

Rhonda Mawhood: —working.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Okay.

Rhonda Mawhood: And now I know that you're from different places, so maybe I'll start with Mr. Lee and then I'll ask you Mrs. Lee. Have you always lived in Tillery, Mr. Lee?

Richard L. Lee: No. Not, really. I lived in New Jersey, before we were in Tillery. And before that I was in Detroit, Michigan. And before that I came out of the Army in '46 to Detroit. And before that I spent a brief time in International Falls, Minnesota, about two years. That was back in the '30s. And then I spent a brief time in Mason City, Iowa. And then I came from Alabama to Mason City, Iowa, because there was nothing there.

Rhonda Mawhood: In Alabama?

Richard L. Lee: No, Tillery. Situation was very tough. And it was six of us, and you know how that is. There was no kind of help, like it is today. So we had to make do whatever we could. That's why a lot of people, especially Afro-American, when they wanted to better themselves, they would leave from down south, come north, in order to better themselves. So that's about the route I took in order to get this far.

Rhonda Mawhood: So you were born in Alabama, Mr. Lee?

Richard L. Lee: Yes, I was born in Greensboro, Alabama, in the country.

Rhonda Mawhood: And what did your parents do there, Mr. Lee?

Richard L. Lee: Well, mostly farm, that was all to do during those days, nothing else.

Rhonda Mawhood: And did they own their land that they farmed?

Richard L. Lee: No.

Rhonda Mawhood: What kind of—

Richard L. Lee: There was very few African Americans that owned, but the majority was—some were sharecroppers. Some would rent the land, things of that description. And of course, we had mules. And we had to work from sun to sun. And at the end of the year, you didn't have anything after you worked from sun to sun. That's the way the situation was so bad. I feel that, in those days, it wasn't too much different from

slavery, as far as I'm concerned, because you never could progress in it.

Richard L. Lee: That's what most of us, there was nothing to—very few people could progress. And I had to quit school 7th grade. And then when I went to Minnesota, I attend school for two years, and I only finished the 9th grade. And then in order to get the better of things of life, we have to work, just constantly work. That's the ways it worked out. Is there a question that you would want to ask?

Rhonda Mawhood: Well, I'd like to ask Mrs. Lee—oh, I'll come back. I have other questions. But Mrs. Lee, I'd like to ask you, you lived in New York or New Jersey?

Katherine Bethea Lee: I was born in Montgomery, Alabama.

Rhonda Mawhood: Montgomery, Alabama, okay.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Mm-hmm. And when I was 12 years old—I used to travel back and forth to New York to Alabama. My mom and dad was divorced, so I would go back and forth. My mom was there. She worked as a domestic.

Rhonda Mawhood: In Montgomery, Alabama?

Katherine Bethea Lee: Right. And my grandparents was there, so we lived in a house together. That was my grandmother and my grandfather, my uncle and his wife, and my mom and myself. We lived together. Oh, we were a very close-knit family. We lived, say, approximately about three miles from the capital, from Montgomery, which was in the country. My grandfather rented a small area of land, and he ran a truck farm. He would crate vegetables and take them into the city and sell them. And that's how they made their living.

Katherine Bethea Lee: On my father's side, he was a gardener. My grandmother was—I don't know what you would call her. She cooked food. And she would go into the country on our way we live, and she would get fresh vegetables every day and meat, and she would cook it. And wherever men was working, she would take this food and sell them in her car. So she worked from the trunk of her car. There was food always in the trunk of the car. But by the time she take it to the people, it was still hot.

