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## Goodwin, Welvin

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Brian Purnell (BP): Today is February 10th, 2005. We are in the home of Mr. Welvin Goodwin, 230 E. 179th Street in the Bronx. We are interviewing Mr. Goodwin for the Bronx African American History Project. Thank you Mr. Goodwin for agreeing to participate in this oral history project, and we would just like to start with some information about you, like when and where you were born. I remember last time we talked in the hospital; you're from Timpson, Texas?

Welvin Goodwin (WG): Right

BP: What's your birthday?

WG: January the seventh, 1908.

BP: And I understand that you spent a long period of your life playing baseball, professional baseball.

WG: I did, I did.

BP: How old were you when you started playing baseball?

WG: Well I was about 14 years old, not playing professional, but just playing ball, I was 14 years old. I started out then I got to barn storming - -

BP: What does that mean barn storming?

WG: Barn storming means that you know and most everybody realized that Negro's couldn't play with the white people. So what we'd do we'd barn storm. We'd go from place to place, and that's what they called barn storming, and then they might have called it more than that. I'm making it as plain as I can so that you can scratch it out or let it stay as it is.

BP: I'd like to talk about your experiences playing baseball. They called it the Negro Leagues right?

WG: That's right.

BP: Where were your parents from?

WG: Texas.

BP: They were from Texas too?

WG: My father, his father and his grandfather, they were born in England, and they moved from England to Texas.

BP: They were born in England?

WG: Right. I wasn't born in England, wish I had been. And I really hated that I didn't do like my mother asked me to do. She asked me to go to school, learn all about the Africa and everything, it was the richest culture it was and I didn't know. Just to tell you the truth, I figured she was just lying, just talking. But after she told me all of that and I didn't do it and I found out what I could have been, I never did get over it, but it was too late.

BP: What kind of work did your parents do?

WG: They were farmers. My daddy was a farmer.

BP: On what kind of farm?

WG: All things, cotton, corn, and stuff like that, they'd plant cane, anything that was plantable and that you could make money out of, just like picking cotton, I could pick 300 pounds of cotton a day.

BP: Did they own their own farm or they rented it, or they were sharecroppers?

WG: Yes, a couple of them they owned, but the most of them, I would say that they was renting them farms.

BP: So they weren't sharecroppers?

WG: Yes most of them was sharecroppers, that's what they was called, but they wasn't like, you know it might been printed because my father and I, he wanted to take his family and move to help you out, it ain't nothin nobody could do about it.

BP: So there wasn't - -

WG: There wasn't no sharecropping.

BP: They weren't tied to just one - -

WG: No they weren't just tied to one family.

BP: As a boy did you work on the farm?

WG: Oh yes work on the farm, made a living on the farm.

BP: How old were you when you started working on the farm?

WG: I was less than 10 years old when I started working on the farm.

BP: And what was the first job they would have a boy do?

WG: Well there wasn't hardly no first to it. When got big enough to pick cotton, you went out then and picked cotton. It wasn't what you thought, it was what your mother and father thought. You'd work all the week and when it comes for you to make some money for yourself and you had to work on a Saturday, you couldn't get nothing on the weekends like say on a Friday or Thursday - - all that went to your father, you'd get none of that.

BP: You didn't get free time.

WG: If you wanted to make some money for yourself you'd work Saturday and that money you'd made you got it. If you picked 600 pounds of cotton then you got \$600. I'm just saying dollars as - - I wouldn't know how to put it, but that's what you did. All the money you'd make on a Saturday would come to me.

BP: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

WG: You wouldn't believe me, but I had nine sisters and two brothers but I am the only one and my sister in Vernon, Texas, there's only two of us left out of the nine - - but we'd pick a bale of cotton a day. [Laughs] Any time you wanted a bale of cotton - - and at that time when you went out and picked say - - if you had a farm you'd invite us over to pick that first bale of cotton to beat all the rest of the farmers selling their cotton. They were ready for us because they knew we could pick that bale of cotton a day. Wasn't nothing about being hired, they'd just tell you come and pick that first bale.

BP: What year were you born?

WG: 1907 - - I can't think right now. 1908?

