

Michele Mitchell: 25th, 1994. And this is an interview with Mrs. Landry. If you can tell me the exact same thing you just told me.

Agnes Chatman Landry: My name is Agnes C. Landry.

Michele Mitchell: And that's Chatman?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah. Agnes Chatman Landry.

Michele Mitchell: You told me that you're from Texas.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah, Beaumont, Texas.

Michele Mitchell: That's where you were born?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-huh. Born and raised.

Michele Mitchell: And what year were you born? When were you born ma'am?

Agnes Chatman Landry: The third month, the 15th day of '17.

Michele Mitchell: 15th day, 1917?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-huh. I'm always getting the 17 and the 15th mixed up.

Michele Mitchell: And could you tell me a little bit about what Beaumont was like when you were young? What you remember?

Agnes Chatman Landry: It's been so long. It's been a long time ago. I went to elementary school and high school there.

Michele Mitchell: Did you live in town?

Agnes Chatman Landry: I always lived in town.

Michele Mitchell: Yeah?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah.

Michele Mitchell: What were your parents' names?

Agnes Chatman Landry: My mother was named Rose Phillip.

Michele Mitchell: Spell that for me.

Agnes Chatman Landry: P-H-I-L-L-I-P-S. Phillips. But I lived with my grandmother. Her name was Matilda Mitchell. I named my daughter after her. And boy, she liked her dad.

Michele Mitchell: Oh goodness. She liked your grandmother, and you grew up with her?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah. She died when I was 12. Yeah, I was 12 years of age.

Doris: Was was she from Texas too?

Agnes Chatman Landry: No, she was from New Iberia. My mama too was born here. My daddy too.

Michele Mitchell: Yeah? So how'd they get out in Texas?

Agnes Chatman Landry: My grandmother went to Texas first.

Michele Mitchell: I guess, I asked because so many people I talked to have gone back and forth between Beaumont and New Iberia. It's interesting.

Agnes Chatman Landry: And I visit. You want to know how I got back here?

Michele Mitchell: Yeah.

Agnes Chatman Landry: I came to visit my grandfather, and a summer and I met my husband, and we started communicating like that. In a couple of years, we got married.

Michele Mitchell: So that's how you came here?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Mm-hmm.

Michele Mitchell: So this was your grandfather Mitchell, or another grandfather?

Agnes Chatman Landry: No, this was my step grandfather Mitchell.

Michele Mitchell: Step grandfather?

Agnes Chatman Landry: My grandfather was Steve. Steven Phillip.

Michele Mitchell: And you mentioned your father too. What was your father's name?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Avery Chatman.

Michele Mitchell: And he from New Iberia?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah. But he came back to New Iberia. My dad and my mama came back to New Iberia after I was married and over here. Both of them was living in Beaumont.

Michele Mitchell: Did your parents work? What did they do for work?

Agnes Chatman Landry: My mother used to do— While she was in Texas, they worked at a school. She cafeteria working. I had a step-daddy, he was janitor. That's what they did.

Michele Mitchell: And your father?

Agnes Chatman Landry: My father, it was common labor. I guess you would say, common labor. Because he worked as a janitor over here in the school too. Then he retired.

Michele Mitchell: Now I think, I just would like to find out some more about what it was like for you when you were young. Just in terms of what sort of things you remember that you would do? Where you would go? What it was like to be in school? Things like that.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah, I always was a child that liked to go to church. I always did a lot. And we had a church in the community. Baptist church. And I attended the Baptist church. But my grandmother, she was Baptist, but she always had said she wanted me to be Catholic. But this church was right in the community, so I attend that church. And after she passed, I joined that church.

Michele Mitchell: Did she tell you why she wanted you to be Catholic?

Agnes Chatman Landry: I don't know. No, I don't believe. She always wanted me to be Catholic. But this church, Baptist church was in the community, and she used to send me there to Sunday school and different things. And I used to go with her sometime to her church. Now she was Baptist, and I used to go with her to her church. And her church was a good distance from our house, but we walked there. Her church was named, Antioch Baptist Church. And it was on Portside, up in the heart of town, but Black people. A street with Black people.

Michele Mitchell: And what was the name of that street again?

Agnes Chatman Landry: The church was Antioch Baptist, but I'm trying to think about— What was that? I believe it was Portside.

Michele Mitchell: So what was it like walking up that street, if there are Black businesses? Was it busy?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah. Well, not as much as— Because we used to go at night, and she used to take me along with her, and I was young then. Used to take me. That church didn't move from Portside though. Antioch Baptist. And when I went back there, it had moved. It was a big church.

Agnes Chatman Landry: And if I'm remembering right, Reverend Shepherd was the pastor. They had their church, he was from Mt. Port Arthur, Reverend Shepherd. And he pastored at another church after that, after my grandmother. And I'm trying to think the name of that church. This was up in the north end. In the south end, he pastored at church. I'm trying to think about the name. I can't think of it right now. I used to love to hear him preach.

