a member of the Queen of the World hospital board, and then they talked me into going over to General Hospital Medical Center and becoming secretary of the board over there.

[0:33:05] So you see, in addition to those, there were other things too. You see, I've been very much involved in the work of the community. I've been a member of the Beau Brummell Club, for example, which is a social club, and then later on, I became a member of the Urban League board in the city.

[0:33:31] And I told you about the secondary teacher study club and the cooperative council. But I also became a member and at one time president of the Teachers Credit Union. I served on that committee a long time, worked with that organization a long time. Then in 1960, I became interested in mental health and ultimately became president of that organization.

[0:34:03] I was the first negro president of the Mental Health Organization of Greater Kansas City and maybe the last one. I don't know if they've ever had another one or not. But they did give me a plaque in recognition of my services to that organization. I worked on the People of the People organization.

[0:34:29] It was formed by Dwight Eisenhower and [George Hall] out here, and it had the approval of Harry Truman. I forgot to tell you that one time I met Mr. Truman and had my picture taken with him. Most recently, I was placed on the Harry Truman Institute of National and International Affairs and on the board of the Harry Truman Institute out there.

[0:35:01] And I'm on the [unintelligible] Committee too. In 1965, I was appointed by the governor of the state to be a police commissioner in Kansas City, Missouri. Most recently, I worked on the Jackson County Charter Commission that set up the new form of government that we have in the county.

[0:35:28] So as I said before, there have been a whole group of organizations that I've worked with in addition to my work in education. Because I don't think you can be a well-rounded person if you stick to a very narrow path. You have to broaden out and conceive of life as a much broader horizon than merely going to school in the morning and coming back at night.

[0:35:55] Life is really more than that.

Interviewer: In being a part of so many different facets of the community, how were you able to structure your time?

Bryant: Well, I don't know, because I spent quite a bit of time after school. I never even thought about taking a penny's pay or even asking for any compensation for this volunteer service.

[0:36:30] And then there was also a time I went around to my students' homes. But taking all of this into consideration, if you're really doing your job, and you're doing above the call of duty, you're putting in extra time, there was still plenty of time in the evenings, plenty of time on Saturdays and other times to do that. One other thing I forgot to tell you about was going out in the summers and doing different things.

[0:36:59] And these ranged all the way from waiting tables on the Union Pacific diners to teaching at places like Atlanta U and Lincoln University. I taught there for three or four summers. Taking a year's leave of absence and going to Florida and teaching at Florida A&M University, which was a very pleasant experience.

[0:37:30] Taking a year off and working on my doctorate's degree at Washington University in St. Louis. Ultimately getting the degree in 1963. And traveling in the summertime. We took freighter trips. We took one freighter trip to Hawaii and the next summer, we took a freighter trip to the Caribbean, visiting Ponce and [unintelligible] and San Juan and Santo Domingo and Port-au-Prince.

[0:38:11] But then some summers, we would just go around the United States to different places and travel. We were getting around all the time.

Interviewer: And seeing things.

Bryant: See, that's the way I used my summers.

[0:38:28]

Interviewer: How many children do you have?

Bryant: We have two children. One just left here Sunday. Both are girls. Betty Ann – Marino is her married name – is an entertainer in Los Angeles. She's been out there for the last 20 years. And she's seldom been without work. She plays the piano and sings. At the present time, she's at the Hyatt House in Los Angeles.

[0:38:57] And Barbara Jane, whose married name is Wallace, is living in Los Angeles, only a few blocks from where Betty lives. And she's a registered nurse. And she has been supervisor at convalescent homes for the last few years. And each one has one child. Betty has a boy named Adam. [Patrice] has a girl who's 16 years old now named... I mean, Barbara has a girl named Patrice.

[0:39:38]

Interviewer: When you talk about your travels, and you say "we," did you always take your family?

Bryant: My wife went with me. The children stayed here. When we went to Thailand for a year, they were old enough to look after this house while we were gone.