Katherine Bethea Lee: So that's how I was raised. After my mom died, I came to New York to live with my father. And I went to P.S. 93 in Brooklyn, and Brooklyn High School for homemaking. In this area in the '40s, there was no Black teachers in this school system of New York, all Jewish teachers. There was nothing taught about your Black history. But since my stepmother was a teacher here in North Carolina, she did know some Black history. And she introduced me to little of it. And then I started going to the library to find out for myself what was going on. I grew up being very interested in everything. I did a lot of reading. I lived in Bedford-Stuy. There was not too much contact with White people. The area of the stores and everything was all Black. There was discrimination, of course, in New York at that time. There was places that Lena Horne couldn't go to so, you know we couldn't go there.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Well, my father was a longshoreman in New York, in Brooklyn really. And he worked there until he was retired. My stepmother there worked part-time three days a week, so she was home most of the time with me. And then, I went to work when I was 16 years old. I went to work in the hospital, just part-time. And when I came out of school, I stayed there and worked. And then I went from an aide to operating room tech, and I stayed there for years. And then I went off back to school. After I got married to Lee, I was going to go to school then, and went to back to school and became an RN. And I worked there at the hospital there for 31 years in New York. And then on the one I just left, I worked 13 years, so I retired last February. And I'm here.

Rhonda Mawhood: Was your family from this area of North Carolina, Mrs. Lee?

Katherine Bethea Lee: My stepmother was from this area.

Rhonda Mawhood: Your stepmother, okay.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Mm-hmm.

Rhonda Mawhood: Thank you. I'd like to come back.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Mm-hmm.

Rhonda Mawhood: Mr. Lee, how old were you when you left Alabama?

Richard L. Lee: Well, 18.

Rhonda Mawhood: 18.

Richard L. Lee: Between 17 and 18.

Rhonda Mawhood: Mm-hmm. And—

Richard L. Lee: You want to know how I left Alabama?

Rhonda Mawhood: Yes, sir.

Richard L. Lee: Riding the freight train.

Rhonda Mawhood: Riding the freight train?

Katherine Bethea Lee: He had no money.

Richard L. Lee: [indistinct 00:09:42]. As I say, in those days, it was very difficult, especially for Afro-American

people. It was during that time and afterwards too. I spent a couple of years in Mason City, Iowa. I had a older brother that was up there at the time. That's where I went with when I left Alabama. That was back in '40. It must have been '40, because he went back down south, because he was trying to keep from going into the service. So I didn't want to. I'd rather go in the service than go back down south. So I went to Minnesota, had an uncle in International Falls. That's where I went after he left. And I was drafted from International Falls, Minnesota back in '42. And I spent three years, three months, and 29 days in the service.

Richard L. Lee: And of course, everything then was Jim Crow, even in the service. And we were in different units, all Black units with White officers. And we was in Fresno, California. We shipped from Minneapolis, St. Paul up there to Fort Snelling, that camp up there. We were shipped from there. After we was inducted, we were shipped from there to California. And then when we got to California, then they split the Whites on one side, Blacks on the other side, during those days. So it's just about the story.

Rhonda Mawhood: So you were already a young man when you left Alabama, how were the lines of segregation drawn in Alabama at that time?

Richard L. Lee: Well, you mean how was it drawn? Well, of course, they had signs of White and Colored, like restrooms and things like that, especially in train stations, the bus stations. It was all drawn that way. When did those sign come down, about '67?

Katherine Bethea Lee: Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Lee: Yeah.

Katherine Bethea Lee: [indistinct 00:12:48].

Richard L. Lee: Oh, '67, '68, '67?

Katherine Bethea Lee: I think they came down in the '50s. I'm not sure.

Richard L. Lee: I don't know.

Katherine Bethea Lee: I think they came down in the '50s. The end of the '50s. I think, most of them would start to come down, because they were having the sit-ins and everything starting in the late '50s up through the '60s.

Richard L. Lee: No, but the sit-in wasn't until after Montgomery.

Katherine Bethea Lee: [indistinct 00:13:26] boycott ended, I know my grandfather got sick in '57. And we went home, and it was over then.

Rhonda Mawhood: Besides the signs, how else were the boundaries between White and Black drawn and

Alabama, when you were growing up there?

Richard L. Lee: You mean in the cities, the towns, no?

Rhonda Mawhood: However you experienced it. I'm wondering about your own experience.

