

Margaret Bishop White: Well, my.

Chris Stewart: Did you have a costume?

Margaret Bishop White: Costumes.

Chris Stewart: Mm-hmm.

Margaret Bishop White: We didn't go out unless we had costumes on.

Chris Stewart: Right. Were they glittery?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Were they shiny?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah. Some of them glittery and some of them shiny, some of them wasn't. I liked it too.

Chris Stewart: What were the styles for, I mean, the styles that you used when you were performing, when you were singing?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, it'd be long.

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Margaret Bishop White: Split up, something like that. All a little heavy in what I am now. There's some of mine, that picture and that in there, all a little heavier.

Chris Stewart: Do you have any pictures of yourself while you were performing?

Margaret Bishop White: Not too many. The children takes them from me, they won't let me have them.

Chris Stewart: They do?

Margaret Bishop White: No, that. Which one? Me? No, I don't know where that's at. Guess they got it when Isadora was sick. I had one that I had a dress on.

Chris Stewart: Would you—

Margaret Bishop White: Well, I got this one in that one.

Chris Stewart: Is this you?

Margaret Bishop White: That's me right there in the corner.

Chris Stewart: Not this one.

Margaret Bishop White: No.

Chris Stewart: This.

Margaret Bishop White: This.

Chris Stewart: Okay. But this is, how old are you? You're older here, aren't you?

Margaret Bishop White: I was in my forties.

Chris Stewart: When were you singing? How old were you when you were singing?

Margaret Bishop White: Young.

Chris Stewart: How old is young?

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, in twenties or thirties.

Chris Stewart: Would you ever sing in at people's houses, at house parties or some or?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, if they want me to.

Chris Stewart: How long were you in Chicago? You said 30?

Margaret Bishop White: 30 some years.

Chris Stewart: Yeah. So you said you moved there after you graduated from Williston?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah. I come out of school and I stayed here quite a while.

Chris Stewart: How long did you stay here?

Margaret Bishop White: I don't know, but I used to work with Mr. Freeman. We used to have the Freeman

Shoe Shop downtown there. I used to help him on Front Street.

Chris Stewart: On Front Street?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: What kind of work would you do there?

Margaret Bishop White: Clean and sell shoes. When I was going to school I worked right alone. Then sometime I would volunteer there to the hospital.

Chris Stewart: At Community.

Margaret Bishop White: Community.

Chris Stewart: What kind of work would you do at Community?

Margaret Bishop White: Get flowers and take the people out in the yard and things like that.

Chris Stewart: Sounds like you were busy.

Margaret Bishop White: I'd rather be busy than not to be busy.

Chris Stewart: So you were going to school, volunteering at Community, and working at Freeman Shoe Shop?

Margaret Bishop White: Mm-hmm.

Chris Stewart: Wow.

Margaret Bishop White: That wasn't bad.

Chris Stewart: Well.

Margaret Bishop White: It wasn't hard.

Chris Stewart: No, I don't imagine.

Margaret Bishop White: No. Anything was harder when you had those little stripes on, carrying those people out, and some of them felt like laid, carrying them out on in the rolling chair, and that was the only thing.

Chris Stewart: What area? Did you volunteer all over the hospital?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah. Just like they come in with flowers. The flowers, florist come in and bring flowers, you came to the different room.

Chris Stewart: Yeah. So you stayed here then for quite a while.

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Why did you decide to move to Chicago?

Margaret Bishop White: I got sick of Wilmington. I got fed up off it.

Chris Stewart: What were you fed up of?

Margaret Bishop White: It wasn't nothing here, you couldn't get a decent job or nothing like that.

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Margaret Bishop White: I went somewhere where I could get a decent job, come right back here and I still ain't hitting no nothing.

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Margaret Bishop White: You know what I mean?

Chris Stewart: Yeah. There were no decent jobs for Blacks?

Margaret Bishop White: No.

Chris Stewart: What kinds of work could you have? I mean, what kinds of work was available to you?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, what I wanted to do, because it can be pick and choose. Nursing work is my thing. And then I took up that, see. I took that up. And then you go to school for that and take up different little things and all, you can use it, computer and all of those things. And sometime that you don't catch on, but you can soon catch on what to do, so that's what.

Chris Stewart: Did you say you went to nursing school?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Where did you go?

Margaret Bishop White: I went down in Cape Fear for a while after I came back. Then I went somewhere else.

Chris Stewart: After you came back from, in '70?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Okay. Well, why did you leave Wilmington? Said you were sick of it.

Margaret Bishop White: I certainly were.