BP: So you started playing baseball when you were about 14.

WG: 14 I was playing professional, but it wasn't like such a paid thing, this was just school boys playing. But when I got up - - really loved to play against them 'cause they still wasn't letting me play with the white boys, we couldn't play with them or play in the field with them.

BP: But when you were a boy, not when you were professional, did you play with white boys when you were just kids?

WG: Oh yes. In fact, my mama used to keep white boys and I didn't know anything about discrimination and stuff like that.

BP: I'm sorry, what does that mean when you say your mama would keep white boys?

WG: She would keep them - - if the white people would be going out somewhere, or wanted to go visiting, she'd keep them boys for her.

BP: They'd stay with your family.

WG: They'd stay with my family. There were three of us, two brothers and [Inaudible].

BP: So as a boy you could play together just as school boys - -

WG: Oh yes. We washed in the same tub. We didn't have no special bathtub - - in fact, they didn't even have bath tubs in them days. But we'd take one of those clean, pale tubs and put all three of ya in there to wash, never did think nothing about it.

BP: So when was the first time that you became aware that whites and blacks were different?

WG: It never did come to me. I always knew that I was Jim Crowe. I knew how to take it and today ain't nobody can make me hate no man, much less a white man and truthful speaking, I'll say it to my own people. Well I really hate my father, he's the one that would take me out of my field, make me pick the white mans garden and then that's when I'd come up losing. But other than that, I never had no way against a white man and don't have today. I treat him just like I would love and treat my family, but talking to you and to other people that I have to talk to or want to talk to, you are always going to be discriminated against. I don't care how black you did or how white you did, it's going to be there. But I don't bring that up, don't even bring it up in meetings or nothing like that. I don't hate nobody, don't care what color you are, or how you treat me - - I'm not going to ever mistreat you or your color. But me and them white boys, we used to fight, go on - - but that wasn't nothing like being discriminated against. My mother was

keeping them. She'd take that hickory stick and whoop them just as she'd whoop me.

But you can't do that now. And you couldn't do it then if people knew about it, you couldn't do that.

BP: When you started playing baseball what position did you play; were you always a pitcher?

WG: Always a pitcher. I could play any part but you know, if you're a good pitcher you didn't put him out there handing the pitch when you figured he had enough, you'd take him out and sit him down but that's what the size of pay but he didn't want to hear that because when he didn't want to go in, they knew if they put Satchel Paige in there they had it coming. That was a winner because nobody could beat that man. And white folks know it now, they know it today. There wasn't nobody who could beat Satchel Paige. But then still by discrimination they just didn't like it and truth be speaking - - That man could throw a ball that would - - it would just look like it was coming so straight to you and then all of a sudden it would disappear. [Laughs]

BP: Did you bat against - -

WG: Oh yes. I told you me and him tied up in Kilgore, Texas. You might remember Kilgore, Texas was one of the greatest ball fields in Texas. One of the greatest ball fields in Texas. And besides, I didn't ever have any anger in any body no way, and I thank god for that. Whatever you was and how you treated me, I felt like it was - - a lot of that I knew wasn't right but I knew how to go along with it. Of course if you want to live, you know, nobody's saying it wasn't happening and it's still happening as far as I can see. There's still discrimination going on but it ain't as bad as it used to be.

BP: What was the worst form that discrimination would take when you were younger in Texas?

WG: Well, truth be speaking, its still history. Anytime you'd whistle at a white woman or looked at her, or her dress blew up and you looking, they could kill you for that.

[Inaudible] But they done still [Inaudible] today, that you could get by with that but there wasn't no business about it then. What do I care about looking a white woman because her dress blew up, it didn't bother me. But yet there still guys that are being killed today just over them kind of things. They don't come out as those, but if you take a Negro looking too much at a white woman, not even then, today; they'll watch ya. The two of you walk out alive - - that's in the South - - as well as it was here. I've had to come down the street; if a white woman was coming down the street I'd have to get off the street and walk in the street, couldn't walk down that street with a white woman coming. But yet still I always did and got by with it, I didn't never care nothing about that kind stuff, I always respect the white women the same as I did mine. I just grew up like that, never did have no problems. Today I can go south and all the white people I used to work for [Inaudible]. That's been over 25 years ago and I did have to go back.