[0:39:58] In fact, they made it possible for us to.

Interviewer: And your wife really enjoyed being able to do all those things?

Bryant: Oh yeah.

Louise: I loved the Caribbean cruise and that sort of thing. I loved the freighter trips. The year in Thailand was a very good year. I taught too, while we were there.

[0:40:26]

Bryant: I forgot to tell you that I taught at Washington University in St. Louis. The title was visiting lecturer and assistant. The assistant was a title given to most graduate students who are permitted to teach. And they pay you a salary for your teaching. And visiting lecturer was something that was a little special. And again, I was paid at an even higher rate for that than I was as an assistant.

[0:41:01] But I really enjoyed teaching at Washington University. Most of the students were Jewish, and they were bright. Really bright as they could be.

Interviewer: And you've been to Europe also, in 1968?

Bryant: No, when we returned from Thailand, we came across Europe.

[0:41:27] We landed at Rome, and then we took trains to Florence, Italy and to Venice and to Milan, and to Zurich, Switzerland and on up to Paris, France. And then across the Channel to London. And we spent three to four days in most of the places that I named.

[0:41:57]

Interviewer: Was there any experience in education there?

Bryant: No, we were just tourists, just enjoying ourselves.

Interviewer: Did you seek out some of the educational institutions?

Bryant: No, we passed the Sorbonne when we were in Paris. I was surprised that it was just one building. I'd heard about it all my life. It's a part of the University of Paris over on the Left Bank.

[0:42:28] And there are a whole lot of other buildings that are part of the university, but the Sorbonne itself is about a three- or four-story building, gray limestone. And you would think with all of the fame that it has, that it would be spread out over a mile square, but it isn't. It isn't any larger than a high school.

Interviewer: Sort of like they say Kansas City has more parks than Paris.

[0:42:57]

Bryant: Yeah.

Interviewer: How long have you and your wife been married?

Louise: 47 years.

Interviewer: And both of you teach?

Bryant: Well, you tell him about your teaching experience.

Louise: I was a substitute teacher for a while, and I worked for basically the YWCA and then the Institute for Community Studies.

[0:43:28] When I retired, I was the survey director at Community Studies. You know about Community Studies?

Interviewer: I'd like to know a little bit more about it.

Louise: Well, this is in my day. Well, I mean, actually, it was social research, and they had government grants, and then we would set up the questionnaire and get the data that it required and analyze it and that kind of thing.

[0:43:59]

Interviewer: What of your childhood? How did you ever meet Dr. Bryant?

Louise: I was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, practically on the campus. My father was in the English department there. And we came to Missouri when I was eight years old. I'm one of four sisters. And my father was president of Lincoln from 1918 to 1922.

[0:44:28]

Interviewer: Lincoln University?

Louise: Uh huh. There's a building on the campus that's named for him. It was dedicated in the fifties sometime, wasn't it?

Bryant: Mm-hm.

Interviewer: What was your father's name?

Louise: Clement Richardson. And then that being a political fight, we lost our [unintelligible] and we came here to Western. The same Western College where we met.

[0:44:57] And then my father went to Kansas Vocational Scholarship, and without knowing that father had gone up there, and Girard had just applied up there for a job, and got it.

Bryant: I knew he had gone up there.

Louise: Well, anyway. And that's where we met and got married. I mean, we met here when I came home.

[0:45:29] I went to Washington in Topeka. That was my school. And I think when we first met, I came home on a weekend. [unintelligible] And in my junior year, we eloped. Didn't tell anybody. And father couldn't hire anybody who was related to him. [unintelligible]

[0:46:00] So an opening was here in Kansas City at Western again, and we came back here [unintelligible].

Interviewer: I think that's always interesting, when you have such a cadence and a family structure at this point. It's always interesting to [unintelligible] I'm able to talk to someone who has been together such a long time.

[0:46:36] These kind of things, you could have some keys or something.