Chris Stewart: What kinds of work did you want to do when you were here back then that you couldn't have done?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, I tell you, I didn't want no, I used to work in, I used to work the GE awhile.

Chris Stewart: Before you left?

Margaret Bishop White: No, since I've been back. GE wasn't even built when I left.

Chris Stewart: I see. The kinds of work that most people have told me they've had to do, most women, it's been service work.

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Most of the women I've talked to have done service work were teaching.

Margaret Bishop White: Uh-huh, teaching.

Chris Stewart: So how did you get up to Chicago?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, I caught the plane and got going.

Chris Stewart: Flew?

Margaret Bishop White: Sure flew up there.

Chris Stewart: Oh, wow. You flew when? Around what time was this? In the '40s?

Margaret Bishop White: No, I think that was '30s. That was '30s.

Chris Stewart: Yeah?

Margaret Bishop White: I come back and forth to see my mother and all like that. I mean, I live with me. I went right on and got me a job.

Chris Stewart: Where'd you get a job?

Margaret Bishop White: I was lucky.

Chris Stewart: Where?

Margaret Bishop White: What I was doing is looking, had a great big light like this in looking at eggs.

Chris Stewart: Eggs.

Margaret Bishop White: Egg factory.

Chris Stewart: And what was the name of the place that you worked?

Margaret Bishop White: I can't remember. I didn't put it down.

Chris Stewart: So what were you looking at eggs for?

Margaret Bishop White: You could tell if they're solid. Some of them have biddies in them. Some of them is not firm like they should be and all like that.

Chris Stewart: I see. So was this to decide whether or not there were chickens in them or whether?

Margaret Bishop White: That's right.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Margaret Bishop White: That's right.

Chris Stewart: Okay. And how long did you work there?

Margaret Bishop White: I didn't do that here. I worked there for around about three years.

Chris Stewart: Were you singing up there when you were working there at the church?

Margaret Bishop White: I do a little bit.

Chris Stewart: You did.

Margaret Bishop White: In the dance place.

Chris Stewart: Yeah. And now we're talking about Chicago, right?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Okay, this when you first got up to Chicago.

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, I did a little bit of that and a little bit of, my real job was looking at those chicken, them eggs.

Chris Stewart: Right, that beside you would use to sing. How much money could you make?

Margaret Bishop White: If you was able to make it, you could make all you want. Didn't have nothing to do with what you make.

Chris Stewart: How much money could you make singing?

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, sometime in a night I could make 100.

Chris Stewart: Oh, wow.

Margaret Bishop White: I wouldn't go home until morning.

Chris Stewart: Yeah, you'd be out there a long time, huh?

Margaret Bishop White: Yes.

Chris Stewart: Would that be in tips as well as just getting paid? People tip you?

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, sure.

Chris Stewart: For singing?

Margaret Bishop White: Sometimes \$50, \$20.

Chris Stewart: Big spenders. Were you singing for mixed crowds, both White and Black or were they?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, we all mixed together.

Chris Stewart: You were?

Margaret Bishop White: Mm-hmm.

Chris Stewart: Where did you live? When or how did you find a place to live in Chicago when you moved?

Margaret Bishop White: I had people up there.

Chris Stewart: You did?

Margaret Bishop White: Mm-hmm.

Chris Stewart: So did you live with them or did you?

Margaret Bishop White: I lived with them for while then I got my own apartment.

Chris Stewart: Did you live by yourself or?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, I lived by myself afterwards. I got.

Chris Stewart: How was it?

Margaret Bishop White: And they say they'd get on your feet.

Chris Stewart: Yeah. How was it, living by yourself?

Margaret Bishop White: Just fine.

Chris Stewart: You liked it.

Margaret Bishop White: I liked it, much better.

Chris Stewart: How come?

Margaret Bishop White: Because my business my business (laughs) just like that.

Chris Stewart: You can come and go as you please?

Margaret Bishop White: As I please, that's what I was getting ready to say.

Chris Stewart: Do what you wanted to do?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah. But if you visit someone else, you can't do it. You got to come in a certain time,

like that. And if you want to get out and go over 12 o'clock or one o'clock, that's your business, you go.

Chris Stewart: What kinds of stuff would you do for fun in Chicago?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, it's a lot of fun to do there. Going different places and all like that, holsters and all. You love things like that.

Chris Stewart: Was there a special street or a special area where the night hotspots were in Chicago?

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, sure.

Chris Stewart: Where?

Margaret Bishop White: It was a block from where y'all stayed at, all I had to do was go around the corner.

Chris Stewart: What was the name of the place?