BP: When did you start to play for the Negro leagues, was that with the Black Yankees?

WG: It was the Black Yankees but we never did get started, in other words just to play Negro's against Negro's until Jackie Robinson and them people come up. You never was able to go in and play in the park with 'em - -

BP: With white folks.

WG: That's right. Then finally got word that you could play against the white boys but you couldn't have just a team, just a Negro team.



BP: But before Jackie Robinson, you would just play with other black people?

WG: No, before Jackie Robinson - - well after he come up I wasn't good enough to go into [Inaudible] and pitching against Satchel Paige. What they want put me up with Satchel Paige? That man could strike out anybody, burn a fool. And it was proven that [Inaudible]. He'd call us all in, this was in the 9<sup>th</sup> inning - - he'd call all the ball players in, outfielders, infielders, everybody in - - struck out the side.

BP: With nobody in the field?

WG: Nobody in the field. Nobody even coming to the bat but the other team.

[Laughter] And he struck out every man and every fool.

BP: Three up and three down.

WG: That's right. And that ain't heresy, I've seen him.

BP: How long did you play in the Negro leagues, how many years, do you remember?

WG: Well, truly speaking I played only [Inaudible] I was at least 26, 27 years old and I was aware that I couldn't even play in the Negro league. But Josh Gibson - - ain't no man could beat that man pitching. And that's the reason why, you've probably heard of him - -

BP: Josh Gibson?

WG: Yes. And he wasn't easy - - you know a pitcher don't sell, he'd just get out there - - and like a relief man, he could really pitch it.

BP: When did you know you were good at baseball? Just from playing baseball as a kid?

WG: Just from playing ball in school. My father, god bless him he's dead and gone, but he was the first one started me off playing. He bought me a glove and a ball and a bat

and I never did forget him for that. He did everything he could to make me a good ball player and I was. I could pitch but I couldn't pitch enough like good 'ol Satchel Paige. [Laughs] Like I said, when we tied up that Saturday, he said, "Now look," he said "now you know baseball, you were not supposed to hit a home run - - if one of your players hit a home run, let him run all the way around the base until he get to third base and then turn him back and he'll go back to the umpire can call you out." Which was happening in those days. You couldn't go back - - If you hit a home run, you had to go all the way around, but then they'd call you out. So that's the reason why I stayed tied with him for 9 innings because the next year you could hardly get in the baseball park. Still I didn't score the next inning. But it's said that people came out because a Negro team and two Negro pitchers, they won't see that. And they didn't never see it.

BP: Did you travel all around the south?

WG: All around the south, oh yes and the north. It was - - work was like that might be hard to find now because I know I got a lot of records and I had a pair of shoes that I used to play against Satchel Paige, I had them shoes. That glove I used to play with - - Finally that stuff get away from me. A lot of the righty's couldn't get away from me.

BP: Were there a lot of the fans that would come to the games?

WG: Oh yes.

BP: So you must have been a real popular young man?

WG: Not just me! [Laughter] Not just me.

BP: What was it like; we'll say you just played a game and you're in a town somewhere else in the country, what would you and the other guys do after the game?

WG: Well, truth be speaking, you went out, you had fun, then the ones who wanted to get drunk, got drunk, and I'm telling you the fights. And Satchel Paige in fact if you hadn't read about it, then that was the most popular colored ball player - - you ought to play him one time. He did his thing and then two, I don't have this record, but it is a record, that the first two boys that played was in St. Louis. When they come to call them out to play, they was up in the hotel drunk. Now this is what I heard, that don't have to be true, so you better be careful bout writing that. But still, they are the first two Negro's that first played - - but they was in the hotel drunk.

BP: What did you do when you were finished playing baseball?

WG: Well, when I finished playing baseball, I was just sad, they called 'em and I guess said "Operator, I had my own place" and I went and did this for my self.

BP: In Texas?

WG: Oh yes, in any place 'cause right now you think them shoes shine, I'll take them shoes off and you swear. [Laughs]

BP: I just shined them this morning though.