Richard L. Lee: More or less, it was understood where a Black could go and where—how could I put it?

Katherine Bethea Lee: Well, I think—

Richard L. Lee: It's a unwritten law, something like that.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Mm-hmm. They got they section, and you had yours. We had stores in our area that were Black, owned by Black, which I think we have lost a lot of that.

Rhonda Mawhood: In Montgomery, that is?

Katherine Bethea Lee: Yes. They owned stores. And you went to town maybe once a week on Saturdays to do your great shopping. But there was stores that you attend to and shopped there. They was in [indistinct 00:15:00] small stores. They wasn't anything large, like a supermarket. Now, I guess they would call those little small mom-and-pops. One of my uncle owned one of them. And he had a little store by his house. And on his porch he had the coolers for the sodas and the ice cream, and the rest of the stuff was outside in his little fruit store. Not a big store, just a little small place. I guess four or five people get in there, you would crowd it. That was what they did mostly during the weekend. Even they need something, they would go. Most of them work, that he said, until the sun went down.

Katherine Bethea Lee: There was no recreation of any type except church. And that's where the line was really drawn. And I think it's still the same today. Sunday's most segregated institution that we have with churches today, because they're mostly still White churches, Afro-American churches, Chinese, Spanish or whatever churches [indistinct 00:16:20].

Katherine Bethea Lee: But I guess he's saying, she was asking where the line was drawn. I guess it was saying, "This was my side of the town. That was your side of the town." We shared some things in the downtown situation. You couldn't try on clothes if you want. I don't even guess they really wanted you in the stores. I know they had one Jewish shoe store there, that my family used to buy their shoes from, because he would let you try them on.

Rhonda Mawhood: And this is in Montgomery as well?

Katherine Bethea Lee: This is in Montgomery, Alabama. I don't know. I can't remember at that time if he catered mostly to Blacks. I presume he did. For them tried the shoes on, I don't think Whites probably went in or very poor Whites. I really don't know on that. All I can remember that he had brown shoes, and I loved

those shoes. And they was a little tight, but I had to have them anyway. That was [indistinct 00:17:34] could wear those shoes, because they hurt my feet. So I think that's where mostly the lines was drawn. You know that you could not go into the hotels downtown, so you had your own hotels.

Richard L. Lee: Some people did, yeah, like [indistinct 00:17:50].

Katherine Bethea Lee: In Montgomery, they had their own hotel.

Richard L. Lee: Well, in my hometown, you didn't have any.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Okay. So that was from a little larger town than you were from. There was, as I said, in that side of the area, which was you did have larger stores for Black stores. There on Clark Street, where my grandmother's house was, where Jean house now—I don't know if you noticed when you came in from Clark Street there, to come into Clark Street, there was little stores up and down: the cleaners, the hairdresser, and things like that. That was like the backbone of your area. Okay now, say if you got in trouble, that was one person that you would have to go to the sheriff. And most the time was my grandmother, who they would come to if somebody was in trouble. They would come to see Ms. Classy. And Ms. Classy would go and talk to the sheriff to see what could be done about getting him out of jail or what he had did or whatever was the problem was.

Rhonda Mawhood: Why was it that your grandmother played that role in the community, Mrs. Lee?

Katherine Bethea Lee: It seemed to be whoever was [indistinct 00:19:10] leadership. You would be the one who most people went to. And I guess another thing is my grandfather was a gardener. He knew he did the work for all the rich White folks. So since he was a very quiet person, and my grandmother was outgoing, and I guess she knew the people through him, so maybe that was it. I really couldn't tell you.

Rhonda Mawhood: Interesting. One of the questions I wanted to ask you was if you or anyone you knew ever crossed those lines, ever broke the rules of segregation.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Oh, my, it was always being broken.

Rhonda Mawhood: Can you give me examples?