Margaret Bishop White: I can't think of it.

Chris Stewart: What was the street?

Margaret Bishop White: I can't think of that. I'll tell you, I'm not the same I used to be. I can't think about these. You asking these things, I know where I was.

Chris Stewart: Sure, right around the corner.

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah. But I couldn't tell you right now the street and nothing like that.

Chris Stewart: What kinds of places were on the street that you, where the hotspots were? Were they nightclubs?

Margaret Bishop White: Nightclubs.

Chris Stewart: Cafes was there?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, you could eat there. You could eat, drink.

Chris Stewart: Were there any movie theaters?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, you could see movie theaters and singing and dancing in the back there. One part is where you eat, another part like that.

Chris Stewart: I talked to a woman who lived in Baltimore for a while and her husband owned a.

Margaret Bishop White: Cafe?

Chris Stewart: Cafe and nightclub and she's got a picture of it. And on one side it's the cafe, and the other side it's blackened out.

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, yeah.

Chris Stewart: The windows are all blackened out, so the other side is the nightclub.

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, yeah.

Chris Stewart: It's a great picture. Great picture. But it's in Baltimore. Yeah, so they had those kinds of places in Chicago.

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, yeah.

Chris Stewart: Yeah. Was it safe for a woman to go to those places alone?

Margaret Bishop White: Most of the time I get out and go wherever I wanted to. But you can't do it now they says.

Chris Stewart: No.

Margaret Bishop White: No.

Chris Stewart: Would there be any things that could happen to you?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, sure. A lot can happen.

Chris Stewart: What?

Margaret Bishop White: Because if it's a mean person, they can hide somewhere, grab you, kill you, choke you to death, cut your throat.

Chris Stewart: Did you ever hear of anything like that happening when you were up there?

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, sure. Yeah. Always. Any place you go at, you hear talk of things like that.

Chris Stewart: How did you protect yourself while you were up there?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, I was on it. I took karate a little bit.

Chris Stewart: You did?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, protect myself. And I wasn't, I said, in any way I wasn't dumb when I went up there. I was on my Ps and Qs. It was a good while before I made a lot of friends.

Chris Stewart: It was a good while before you made a lot of friends?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: How come?

Margaret Bishop White: Because I was new and I didn't know a lot of the people. Some of them I met, but I didn't know. I treat them right, but I wouldn't go so far.

Chris Stewart: Sounds like you were pretty careful.

Margaret Bishop White: I am. I'm that now. And I can't stand a person walk behind me. If I go out here there, I go out this way and go to the college and can catch the bus and somebody come behind me, I'll cross another way. I just don't like that. You don't know if they'll get up on you and knock in the head or nothing. It's so mean here and anywhere else.

Chris Stewart: Well, it's pretty mean here in North, in Wilmington. I've noticed that.

Margaret Bishop White: Yes. You better watch too. Well, let's pray. These people here now is something else. You used to hear it up the road, but up the road is bad in some spots, but Wilmington is getting rough.

Chris Stewart: We've actually noticed it more from White people. White people are not very nice here at Wilmington. We spend a lot of time.

Margaret Bishop White: I tell you, Wilmington is not the best, no way. I'm going to tell you right up and down. These laws here, I ain't never seen nothing like it.

Chris Stewart: What do you mean?

Margaret Bishop White: They don't have no law here.

Chris Stewart: Yes?

Margaret Bishop White: Because sometimes that they can do something, it'll stop being so nutty. They think they knows it all. See, they don't know it all. You can call can say somebody's around your house and call

the police there. He going to put the sirens on. If he come, he could catch somebody if he wouldn't put the sirens on. There's a lady right in the back of me and she's fighting. She died and they all, somebody want to start to break in her house and call the cops. You ought to hear them, all those sirens, you can't catch nobody like that. That giving people the way to get away and look right at you. Some of them come right back to the crowd.

Chris Stewart: Yeah, and watch.

Margaret Bishop White: And watch. How dumb can you get? That's dumb. And they be talking to this and dumb, and the eyes going around and they still ain't knowing what's happening. They'd still dumb to the facts. So yeah, because right here, right side of me, since this road come through here, it was a car. Somebody stole it, we didn't know it until after. And the car burned up right over there.

Chris Stewart: Wow.

Margaret Bishop White: Yes sir.

Chris Stewart: It burned out? Somebody burned it up?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, they caught it. Yeah, it burned up and the man got away.

Chris Stewart: Wow. How close to the house was it?

Margaret Bishop White: Right there to the road.

Chris Stewart: It's pretty close.