WG: Yes but they ain't shine. [Laughter] Look under that bed over there, you see a pair of shiny shoes over there and they ain't shining like they should be. [Crosstalk] That's when I said I told you the truth before come they wasn't shined. [Crosstalk] But really my real living in them days was farming. Anybody that could farm and know'd how to farm, you didn't have no problem.

BP: When did you move to New York City?

WG: Well I didn't come to New York City 'till '45. But I also had been to New York City so many times.

BP: When you were playing ball?

WG: Playing ball. In the Kansas City line up, they used to have the best team there was and he could tell you that. Names that I can't even call on that team but they had some of the best ball players there was in the world, much less just in the city. They had the best.

BP: So why did you move to New York in 1945?

WG: Well, since I'm talking to you and since you knew about it, discrimination. I got tired of being treated like I was treated. So, I was playing baseball and I was just coming - - going around playing baseball and then I found out that I could beat it - - and I kept on telling his brother you know, we're going to New York one day. But didn't do that much good, but everyone that I brought here would listen, they just agreed - -

BP: Say it again?

WG: I said although they listened to me because they didn't know anything about discrimination, I just brought 'em on anyway.

BP: So was life better in New York?

WG: Well you know that, you don't have to ask me that question.

BP: How was it different I guess is what I'm asking.

WG: Well it was a little difference but the way it was carried out, it had to be different 'cause you black and you could be walking down the street with a white woman and you wasn't raised in New York. You couldn't do that just do that. You'd be in a black neighborhood walking down the street with a white - - but then when they got up and the white folks find out that - - they'd got to make some kind of break in the - - beginning to loosen up, beginning to break loose. But truth be speaking, I had a better time in Texas than I'm having here. But yet it still, I waited too late to come. That big house that there

you see on 169<sup>th</sup> St and Boston Rd I should of had that home. All those houses from Boston Rd down to Prospect Avenue but I didn't have enough brain.

BP: Why couldn't you get one of the homes, because you couldn't get it quick enough?

WG: Didn't have no brains, just had sense - - anybody had money, you know money - - with money and you could buy anything - - so I had money, know'd how to make money, still there wasn't goin' good for me 'cause I didn't do nothing with it.

BP: When you moved to New York, where did you live at first? Where was the first place you moved, was it Harlem or the Bronx?

WG: I didn't move to Harlem but that's the first place I stayed was in Harlem. I'd heard so much talk about Harlem and that's where I was doing. Then I still don't regret it because man I lived near the Apollo theater and all of the big shots and everything. I lived in that.

BP: Where was that, in the Bronx?

WG: No, in Harlem. Harlem has always been the biggest and the best but they wasn't able to bring it out and they could only go so far and that's what happened, but right now Harlem is one of the most popular places there is for Negro's today - - I got a pastor he tried to get, I didn't know they had that man living there, but he had a meeting and he said look, they selling out, I forget that Harlem - - it wasn't Harlem hospital, it's the one down close to St. Nicolas Avenue. Do you remember? Fredenham Hospital. Now he knows more about Negro's than me. But still he got us all together and in there had 7 millionaires and I didn't know a millionaire no more than a shoe shiner. [Laughs] But he had 7 million in his - - in this meeting. He said look, they getting' rid of Fredenham or whatever name it is - - getting rid of Freidenham Hospital - - said we got enough colored

people here, we got enough doctors here, we got enough workers here, that we can buy this hospital and it means a lot of good to the colored people. We didn't do it. So they went over and sold that hospital and he still regrets it. Millionaires didn't get up over that money.

BP: When did you move to the Bronx?

WG: I moved to the Bronx - - well, I would say in '47 I moved not to the Bronx, I was living here in the Bronx and had moved on up and then I bought some property and I kept it until about four years ago, maybe five. One of the worst mistakes I ever made in my life.

BP: Selling the property?

WG: Selling the property.

BP: It was in the Bronx?

WG: In the Bronx.

BP: When you moved to the Bronx and when you first came to Harlem, what kind of work were you doing?

WB: Shoe shining.