Katherine Bethea Lee: I can't really give you a really good example of it, because as a child you don't see it. You don't see things that really happen. They are not focused. And when you are transplanted as a child, from one area to another area, your perception of everything is distorted. I know mine's was. I left there in the '40. When I went back, it was in '57. The people who I thought was tall was short, had the wrong heads on the wrong body.

Katherine Bethea Lee: So I really can't tell you. I wish I could. That part of the life, I really can't tell you. I don't know. But the only thing I remember, that I guess where the line was drawn, a White man could go

with a Black woman, but a Black man could not go out with a White woman. You would be lynched to be caught for that. I think this is where the lines is mostly drawn. You didn't cross that line, period. Your life was at stake. I guess that's about the biggest one I've heard people talking about. Otherwise, I can't go into that, because I really can't say.

Rhonda Mawhood: Thank you. Mr. Lee, did you, or did anyone you know, break those rules as you knew them? I don't mean necessarily what Mrs. Lee was talking about, but the rules of segregation in general.

Richard L. Lee: Well, no. At that time, see, I was very young myself around 17, 18. Maybe people that was there, older than I, would have a different story. But I don't know anybody that broke the rules. I guess a lot of the boys would break them. But most times, when you knew what's going to happen, you try to stay away from certain things, because even the law enforcement is not—you won't get no protection from them.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Most of them was Ku Klux Klans at the time.

Richard L. Lee: Hmm?

Katherine Bethea Lee: Most of them was Ku Klux Klans. [indistinct 00:22:35] the truth. A lot of them is still is though. It's no great [indistinct 00:22:39].

Richard L. Lee: Well, we have a lot out here, right here in North Carolinas today.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Well, I said, it still is. Not only, and in southern New Jersey, it's infiltrated with nothing but.

Richard L. Lee: But they always said—

Katherine Bethea Lee: And some Ku Klux Klans, so.

Richard L. Lee: But the only thing today is nobody's afraid of no one else. That's the difference you see today.

Katherine Bethea Lee: I think we had a lot of fear tactics. I think there was a lot of fear tactics used against Black people in [indistinct 00:23:08].

Richard L. Lee: Those fear tactics don't even work anywhere in the South today.

Katherine Bethea Lee: No.

Rhonda Mawhood: You say a lot of us wanted to break the rules. Do you remember people talking about life for Afro-Americans when you were growing up? Do you remember people, your parents or other adults or yourself and other teenagers, talking about this and talking about the rules?

Katherine Bethea Lee: I think that's happened while we had left the South.

Richard L. Lee: Yeah.

Katherine Bethea Lee: I don't think there was too much of it, while you were in the South. I think what they tried to do mostly is to give you more of a Black history than the northern states did, because you had one week here, and they did teach you about some of the Black history of that time. I know my grandmother would talk about different things and what was happening in the area and try to give you a little basic to abide by.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Like Tuskegee University was not too far from Montgomery. I had an uncle who was a professor there. So we got a little bit of input from him, to hear him talk about George Washington Carver, with things that was current for him. I don't know really thinking about it. I think what had happened, you got your little niche, everybody, and they fitted in as well as you can. The ones who couldn't fit in, I think they left and went to—they came North to try to look for even a better life to exist. And some of them was disappointed, and some made it. Some ended up coming back.

Richard L. Lee: Well, there wasn't a sit-in here during those days.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Oh, no, there was no sit-in. But I mean if you couldn't—I remember I went the last time I rode the train. Now I was about 12 years old. The White man farm—they had this big, big, huge farm next to us. We were there. His daughter and I had always called each other by their name. And he says to me, "You have to call her Miss Delores from now on. She's Miss to you." I never talked to her again, because I wasn't not going to call her Miss. She was my age, maybe six months older. Why should I call her Miss? So I never said nothing to her anymore.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did she try to talk to you?

Katherine Bethea Lee: Yeah, but I wouldn't talk to her. So that was my way of rebelling. I don't know how other people did it, but that I do know I did. So I guess I was militant at 12 years old, because I wouldn't talk to her. And she would come across, and she would try to talk to me, and I'd just look at her. But in that, after a few times, she didn't come back anymore.