Margaret Bishop White: Yes, it is. In the woods around there, burnt. He could have come right onto the house close to where we did. We put the holes there so he could, but the side of the house.

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Margaret Bishop White: But I tell you right up and down, there's something here. And it's worse since that road got through there. In the nighttime, you hear.

Chris Stewart: Since the road came through that connects with the animals.

Margaret Bishop White: It's awful. It's no easy street. Every time you hear vroom.

Chris Stewart: Sirens?

Margaret Bishop White: Sirens. Didn't catch nobody.

Chris Stewart: What did your grandparents or parents ever talk to you about the Wilmington Riot?

Margaret Bishop White: Oh yeah, I knew about the Wilmington Riot, I was here.

Chris Stewart: Will you tell me about it?

Margaret Bishop White: I was around. Well, your—

Chris Stewart: You talk about the riots that happened right as soon as you got back? Yeah, okay.

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, some of it I didn't see, but I know about some of it. So they had to have guns and walking up and down. Couldn't even walk the street. You had to be in a certain time.

Chris Stewart: Curfews?

Margaret Bishop White: Curfew. No, you couldn't be out in the street. At certain time, you better be in your house.

Chris Stewart: What would happen if you weren't?

Margaret Bishop White: Anything that happened to you, they didn't have anything to do with it, that's what they tell you. You don't know what it happened. Somebody could shoot you, cut your throat, beat you up, leave you on the street.

Chris Stewart: Then the police wouldn't have anything to do with it?

Margaret Bishop White: Ain't got nothing to do with it.

Chris Stewart: What about the riot that took place a long time ago? Did your grandparents or parents ever tell you about that one?

Margaret Bishop White: That's been a very long time.

Chris Stewart: Did they ever tell you what they?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, they said some things about it, but that went away from us after us. But I'll tell you right here now, the right, they're always doing something. I was there on the bus about two weeks ago. And that man jumped out the car and had the shotgun. And we was on the bus. And bus driver, now they got the phone on the bus, he called the man, and when they come they got to have the heavy sirens on and it was right out there in a car lot.

Chris Stewart: This just happened recently?

Margaret Bishop White: Two weeks ago.

Chris Stewart: Wow.

Margaret Bishop White: Right out there.

Chris Stewart: Doesn't seem like a very safe place to live, huh?

Margaret Bishop White: Well I tell you, if I didn't have, was getting younger now, I wouldn't stay here. And after my mother health failed her and she was here and she didn't want to go with me so I made the best of it I could. And stayed and tend to her until she passed. But I've never been here in Wilmington long ago.

Chris Stewart: Did those kinds of things, the things that you're just talking about right now, did that influence your decision to leave originally too, in addition to your job?

Margaret Bishop White: No. I'll tell you, I'm retired now. I don't do no whole work or nothing like that unless they called me in to do something.

Chris Stewart: But when you left back when you were younger? I mean, were you upset about your safety or anything else while you were here? Or was it just that you wanted to get better work or?

Margaret Bishop White: I wanted to get some work to do, because see, when I was coming up, I always had a little something to do to help me along with my schooling. And what my mother did for me and my father, that helped, you know what I mean? I didn't have to go to them all the time for something.

Chris Stewart: Right.

Margaret Bishop White: And that mean a lot. That's the way we was raised.

Chris Stewart: Right.

Margaret Bishop White: Mother may have and father may have, God bless the child that got his own.

Chris Stewart: Right.

Margaret Bishop White: So I'm still that way. And you work here and it takes so much now to live. And I'm not going to burn up. My light billing thing is high, but I just paid. If they elect you and they're getting so now because so many people ain't doing, ain't one bad sheet make it bad for them. You know that? Well, you pay your bills, somebody else will. And it make it hard for you. But they'll make you pay for what they haven't paid.

Chris Stewart: Yeah, that's true. Especially electric.

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, that's what it's all about.

Chris Stewart: Did you ever marry?

Margaret Bishop White: Yes.

Chris Stewart: How'd you meet your husband?

Margaret Bishop White: I met my husband one night dancing and singing. And I'm sorry I ever met him.

Chris Stewart: You are?

Margaret Bishop White: Yes.

Chris Stewart: How come?

Margaret Bishop White: Me and him couldn't make it.

Chris Stewart: Yeah? How come?

Margaret Bishop White: His way and my way wasn't just annoying.

Chris Stewart: How were you different?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, I just couldn't be bothered with him. See, the things I like, he didn't like, and things he liked, I didn't like.

Chris Stewart: What were the things that you liked that he didn't like?