BP: That was how you made - -

WG: I was working for myself, I always worked for myself. I had a shoe shine parlor on 130<sup>th</sup> St and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue but I was working in a guys place that he was a shoe shine man that made shoes, you know. He was good at it. So asked him if he could put a place in there and man, did he ever regret when I had to leave.

BP: You made enough money to pay your rent?

WG: Oh yes. I'm still a master shoe shiner.

BP: What's the secret to shining shoes?

WG: Well the secret is that back bending, [Laughs] you get to rubbing them shoes until they shine. You can't play, you got to be able - - but I'm glad to the man who brought me up, the old colored man I never will forget. He said "Well son, you got to learn how to bend your back," and you know, so after I learned all of that and come to rely on myself, I never did have to work for nobody else.

BP: What other types of jobs did you do in New York?

WG: Oh I could do most anything. I could help lay concrete, I could work you know as a [Inaudible] - - any kind of work I could do.

BP: When you first moved to the Bronx, what neighborhood did you live in?

WG: I lived in my own home. I bought my own home.

BP: Where was it?

WG: Right there between - - I would say you wouldn't hardly know where it is - - its called Freeman St. and Boston Rd out there between 4<sup>th</sup> St and Boston Rd.

BP: Is that Morrisania? Is that called the Morrisania - -

WG: No, no. Morrisania was way down below me. I'm between Boston Rd and [Crosstalk].

BP: Now when you moved there was it all blacks or all whites or both?

WG: No they wasn't just - - they was more white than they were black in there but once in a while you know how that goes - - a Negro would get in there and then first thing you know had a bunch of Negro's to move in there. Whether you know it or not, but I know it, but when them Negro's go to coming in, them rich white people go to moving out. So that's when I began to move in there. I really don't regret it because it was my fault. The

same house that I bought I could have got even \$10,000 for it, didn't have sense enough to wait. Later I can't recall her name, but she was the seller woman, and she told us well we're never gonna get rid of this hand. Said this is one hand is worth a lot of money and that's when - - I forget - - hell, he knew more of them big-shot people than I do, but yet still I said to him, not him, to the guy that she told him not to get rid of that stuff, he went on and he got rid of it. But still I ain't never regretted coming to New York to stay and I should have went on back when I was in the position to do that. Never did go back - - but there's a lot of people going back south, lot of them. [Crosstalk]

BP: When you left Texas Mr. Goodwin, what was it - - did you witness something specific? You said it was discrimination - -

WG: When you look at the way the Negro's were being treated, and besides some of them were your own people. Now to get down to what he's talking about, one my nephews went to army. He come back home and walked in the house and he hadn't got in that door before this white man walked in behind him. Didn't say nothing to him, walked on by. But then when he said man, what's wrong? They would have killed him. But he was a 33<sup>rd</sup> Degree Mason so they got him out. But that's one of the reasons why I left.

BP: Did he fight the white man that walked in - -

WG: Why can't he fight a white man? You can't even do that now! [Laughs] Course that's the way back then. There's a lot of it going on, but it ain't like you can just do it. But right now the white man has always been a coward and he always will be because the Negro's if they tell you don't be there when I come back, you better not be there.

Because he's coming back. But I ain't never just - - been treated so bad that it made me leave Texas. It just didn't - - was the way a white man would treat you. And they're still



doing it and I don't want to just there anywhere you go, you just stay there long enough  
and you'll see it still in the streets. [Crosstalk]

Oh sure I used to stay with him! I used to stay with - - my mother used to keep two white  
boys and you don't know about that - - had a tub big and round as that, put all three of us  
in that tub. That's right. Not in South Carolina, in Texas. But still, it was happening in  
South Carolina, any kind of Carolina, Missouri, all those places. That's right. But yet it  
still getting back to these white people and since I've been here, I have a brother-in-law  
and he's blacker than I am - - and you know that's saying a whole lot - - they went and  
they mother was so good - - they went out to her and they got the wash tub and put that  
salt and stuff in and going to make him white. [Laughs] But this happens. But just  
lucky my mother had [Inaudible] go out and look and when she seen what was coming  
out of them bars, she couldn't go no further.