Bryant: We planned and built this house in 1950, and we moved into it in 1951. And we've been very pleased with it ever since. Unfortunately, the children were over 16 at the time we moved into the house. Up until that time, we lived in apartments for the most part.

[0:47:07] Kansas City's been good to me. I can't complain. We live very comfortably. They've given me a number of honors and plaques and certificates, whatnot. So I can't complain at all. I think it's given me very good recognition.

[0:47:38] And it's been rather pleasant living here.

Louise: Mm-hm. [unintelligible] for so long.

Interviewer: What about the women's liberation?

Bryant: I'm for it.

[0:48:03]

Interviewer: What about you?

Louise: I haven't [unintelligible] as a movement at all. I'm for it, but I think that we have to individually earn the right to do whatever it is we can. I think that women should be allowed to do what they're capable of doing. And this is basically it.

- [0:48:27] I mean, as a person, what you're capable of doing has got to be available to you to do.
- Bryant: I also believe a woman should have the right to determine what to do with her own body.
- Louise: Right. On the abortion issue.
- Bryant: On the abortion issue. I just can't see these fanatics who get all worked up about something like that, but I think with them, religion is a primary motivation for their fanaticism against it.
- [0:49:02] But I think we'll be moving toward a more liberal age when we get to the point where a woman can determine what she wants to do. Do you have any other issues you want to mention?
- Interviewer: That's quite a [unintelligible].
- Bryant: I'm not at all satisfied with the president. The present president. I think he's making a big mistake in giving business a free hand, and industry.
- [0:49:32] And I mean big business, the ones that have the millions and billions of dollars. Because history will show that every time they've been given a free hand, they've abused it. And they need controls, and there are periods in history they've gone to the government asking for controls. This whole theory, the trickle-down theory it's called, that if business prospers, all the rest of the country will prosper, never worked out that way.
- [0:50:05] So I'm not at all satisfied with the faces that are in Washington, DC, and I would like to see some new and fresh faces appear. I think it would mean a lot more for the country. This belligerence of wanting to build up our arms and wanting to play down détente, I don't think it's good at all. We need more détente.
- [0:50:34] We should live in the world and try to get along with people and understand that we have to live in a world with people, not all of whom think like we think. Not all of them have the same types of government as we think we approve of. And the fact that we'll back any kind of government just so it isn't communist seems to me rather stupid.
- [0:51:03] We don't care whether it's a dictatorial form or a fascist form of government, we back it for no other reason than it isn't communist. So I hope to live long enough to see our country get out of that syndrome, and we have been in that syndrome ever since Nixon became president. Ford's carrying out his ideas and his thinking.
- [0:51:32]

Louise: [unintelligible]

Bryant: As Julian Bond says, Ford is an honest Nixon. I think Mr. Jackson is a Democratic Republican.

Louise: That's a good description, yeah.

[0:51:56]

Bryant: He thinks just like they think. He wouldn't be any different, just keep on rattling the sabers, keep threatening war.

Louise: Okay, he's gone that far. Now tell him who you like.

Bryant: Well, that's rather hard to do. Right off the top of my head, it would be Jimmy Carter, but I don't know. Jimmy Carter is a fresh face, and he has different ideas, and many of these ideas I agree with. Furthermore, Mr. Carter is very highly spoken of by the Black people of Georgia that I've talked with.

[0:52:33]

Interviewer: There was an attempt to play up the statement that he made on ethnic purity.

Bryant: Well, they were looking for something to trip him up with, and it took them all by surprise that Jimmy Carter from Georgia could win over the Black people. This really swept the so-called liberals off their feet. They just didn't expect this.

[0:52:59]

And so consequently, they settled on waiting for him to do something so they could trip him up and try to do something to dissipate his support among Black people. And I was rather amused than anything else about taking this statement on ethnic purity and using it to whip him over the head with it, because he wasn't saying anything more than they had said in different times in different ways.

[0:53:31]

Louise: But he had some good statements [unintelligible]. I mean, taking a definite stand rather than a general statement on a number of things.