Margaret Bishop White: See, I loved to dance and go and enjoy myself like that. I'd work now.

Chris Stewart: Oh yeah, I know.

Margaret Bishop White: But he didn't like that.

Chris Stewart: Really?

Margaret Bishop White: And I'm not a person that going to sit right down or nothing like that. I got to feel bad. Or it's hot out there like it is now, I ain't going up there.

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Margaret Bishop White: But he didn't like that and couldn't get along. And everybody look at you, you going with that person you're making a date at, and anybody look at you and talking to you and seeing this man making an eye. I don't want nothing like that, I can't be bothered.

Chris Stewart: How long did you marry? Did you stay married?

Margaret Bishop White: I stayed married to a good little while and I left him, sure did. That's my baby right there. Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Where did you go live when you left him?

Margaret Bishop White: I come and stayed by my mother.

Chris Stewart: That's when you came down here?

Margaret Bishop White: Stayed in my mother for a while.

Chris Stewart: Oh, you did?

Margaret Bishop White: Uh-huh. And I went on, attended my business.

Chris Stewart: When did you go to New York?

Margaret Bishop White: That was.

Chris Stewart: So why did you go to New York? Let's put it that way.

Margaret Bishop White: To see how the New York is because I heard so much about.

Chris Stewart: Yeah?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: How was New York different from Chicago?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, if I was going to stay anywhere, Chicago, I would stay. Now New York, I don't care too much about New York for staying there.

Chris Stewart: Okay.

Margaret Bishop White: Visiting is all right for a while, but staying there for all way, I don't want it.

Chris Stewart: How come?

Margaret Bishop White: I just don't like the setup there.

Chris Stewart: What's the setup?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, the setup is, it's so many that you see walking the street and when you drive ride those subways, they so slick to, it's pitiful. They'll cut your pocket right off your clothes and you'd be standing there and you don't feel it.

Chris Stewart: Wow.

Margaret Bishop White: And when you get on the subways, you got to do one of your numbers going like this in hand. And they got a chance to cut you, because when I went up there, I didn't never had my little change in my pocketbook or nothing like that. I would always have it somewhere else.

Chris Stewart: Where would you keep it?

Margaret Bishop White: I'd keep it on me. (laughs)

Chris Stewart: Exactly where on you would you keep it?

Margaret Bishop White: Mm-hmm! (laughs)

Chris Stewart: Uh-huh, okay. (both laugh)

Margaret Bishop White: So they wouldn't, I didn't like that. And they would be upside of you, doing like this hand. And next thing you know, you look for your bag. If you had a bag that hang on in you, that bag be gone. You don't know where it back.

Chris Stewart: Yeah. Were you working there in New York as well or were you just visiting?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, I worked there for a while and I got tired of that. I went a little further. I wanted to see some of the world in my getting around. That's what I love. I went to Remington, Delaware. Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia.

Chris Stewart: Did you live in these places or did you visit?

Margaret Bishop White: I go and stay there for a while.

Chris Stewart: Is it—

Margaret Bishop White: If I didn't like it, I'd go somewhere else, get further.

Chris Stewart: Was this when you were married or is this after you were married?

Margaret Bishop White: Since I've been married, I'd go like that. But what I like, I like, and what I don't like, I just don't like it.

Chris Stewart: Which places did you like?

Margaret Bishop White: No. Some parts of Philadelphia on the outskirts of town. Not right in the town part, on the outskirts of town, I liked that.

Chris Stewart: What'd you like about it?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, it's quiet out there and you could just enjoy yourself and the people were more friendly, and the ones way up in the city park.

Chris Stewart: Right.

Margaret Bishop White: And then the ones where in Washington and different places, it was all right. But at certain places you stay, it wasn't so nice to stay. They're rough.

Chris Stewart: So this was still during segregation?

Margaret Bishop White: Uh-huh. And see, I didn't like that, so I just kept, go a little further.

Chris Stewart: Were you doing any singing while you were doing that?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, I sing a little bit in the nightclubs.

Chris Stewart: Would you be working in those places before you were?

Margaret Bishop White: Oh yeah, in the night, and I'd go to any night and I'd have to have someone to escort me out. I would walk out there, there was a lot of cutting my throat or anything, see it was rough.

Chris Stewart: Did you have kids then?

Margaret Bishop White: He wasn't born then. I had another one, he died. But see, the way I was doing here, if I didn't have a regular job, I'd sing for mine, I still was making something. And when you go places like that

and they seen you somewhere else and they come another town or something like that. "Oh, I've seen her," she can't sing. No, like that. You can't go nowhere. If you go in the powder room or something like that, because you don't know what's going to happen.