BP: When you lived in the Bronx did you attend any churches?

WG: Still the same church I was always going to, I'm still going to that same church.

BP: Which church is that?

WG: [Inaudible] Baptist Church.

BP: Where is that located?

WG: That's located on Hoover Avenue and 172<sup>nd</sup> right there and if you wanna hear some  
good preaching, just walk in there. [Crosstalk]

BP: Aside from the church were you a member of any other types of groups?

WG: Oh yes. I marched with Martin Luther King so many times.

BP: Really, you left from the Bronx?

WG: Went to Selma Alabama when that white woman got killed. I was there. Besides so many other places I've been but that don't mean nothing. [Laughs]

BP: So did you go to Washington DC when - -

WG: That's right. Not this last move now, but the first move that he made in Washington DC I and my nephew was there.

BP: When he said "I have a dream - -" ?

WG: I have a dream. There ain't no song or no story would beat that story. I couldn't believe when they stopped and got it for you that you could ride in the front seat of the bus. I couldn't believe it. I was with 'em, but that just never come in my mind that you'd be able to do that. Then another thing that made me leave Texas, I never did go around too much because I had my own car. White folks didn't like that. My car broke down and I had to go about 40 miles to get back to where my car was so, I got on the bus and sat down and the bus driver stopped the bus. He said "What is wrong with you?" I said "What do you mean what's wrong with me?" He said "You know niggers can't sit on no front seat." I had two nephews with me at that time and I got that thing in my life I told 'em, then when I seen that what people been saying was happening was happening. So me, I jumped up, told 'em bout my two nephews in there and I'm not going - - so a lot of the rest of the Negro's in there didn't say nothing - - Lord just spoke to me and said "Boy, you can't run this country by yourself." [Laughter] So I looked and I did, I walked on to the back and sat down and that's probably what saved me. But they were going to beat me up. Course I wanted to go ride - -

BP: This is when you went to go visit in the south?

WG: Right.

BP: When you were living in New York?

WG: Oh no. Lord I was there living in the south. Because that woman, I forget her name even, but Rosa Park I believe was her name, but that woman, she had nerve. She didn't always just sit down and do this - - she didn't do it. She wasn't afraid.

[END TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE; BEGIN TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

WG: So that's when that March started out, but I never did figure it was going to end that way.

BP: What about in the Bronx itself, were there people protesting for equal rights in the Bronx?

WG: Yes it was - - definitely. There's still people doing it, but they got such a few that it's probably the rule that Martin left - - 'till it ain't paid too much attention. You were around, you get around, you will see for yourself. There ain't many people that even paid Martin Luther King's birthday any attention.

BP: Who were some of the black leaders in the Bronx that were fighting for equal rights?

WG: Well truth be speaking I can't say that - - because I'm a good friend with a lot of them, especially in my past. I never would believe that these guys would do that and see that them dog was coming after them, guns were shot after them, water was poured on them - -

BP: Who's this?

WG: Martin Luther King. And I'm not going to remember what I hear, I was little. And like I said when that white woman got killed, I didn't get afraid of nothing. But what I did get afraid of, I had to take one of my daughter in-laws out in the country and this white man followed me at least 25 miles. And the lord was good to me that time. Before

we got farther, now this is me saying this, knock us off or kill us you know, I had to go ahead into the pastor and the lord saved us when we turned off, you know they can't come into that pastor so that saved me there. And I never did follow Martin Luther King no more after that because everything was getting in there.

BP: What types of racial discrimination existed in the Bronx during that time? Could black folks live anywhere they wanted?

WG: No. No they couldn't live anywhere they wanted. They did live in a lot of places that they never would have thought they'd of been able to live, but they didn't live any place they wanted to live in.

BP: There was still discrimination.

WG: There was still discrimination. But yet still, the discrimination mostly come because Negro's were beginning to move out of the Bronx. Move way up around Throgsneck and around them there, and they find out they could move up there and that's when - - I would say this myself - - that's the reason the white man began to come back. He began to come back and having a lot of meetings that I know. But they found out that they were done all right to come back, and that's the reason why they began to buy these buildings and things back.

BP: When did you move to the Grand Concourse?