Bryant: Mr. Scott, I think that about wraps it up.

Interviewer: Let me ask you another question.

Bryant: Surely.

Interviewer: It's on the list. What is your opinion of the role of religion in this present society?



[0:54:03]

Bryant: Well, I'm not against religion. Who would be? But I think many people put a whole lot more emphasis on religion to the neglect of ethics. And to me, doing right is very important. And I only believe that religion is effective as it is practiced, as it becomes an action.

[0:54:35]

And this has been mostly my creed. I'm a liberal. That's what you're driving at. And serving on a fundamentalist — you can probably tell that from my attitude on abortion. While I support the church and even pay my dues, it's very seldom I'm carried away by the emotionalism of the church.

[0:55:03]

And consequently, I don't go to church too often, but I have nothing against the church or nothing against the people who go. I think if they feel a need for this type of thing, very good. And certainly I came from a family that was deeply religious. I think my wife did too.

[0:55:27]

Her father was often referred to as Reverend Richardson, although he never was. He was just the president of a Baptist school. But I think it's very good for people who feel that they need this sort of thing. But the thing that surprises me is that both Black and white — particularly white people who profess to be so high on religion are some of the most prejudiced people we have in the United States.

[0:55:57]

And they see no connection between living right and going to church on Sunday and being a deacon and singing the songs and getting on their knees and praying and all this. And then they come right out and won't hire any Blacks in their plant. And this doesn't make any sense at all. If you're going to follow Christ, you should follow Christ. And you don't find anywhere in the teachings of Christ that condones the awful things that have been done in the name of Christianity.

[0:56:32]

Interviewer: That's right.

Bryant: They approved of slavery. Only a few of the denominations lifted a strong voice against slavery prior to 1840. And you know, things like the Inquisition and the Crusades, intolerance and the burning of witches and all of that.

[0:57:03]

All of this was done in the name of Christianity, which to me is a travesty. It's unfortunate.

Interviewer: I have to ask you, what is your opinion of the Nation of Islam?

Bryant: Well, I told you I was a liberal, and as far as I'm concerned, it's all right.

[0:57:29] I think the Honorable Elijah Muhammed was a very good man, fundamentally. I don't think his son caught all that he could have from his father. But I think he was a good man. He had the right ideas, particularly his economic ideas. And his ideas on morals, I think they're very good.

[0:57:54] So while I would not become a Black Muslim myself, I certainly have no objection or no complaints. I would say as far as I'm concerned, they're all right.

Louise: I think I object more to the Jehovah's Witnesses who come by and ring the doorbell on Sunday morning and want me to buy [unintelligible]. And I give them a dime just to keep from talking to them, you know?

[0:58:26]

Bryant: But oddly enough, they're one of the sects that I admire, because the bible said, go ye into the highways and byways and preach the gospel.

Louise: They really do.

Bryant: They really get out there on that street and walk up and down, and sometimes, when the weather's nine above zero they're out. And you have to admire these people.

Louise: That's right. Because they have a right to follow through with what they're supposed to do.

Bryant: And I'll tell you another thing. They've been very liberal on this race question, which is more than we can say about the Mormons.

[0:58:58]

Louise: Right. That's an understatement.

Interviewer: Yeah, it is. They're [unintelligible].

Bryant: Yeah, they've got built in prejudice in their religion, because negros can't enter the priesthood. And if you can't enter the priesthood, you have a hard time getting into heaven. You've got it fixed. And really, these are the ideas of Joseph Smith, and Joseph Smith was a poor white man.

[0:59:28] Almost every white of that era believed that there was something innately evil about Black people.

Louise: Not just [unintelligible].

Bryant: Yeah, they weren't as good as white people, and so Joseph Smith was simply carrying out the ideas of his age and generation. Many of those ideas are carried over to present day.

Interviewer: Well, thank you very much, Dr. Bryant.

Bryant: Well, you're welcome. I enjoyed chatting with you.

Interviewer: I enjoyed it very much.