Chris Stewart: How would you find out places to sing when you would get into a new place? Into a new?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, at that time, the different bands would go from place to place.

Chris Stewart: So you'd find out?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, busy bands I would work with.

Chris Stewart: Okay, so you were really almost on tour.

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: You tour from place to place?

Margaret Bishop White: I enjoyed it.

Chris Stewart: Do you remember the name of your band?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, let's see. Fats Domino was going and then, what's this other one name? I can't think of his name now. I'd go along with them, different ones. Then it was a Johnson Band and they come to Wilmington several times. See, I kept up along with them too.

Chris Stewart: Would you sing with the Johnson Band?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: So you'd come back to Wilmington occasionally?

Margaret Bishop White: Come back to Wilmington occasional.

Chris Stewart: Did you say you sang with Fats Domino?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: You sang with Fats Domino?

Margaret Bishop White: Domino sometimes in the band.

Chris Stewart: The real?

Margaret Bishop White: Fats Domino.

Chris Stewart: The Blueberry Hill, what?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Well, I'll be. I'm in the presence of a real celebrity. (White laughs) Would you be singing backup?

Margaret Bishop White: Sometimes.

Chris Stewart: What other kinds of things would you do with that band?

Margaret Bishop White: Well.

Chris Stewart: Did you play any instruments?

Margaret Bishop White: I don't play nothing now. I used to.

Chris Stewart: Band?

Margaret Bishop White: I used to.

Chris Stewart: What did you play?

Margaret Bishop White: Horn. Blow a horn.

Chris Stewart: You would? What horn would you blow? Would you blow a trumpet?

Margaret Bishop White: Trumpet? I loved that.

Chris Stewart: How was it, a woman blowing a trumpet?

Margaret Bishop White: I'm not bad. I play a piano.

Chris Stewart: You would play piano too. Would you be doing any of this with Fats Domino?

Margaret Bishop White: Sometimes. Most of the times.

Chris Stewart: Did you ever record with him?

Margaret Bishop White: Sometime.

Chris Stewart: When?

Margaret Bishop White: It'll be sometime six months or something like that, that he didn't have someone to go with him or do with him.

Chris Stewart: Where would you record? When you go into the studio, would you record in the studio?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, we have a place that we'd meet.

Chris Stewart: Where was that? Was that in New York or?

Margaret Bishop White: In New York or wherever he'd be at, because he didn't never stay no one place. You couldn't never count on going one place, not with him.

Chris Stewart: Really? What songs did you sing play with him? Sing or play?

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, we would, After Hours. And what is that? White Lightning. What is that other one? Good many of them. I can't think of them now, but it's a good many of them. But many of you like that you just can't think about.

Chris Stewart: Did you play in any auditoriums?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, sometime we would go there, but we wouldn't go as much to the auditorium room as we would to other places.

Chris Stewart: Other places like?

Margaret Bishop White: Tap rooms.

Chris Stewart: Like what? I'm sorry.

Margaret Bishop White: Tap rooms. We have the cafe drinking places and all like that.

Chris Stewart: Was this before Fats Domino got really big? Or was this when he was really big?

Margaret Bishop White: No. He was young.

Chris Stewart: We're talking about the same Fats Domino.

Margaret Bishop White: I guess we are.

Chris Stewart: This is the guy who became a rock and roll star?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, rock and roll.

Chris Stewart: But you were playing with him before he got really big. Do you have any?

Margaret Bishop White: No, I don't have any of the records now. I have some, but I don't have as many because I loaned them out.

Chris Stewart: Sure. But what about any memorabilia? Do you have anything that you took to help you remember what it was like?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, I never can remember what it was like because now, those days is over. The ones that I've been anywhere around west, that most of them is dead.

Chris Stewart: Yeah. Is there anybody who's still alive that used to play with?

Margaret Bishop White: No.

Chris Stewart: No? Not that you know? What did you think when he got real big?

Margaret Bishop White: He was just bloated.

Chris Stewart: Huh?

Margaret Bishop White: He was just bloated.

Chris Stewart: So what were you doing when he started getting real famous?

Margaret Bishop White: He really went to getting famous, my mother was sick all that time. I would go back and forth. I didn't ever stay, so I thought I'd come on home, come this way.

Chris Stewart: When did you stop singing?

Margaret Bishop White: I stopped singing when I was operated on my throat.

Chris Stewart: When you, I'm sorry.

Margaret Bishop White: I had goiter.

Chris Stewart: Oh.

Margaret Bishop White: But I still be in the choir a little.