WG: Grand Concourse in '91.

BP: Oh and before that you lived in your own house?

WG: Yes.

BP: In West Farms - -

WG: No.

BP: Oh on Boston Rd.

WG: On Boston Rd between Boston Rd and Freeman St. But I'm glad you brought that up, this here is what been read about. I went to the courthouse when I bought this house. I was working for a white man that he thought because I'm from the south, now I can be treated any kind of way. So I was working for him \$20 a week and I told him well then you're going to have to raise me. I said when I first started working for you I was just a chauffer. Now we go up on top of the house and when we got through, we done finished the whole house. And I think I'm worth more money than what I'm getting. He said "Well," he says "I'd tell ya, in New York, you get what you are worth." And he said "You ain't worth no more than \$22." So I went to court on that. The white lady - - that's when 121<sup>st</sup> St and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, that was the biggest court around anywhere. [Crosstalk] Yes, the building's still there, but they don't have court there. [Crosstalk] That same - - that was big on in them days for colored people, I can't call his name but was in California and he moved back here now. No it wasn't him - - he was a big lawyer, you know his name but I can't call it - - but anyway, he was at - - I mean at court that day. So this white lady got up and said, "Well, what is y'all trying to do? Tryin' to run everybody out of New York?" My lawyer says "No Ms. So and So, he's a professional. He come up here and bought his own land and everything, he's a tax payer and everything." She said, "That makes no difference," she said "I'm giving him three more months." They didn't make a move out of the house that I had bought. [Laughs] I never did forget that.

BP: How would you say the Bronx has changed over time?

WG: Oh it's changed a lot. It's changed for the better and the people that wanted to be something or you know, it's changed a lot. Look at - - I can't call the name of it, but that

place up there on Wilkins Avenue, you know all of those houses - - you know there wasn't no houses down at Negro's could be living in, but almost everything now that's on Boston Rd going up towards 174<sup>th</sup> St, most of them houses belong to Negro's.

BP: Now?

WG: Now. Then you couldn't buy one.

BP: How would they stop Negroes from buying houses? What would they do?

WG: Well - - money would do anything today, much less then. But the ones that had money and was able to buy, they went on and bought 'em.

BP: But how would white folks stop black people from buying?

WG: They couldn't stop 'em, there wasn't hardly any white folks around there. You know that where as I know, anywhere where all the white folks live, Negroes are next in coming in, they going someplace else.

BP: So it was just when one black family moved in then - -

WG: No it wasn't one. I had - - his sister lived here, she went down and had a child by her - - she had cares because she had majored in army and they wouldn't even let her by. But before then, finally got one Negro was buying everybody else. Most Negroes, however you see there, on Wilkins St and Boston Rd, most of them houses belong to Negroes. [Crosstalk] I wasn't even gonna walk from Selma to Montgomery. From Montgomery I mean to - - I can't call the name of that place. But we went on across that bridge and I remember they blocked us and we went back and then had to come back across that bridge - - then the next day we went and got enough people that walked across that bridge.

BP: And you made it across.

WG: Made it across.

BP: Were you afraid?

WG: Sure you gonna be afraid! You have all them white people with guns and you ain't got nothing. We weren't even allowed to have bricks or anything to fight with. That's one thing I loved that man to death, he says no fighting. I can't call the name of it, but these people they wanted to take over themselves, but yet instill, he said no, no fighting.

BP: Did you think Dr. King, he had a better message than someone like Malcolm X?

WG: Yes.

BP: You thought so?

WG: Yes. He may not have been enthusiastic as him, but he had a better going forward message than anybody. Not just only him - - that means white too. He had the best - - how many people would see would get a bunch of people and wouldn't let them fight or hit you back or do anything - - how many would you see out there? He wouldn't let no - - I don't care how bad you was, what bad thing you come from, no, no, no fighting.

Well, he done this and done that - - that's when I quit, when that white woman got killed I said well, I'm going to quit because I done seen too much coming into this march and I quit.

Voice (V): Mr. Goodwin, did you know Pastor Vernon Johns who was at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church before Dr. Martin Luther King became pastor? Did you know Pastor Vernon Johns?