Rhonda Mawhood: Did you know any White children when you were growing up, Mr. Lee?

Richard L. Lee: Did I know?

Rhonda Mawhood: White children?

Richard L. Lee: Oh, yeah. Well, the place that my uncle lived on it, the White person had two boys, so we used to play ball together, when we was smaller. But that would only happen at a certain age, because it



was—see, I was 13 or 14 then, basic.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Yeah, that relationship only end.

Richard L. Lee: Huh?

Katherine Bethea Lee: Then. That relationship ended.

Richard L. Lee: Well, afterwards—

Katherine Bethea Lee: Probably didn't play ball anymore.

Richard L. Lee: No, afterward, see, down south, there was always some White people didn't really abide by the hardcore segregation. There always was some that didn't abide by it. Just like anything else, everybody's not going to agree with what's all happening. It was like that during those days. But then, they have to deal with the friends and all those kind of things, so that made [indistinct 00:28:28] making it difficult for themselves to do certain things that their heart wasn't in it.

Rhonda Mawhood: What kinds of things would they have to do, Mr. Lee, to show that they were abiding by the rules?

Richard L. Lee: About what?

Rhonda Mawhood: I said, what kinds of things would these White people have to do to show that they were abiding by the rules?

Richard L. Lee: Well, I don't mean that they have certain things they have to do, but they have to treat Afro-Americans a certain way, if they're around certain people like that. But I never witnessed no one never ever getting hurt or anything like that, because, more or less everybody, knew just how far to go. But they probably learned that from their parents. But it never was easy in that part of the country. We didn't have a lot of school. The little bit of education you had, you had to walk. A little bit of schooling you received, you had to walk. They didn't have any buses for—

Katherine Bethea Lee: The White kids had buses.

Richard L. Lee: So White could ride the buses. There was no buses for no Black, like the buses is down around here now. But they fought a long time around in this area about the buses. That's well known about transportation by bus for the schooling. But those days, definitely was no buses for Blacks in those days. So they more or less had to change it, when you got desegregation. But at '54, they had to do a lot of changing, that they wasn't doing before.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Well, when they did have the buses here, I know that—

Richard L. Lee: They had them here?

Katherine Bethea Lee: —they had them here, because these kids here had to go to that little school in Tillery. And the schools were so far apart. So some of them went towards Halifax. I don't know where they went up there. But they did have buses. The White children, when they got new buses, then they passed them down this way, I guess, through any Black area.

Richard L. Lee: Oh, that was a school we had in Tillery, right?

Katherine Bethea Lee: Yeah. You know where they said Clayton factory was right there? That was the school.

Rhonda Mawhood: But you walked to school, Mr. Lee. Did you go to school every day of the week when you were growing up?

Richard L. Lee: You would go when there wasn't anything to do. See, during those days, it didn't make any difference whether a Black person had an education or not, in those days, because that's where the people that's administering the [indistinct 00:32:06] for the school. But that's the way that was hell. One room for one teacher teaching all the grades in that area where I were. See, it didn't go from rooms to room. It was one teacher used to teach everything.

Rhonda Mawhood: That was the way it was in the school that you went to, sir?

Richard L. Lee: Yes. Mm-hmm.

Katherine Bethea Lee: And I learned you had Black teachers then?

Richard L. Lee: Yeah.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Mm-hmm, in that school. But most of the time, I know kids around here, they would go to school in August. And when we would come down, half of them couldn't go to school, because they had to work on a farm yet, end of August. So I'm quite sure they did miss a long time.

Rhonda Mawhood: That's why I was—I've heard about that and read about that. And that's why I was wondering how long you would be out of school at a time. Mr. Lee. Would you stay out of school a long time, in order to help your family on the farm?