Chris Stewart: Yeah. Are you in senior choir over at AME? Is it at St. Stephens?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Are you in the senior choir over there?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Were you singing in the senior choir this last time?

Margaret Bishop White: Last.

Chris Stewart: Last Sunday?

Margaret Bishop White: I ushered last Sunday.

Chris Stewart: I wish I could remember.

Margaret Bishop White: It was two there to the door. The middle door, your flat back.

Chris Stewart: Yeah. Well, I mean I saw ushers going up and down, but I just don't remember seeing you. And I was one of two White girls that were in that church Sunday.

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, yeah.

Chris Stewart: We'd be hard to miss.

Margaret Bishop White: Oh yeah.

Chris Stewart: At what point in your life, ma'am, did you feel like you had become an adult woman?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, I'll tell you, adult is this way. It's so many people is not my age or younger than I am look older than I am because that's the way they carry their self. You don't know if they're adult or what they are, but if you carry yourself in the right way, you don't have any trouble. You see what I mean? But if you going to stay up all night long, don't get a bit of rest and just run, run, run, run, run, don't eat, don't sleep or nothing like that, you ain't looking to look no kind of way. And that's wrong with a lot of them. These actors, they stay woke all night long, then they snuff that mess and all like that. It's okay to take a drink, and sometime you need a drink to get up there all night long. But you got to know how far to go and

it's a lot of people don't know how.

Chris Stewart: Right.

Margaret Bishop White: They don't know.

Chris Stewart: How did you keep your looks up? Sounds like you were a busy woman. How did you stay looking good?

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, I take my rest and I take me a drink and all like that. But I wouldn't take that. I wouldn't take too much. I know how far to go.

Chris Stewart: Right.

Margaret Bishop White: You see what I mean?

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Margaret Bishop White: You take one drink, that's enough. That's when they make those high balls, honey, you don't know what they put in it in there.

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Margaret Bishop White: They really don't.

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Margaret Bishop White: I take one of them and that's it with me.

Chris Stewart: Were you going to church during the time you were singing blues?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, I'll go to church.

Chris Stewart: The church-going women in your church, did they know you were singing blues?

Margaret Bishop White: Some of them did.

Chris Stewart: What'd they think of that?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, I know they had something to say about it, but I figured that I'm the one that had to live that life, and they didn't have to live it, but I didn't show them that I thought more of the blues than I did the Christian. And that's the way you have to carry yourself. Whatever you do, you got to be calm

with it. And if you don't, they can put their hands on you.

Chris Stewart: And did you say you thought more of the blues than of the Christian life?

Margaret Bishop White: Well.

Chris Stewart: What do you mean?

Margaret Bishop White: Whatever I did, I had my mind on what I was doing.

Chris Stewart: Right.

Margaret Bishop White: You understand me?

Chris Stewart: Yeah, I do now.

Margaret Bishop White: That's what I'm talking about.

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Margaret Bishop White: If I'm dancing, I got my mind on what I'm doing, dancing. And if I'm going to church, I have my mind on church and what I'm doing there in church. And when I get out of church, what I do, that's my business.

Chris Stewart: Right.

Margaret Bishop White: You see what I mean?

Chris Stewart: Oh, I agree with you completely.

Margaret Bishop White: That's right. I'm not going to stay in church all the time.

Chris Stewart: Okay. Were there people in your church that disapproved of what you were doing and you knew that they disapproved?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, you're always going to be old sitting here or something, always missing. I didn't worry about it.

Chris Stewart: Okay, and they didn't do anything to try and try and stop you or try to make you change?

Margaret Bishop White: No.

Chris Stewart: Good.

Margaret Bishop White: No, they didn't try to make me stop because if I want to do it, that was my business. I figured that right now I want to get out and dance and sing the blues and get up there and have my fun, that's my business. But now it is now time for me to come in with that. You see what I mean? So that's what I'm doing. I'm coming gradually along. That's what I'm doing.

Chris Stewart: You're spending more time with the church now than?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, that's what I'm doing. It's time now to come in.

Chris Stewart: Time to come in?

Margaret Bishop White: That's right.

Chris Stewart: Is that what you said?

Margaret Bishop White: And live for God.

Chris Stewart: Is it hard for you to remember those? When I say hard, I mean painful. Is it painful for you to remember that? Or do you think about that time when you were singing blues fondly, do you think of it?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, I think about it, but now it don't bad with me that much. Now I'm working in the church and all like that, and I'm going for that now. So I enjoy it. Sometime I go out on the cruises with somebody else, something like that. And if I want to do so that I'll do it. You see what I mean?