WG: No. My mind goes backwards you know at my age now, I can't think of too many people's names.

V: Because according to history, he was asked by the sheriff in Georgia to go north because there was some talk about discrimination around the church and Pastor Vernon Johns told his congregation "If you see a good fight, get in it." And the board of Deacons brought it to ask him to leave the church because they felt he was leading the church towards violence.

WG: Well that's one thing about it.

BP: I just have a few more - - When you went to DC with Dr. King, when you went to Selma, did you go from the Bronx with your church or did you go by yourself?

WG: No - - out of the Bronx had to go.

BP: From the Bronx?

WG: Right.

BP: Who did you go with?

WG: No I have never told - -

BP: No, not the people, did you travel with your church or your - -

WG: Well, yes there was mostly church people.

BP: Were there a lot of people from the Bronx that went?

WG: Oh yes.

BP: We heard that Reverend Edgar Hawkins of St. Augustine Presbyterian, that he organized a lot of buses to go down to that event. I was wondering if you might - -

WG: Well truth be speaking I can't remember all of those things, but there was buses that left and went from here to there, but then in still, I can't remember - - too tough now - - who they was - - just like the first - - big bus thing that ever was, was when they went



to Washington that time in March. And I couldn't believe that was staying, but I went.

And after I seen it stood up I just said no I couldn't do anything but feel ya.

BP: If you had something, a message that you wanted to say to other people, especially from your experience, what would it be? What would you want to share with people, a lesson you've learned from your life that you think is important to share?

WG: Well the only message that I would have would be that you got to quit going to the devil and serve the lord. And that's always been my - - and my mother was a Christian woman and that's one reason why the - - If you see the most Christian people, they [Inaudible] They go out there, and do it all there own thing, but next thing you know they don't even come back in. Coming in serving the lord. That's another thing about the generation of today, we have so many people against one another. It ain't going to straighten up until you trust the lord and serve the lord because it cannot be straightened up if you just talking too long. I lived through a many dark phases, but ain't never one I went through that the lord didn't see me through. I've been shot at and I've even tried to be robbed, the lord was just always with me. But like I said, I never did have a bad word said to me in Texas until this white woman here in the court, when she was listening to my testimony, and coming to writing down. And when she got through writing, she looked at me and said "Well what y'all trying to do, you tryin' to run everybody out of New York?" And my lawyer he says, "Well look, this man is coming here to buy property, and he pays taxes." She said, "That makes no difference." Gave me 6 more months before I get in into my own house. I never did forget that.

BP: And that happened in New York, not Texas.

WG: New York, right down on 181<sup>st</sup> St and 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue before they moved those trains from - - and when she said that, I didn't think I was going to go over there but jumped up my lawyer grabbed quick [Laughter] he thought I was going to make a fool out of myself. But I never did forget that.

BP: Mr. Goodwin thank you very much for your time sir.

WG: Well I don't say I wish we had more time. [Laughter] You just learned a little more than what you want to hear and just I told a little bit that I should have told a long time ago, but the only reason you sitting up there now. He may not know, you may not know, that man is because you sitting right there.

BP: That's true.

WG: Not that I - - I always got along with everybody. Your color don't mean nothing, just the way you treat me, treat other people, and you did such a good job there. I'm old enough to know and to tell when you make one of them - - [Laughter] But yet still this is the lord's work and he gone keep on working 'till he get us all back together. I may not live to see it but god is going to bring us all back together and the reason I know that, I been here like I was saying ever since '45. I've been right here in the Bronx. But yet still, I have known places right here in New York, you couldn't go to the church. There were churches you couldn't go to. But right now, you got one - - if you serve the lord you walk in, course there's no door closed that the lord won't let you walk in. There ain't many people want to hear that kind of message, but if - - I wish you would have been able to go to church with me on Sunday. Not because you were white, but that do makes a difference. We don't have that many white people in our churches that we supposed to

have, and we ain't never gonna have them until they get god inside of them and you get

god inside of you; we can all get together.

BP: Right.

WG: OK now I know you got your own things you got to do.

BP: Thank you Mr. Goodwin.