Richard L. Lee: Oh, yeah. Well, yeah, that would happen. When the farm work started, you had to get [indistinct 00:33:29] on the farm, course then you would miss some time for going to school. But in the wintertime, when there wasn't nothing happening, then you would go to school, when everything was all finished, few months that you had to go there. But everything was very difficult in those days. And that's

long time ago.

Katherine Bethea Lee: Especially with a widow with six children.

Richard L. Lee: Yeah.

Katherine Bethea Lee: It's very hard to raise six.

Rhonda Mawhood: Your mother was widowed, Mr. Lee?

Richard L. Lee: Yeah.

Rhonda Mawhood: How old were you—

Richard L. Lee: Yeah, my father died when I was 12 or 13.

Rhonda Mawhood: Mm-hmm. And there were six of you [indistinct 00:34:27]—

Richard L. Lee: Yeah, there was six of us. We had to split up between the families. Some lived with—I said I used to live with my uncle, two of us. And then my mother was living with my aunt. We'd split up like that. You know what I mean?

Rhonda Mawhood: Mm-hmm.

Richard L. Lee: Because there was no other help. At that time, the only help you had then is from the families and whatnot.

Katherine Bethea Lee: There was no public assistance.

Richard L. Lee: No, there's nothing public.

Rhonda Mawhood: And so when you were living with your uncle, was your uncle a farmer also?

Richard L. Lee: Yes. See down in that area, most of the people down in that area, that's what were. They were farmers. And if you don't have any anything to farm with, then you were a sharecropper, you see?

Rhonda Mawhood: So was he sharecropping, your uncle, or was he renting?

Richard L. Lee: Yeah, he was sharecropping, yeah.

Rhonda Mawhood: Sharecropping, mm-hmm. And you were telling me you had mules.

Richard L. Lee: Mm-hmm, yes.

Rhonda Mawhood: Can you tell me about farming like that?

Richard L. Lee: Well, yeah, you had mules. And you walked behind a mule all day from sun to sun. Course, I guess it was healthy, wasn't it?

Katherine Bethea Lee: I guess so. I don't think we had too much [indistinct 00:36:19] and all of that kind of stuff at that time, not chasing that mule all day.

Richard L. Lee: Not chasing [indistinct 00:36:19]. So all this land right here used to be work like that too. Now they have all tractors. The cotton pickers, nobody pick no more cotton. Mm-mm, mm-mm.

Rhonda Mawhood: You picked cotton, Mr. Lee?

Richard L. Lee: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Yeah. My mother used to take all of us out, in order to get—we was getting 35 cents a 100 for cotton. And it would take all us out to pick 300 pounds of cotton all day to make a dollar. But in those days a dollar wasn't like today's dollar. But still, there's a lot of work involved. Picking cotton is a backbreaking situation. It's worse than picking my strained knees.

Rhonda Mawhood: And Mrs. Lee, your grandfather had a truck garden. Did he own that land that he worked?

Katherine Bethea Lee: No, he rented. And he had a mule. And we had a small place. It was just maybe 10, 15, or something. It wasn't a big place [indistinct 00:37:29]—

Rhonda Mawhood: Who did he rent it—I'm sorry. I was wondering who he rented it from.

Katherine Bethea Lee: The White man that I was just talking about. I don't even remember his name. I knew he rented it from him. So he just raised vegetables, hogs, a cow or two, chickens. He had everything to survive on that little land he had. And he'd taken the chicken manure, and he fed the garden with it to grow whatever he could grow to take into town. And that was his job, to go through the town selling fresh vegetables, [indistinct 00:38:23] fresh veggies.

Rhonda Mawhood: And who did your mother work for, Mrs. Lee?

Katherine Bethea Lee: I don't remember. All I know was a family in the town of Montgomery. [indistinct 00:38:39].

Rhonda Mawhood: You were talking earlier about church, Mrs. Lee. And about African American churches and White churches. And I was wondering, what both of you remember from church when you were growing up? Did your families go to church?

Katherine Bethea Lee: Yeah.