Chris Stewart: Are there any local people that you would sing with or play with occasionally just for fun?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, it used to be, but no, I don't. Yeah, because it's just too hot to have on the more robes.

Chris Stewart: Oh.

Margaret Bishop White: It's hot to have on robes now.

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Margaret Bishop White: Those robes and things bring you up. Yeah.

Chris Stewart: Yeah.

Margaret Bishop White: See, you got your clothes underneath there.

Chris Stewart: I know.

Margaret Bishop White: And it's just too hot.

Chris Stewart: I still don't know how people can do that. Yeah, it is, real hot.

Margaret Bishop White: Knock you out.

Chris Stewart: Yeah. Can you recall during the time when you were performing or when you were living here in Wilmington, in your early days, do you remember anybody treating you like they thought you were a second class citizen?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, yes. Some of them does and some you ain't even never. You have one or two nice ones. Let's go for Black and divide, but you don't pay that any attention, you go on because it always going to be someone and want to put you down. You'd pay that no attention. That's the way you do. If you want to get anywhere or do anything, you go head on, hold your head up and go on tender your business. That doesn't do the running of the mountain, you tender your business.

Chris Stewart: Is that something you've always done?

Margaret Bishop White: Yes, that's all I always done. The more you talk about me or that make me hold my head up and gone, you don't hurt me, but don't hit me. You step on my blue suede shoes, I'm going to get you off.

Chris Stewart: Have you ever been hit?

Margaret Bishop White: No. Well, I hit on wood. I hope I don't. Oh, my age now I'll get rid you. But I don't try to carry myself like that. Sometimes people say things snapping, I don't pay no attention.

Chris Stewart: Do you remember Jim Crow signs? The signs?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah. Well, I tell you sometime you have to know and don't know, because some of these young people is not what they cracked up to be.

Chris Stewart: What do you mean?

Margaret Bishop White: They have a face for the day and one for tomorrow, and I don't bother with them. I'll feed you with a longhand spoon that's short. I don't bother. I'll speak to and you speak to me. I speak, and if you don't speak to me, it doesn't make me no different. So I just don't bother with you. It's a lot of them. I don't bother.

Chris Stewart: You talking about White folks?

Margaret Bishop White: White and Colored, I do not because I figure that I'm just as good as any of them. That's right.

Chris Stewart: At least.

Margaret Bishop White: That's right.

Chris Stewart: You're a blues singer.

Margaret Bishop White: Right. So that's the way I take it. And any of them be nice to me. I'm nice to them and I go on and speak and I'm gone. That's the way I carry myself. So I tell all of them, it is the way you carry yourself in this world for people to love you and like you and have something good to say about you. And when it's people in the world that they can't say a good word about them, don't bother them. You don't bother that.

Chris Stewart: Right. What's the point?

Margaret Bishop White: What's the point?

Chris Stewart: Did you ever have any heroes? People that you looked up to, maybe other singers or dancers?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, you always does. You always does.

Chris Stewart: Who?

Margaret Bishop White: Some of them, they dance and all like that. We used to dance and they'll say, "Well, you're much younger than I am." You walking in my footstep or something like that. It make you feel good.

Chris Stewart: Any famous people that you remember that you really looked up to?

Margaret Bishop White: Yeah, but I can't call their name right now. That's right, good name. I looked up to because they was in the world before doing what they stunts before I was. When people like that, you have to look up to them. It's a lot of things that you can learn from them.

Chris Stewart: What kinds of things did you learn?

Margaret Bishop White: Well, it's things that they tell you and all like that, these singers and band players ain't going to never tell you just what is what. They'll give you a hint. You got put it together and do what you want to do, that's right.

Chris Stewart: I interviewed a woman in Winston-Salem who used to travel with the tent shows. She said she used to listen to the blues singers who traveled with the tent shows and she'd stand in the wings and listen to the blues. They would never teach her the songs. They stand there and listen to them and try to memorize them so that when she got her chance she could get out there and sing their songs. She got her chance and she did.

Margaret Bishop White: Well, they say a lot of people does that. They do those kind of things. That's why they don't tell you. They don't want you to know what they do. They'll talk to you, but they're not going to tell you or nothing like that. If you can't catch it, it's shame on you.

Chris Stewart: Did you ever go to any of the tent shows? Silas Green or the Florida Blossom?

Margaret Bishop White: Oh, yeah. You couldn't catch up with it unless you know the song. If you know the song yourself, you could sing.

Chris Stewart: Yeah?

Margaret Bishop White: But you never would, and it.