Richard L. Lee: Yeah.

Katherine Bethea Lee: That was the part of it. We was in church all day Sunday, most of the time. There in Alabama, my family was Methodist. So we went to a Methodist church on my mom's side. On my father's side, they were Baptists. So when I was with him, I went to a Baptist's church. So you were still in church. One of the churches that they had their first civil rights meeting for Martin Luther King was at that grandmother's Baptist church up in Montgomery, the Holt Street Baptist Church.

Katherine Bethea Lee: All the family went to church. It was just like a holiday. That was a day you had to go to church. You visit, and you saw friends. You passed on news or whatever news was in the area. You saw each other. You talked about what happened to you. You would tell your friend. Their friend couldn't wait to tell her friend. So it was oral history, I guess in a way, being passed on mostly on Sundays. Our choir rehearsal during the week, we had choir rehearsal.

Katherine Bethea Lee: When I went to New York, I still went to a Methodist church. It was on the corner, so I just had to walk really across the street. So I went to a Methodist church. And after making friends, I had one friend was Catholic. We went to 9:30 mass. We left there. We came back to my church for 11 o'clock service. And the other girlfriend, she was went to Holiness Church, so we would go to her church by 12 o'clock. And my father would pick us up at seven o'clock in the evening and drop us all home. So as kids, we went to church all day.

Katherine Bethea Lee: But we had a very good relationship within church. We had on Tuesday evening, at the Methodist church, would be YPU. You would go back to religions training. You were going to that. You had to participate in mostly everything that went on. There was Sunday school. I didn't ever went to Sunday school too much, because we were too busy in other churches. And then most of the time, it was 9:30 in my church. So I was at somebody else's church at that time. My father never said anything, because, as long as you was in church, he didn't mind.

Katherine Bethea Lee: He went across the street to another church there. It was Congregational. So that's like a variety of all the Baptist churches, I guess, Methodist churches combined. So they're all congregations, so their religious service would be mostly [indistinct 00:42:05] between all the other [indistinct 00:42:08] they went to. Church was a big part of it. There was nothing else. There was no bowling alleys. There was no skating rink in the South, so what else could the people do? They had to have church for their recreation. And that was church picnics and things like that. So that was their entertainment.

Rhonda Mawhood: Thank you. Mr. Lee, what do you remember about church when you were growing up, sir?

Richard L. Lee: Oh, yeah, well, my mother always took us to church, Sunday school. Long as I can remember,

we always attend church, Baptist, of course. Baptist today. I never strayed away from church. I guess you only get your strength from it. You attend the church and learn different things, that you could fall on during the week.

Rhonda Mawhood: What kinds of things did you learn in church, sir?

Richard L. Lee: Hmm?

Rhonda Mawhood: So what kinds of things did you learn in church?

Richard L. Lee: Well, mostly Bible study and things like that. You learn what to do and what not to do, so how to stay out of trouble. I never had any problem with getting in trouble. And especially in that part of the country, even down here, you have a lot of churches, but a lot of times the people is not as close today as it were during those days for churches. So you have a lot of churches in this area, but they're not as close as they were during those days.

Richard L. Lee: I guess a lot of the hardships that they had then, they don't have them now, so they don't see the need of being as close-knitted as they should be. I find that's a lot of problem around here in Tillery and the surrounding area, that people not as close as they should be. But in those days you had to be close. There was no government help. And if you didn't help one another, you would have no help at all.

Rhonda Mawhood: How was your church involved in the community?

Richard L. Lee: Well, the church that I went to when I was baptized, it was all—the church was situated that people from surrounding areas would gather on Sunday. But it wasn't that much activities pertaining to community, because it's like being in the country, there's no people living different—they living distant apart, so it wasn't like living in a city. There was no recreation time or anything like that. And we would only meet on Sunday for Sunday service, to what I remember, because I wasn't 20 years old when I left Alabama, so I can't account for what happened after the years moved on. But there was no recreation, as far as I'm concerned.