Michele Mitchell: Yeah?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Reverend Shepherd. And after my grandmother passed, I lived with my mother, at 12 years old.

Michele Mitchell: Did she live in the same area of Beaumont?

Agnes Chatman Landry: She lived in the south end. My grandmother lived in the North end.

Michele Mitchell: Right Now I've only been to Beaumont when I was really small. What was the north end like, as opposed to the south end? What was different about it?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Well, I don't know too much different. And at one time they had street cars that we rode from one end to the other end. Then after that, they had buses that you— The transportation was bus. In the south end you had the big refinery where a lot of people worked. Rod the bus, street cars at one time or another. And we lived close, I'll say about five or six blocks from the refinery. We did.

Michele Mitchell: What sort of a refinery? An Oil?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah.

Michele Mitchell: Oil refinery?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-huh. Big place. Sometime we used to go out there, walk. I remember my step-daddy having a old model T4. You remember that? I remember they had cars, different kind.

Michele Mitchell: Did you have to ride in the street cars a lot or did you walk?

Agnes Chatman Landry: We used to walk sometime from the north end to the south end. Now that was a

distance, but we used to walk. From north end to the south end. And when I moved here, so I was used to walking, had to walk to church. My church is over there on Week Street. You know where Week Street at?

Michele Mitchell: Yes ma'am.

Agnes Chatman Landry: That's where my church at. Week Street. My grandfather was a deacon over there.

Michele Mitchell: What's the name of the church?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Mount Calvary.

Michele Mitchell: On the south end where you live, you were telling me about the neighborhood. Was that refinery being right there. Did only Black people work there?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-uh. Black and White. And it was out from the school— You see my mom and my step daddy lived at this school. They had a place for them to live there. Of course it was a White school. It wasn't a Black school, it was a White school.

Agnes Chatman Landry: And I went to school out in the north end. I went to Pipkin Elementary School. And it was another school I went to after Pipkin, because Pipkin was way out in the north end. Way out. I went to another school, I'm trying to think of the name of it. I tell you, I had a stroke last year in the [indistinct 00:13:24]. Ramshacked me up a little bit. I don't remember as well as I used to. And then I was transferred back up to College Street, a school in where we was living, in the south end. Then I went to Charlton Pollard High School. That was in the south end. I used to like go school.

Michele Mitchell: Yeah?

Agnes Chatman Landry: I used to like to go to school. We used to have fun. We had a lot of fun. Of course, when I had to transfer back, I went out in the north in a long time. I used to catch the bus, and go out there. But it was kind of hectic. You had to get up early in the morning. I couldn't miss my bus. If I missed my bus, I would be late. So when they transfer me to College Street, that was better.

Michele Mitchell: Were those the only Black schools?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Huh?

Michele Mitchell: Were those the only Black schools?

Agnes Chatman Landry: That was all Blacks— No, they had, College Street was in the south end, and this other school where I attended, but I can't think of the name. I can't think of that name of that school. And they got in the west end of the city, we used to call it the Pearl Orchard. They had a school, Hebert High, I think. It was a elementary, then went into a high school. We used to go there when we have games and

different things. Football game, with the two school. Like I said, I attend church. Then in the south end, I attended.. And I tried to be Catholic, but it just didn't— Something that I really— I liked to go to the Baptist church. And I attended the Beech Grove Baptist Church out there in south end.

Michele Mitchell: Breech Grove?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-huh. Reverend F. Balls was pastor. And I was good friend with— He had a daughter. She was a little older than me, and then he had one a little younger than me, where we all used to hang out together. And I loved to go to church. We went to church, look like every day we—

Michele Mitchell: Did you go to socials and things like that? Church socials or whatever?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Church social, yeah and school social. But outside that, I wasn't in that too much.

Michele Mitchell: I'm wondering if either in the north end or in the south end, if you lived near anybody White? Or if they were all Black neighborhoods.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Where we lived was a White neighborhood, but they had Black a little down from us. The school set on Poplar and Doucette. And Poplar Street was a Black community, you would say. The school I attended, the Charlton Pollard High school was on Poplar. Further down from where I lived at. But you see, I was in a White neighborhood, that was a White school where my mom and them lived at. So I came in a lot of contact with the White people there. The teachers. The principal.

Michele Mitchell: What was that like?

Agnes Chatman Landry: It was all right. It was nice.

Michele Mitchell: Yeah?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-huh. That was where my mom and them was working, and I went to live with her. And I tell you what, those White people treated us nice. My mom and them was working, so that's what they want the work, I guess.

Michele Mitchell: So it was okay then, huh?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah. But they really was nice though. The teachers, the principal. Because they used to give my mama some handed down for me. The teachers did.

Michele Mitchell: It's not bad. In terms of getting clothes.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah. And I used to work for some of them. Go in and help them on Saturdays. I knowed how to work.

Michele Mitchell: And how do they treat you?

Agnes Chatman Landry: They treated me very nice. And let me tell you something. I was a only child my mama had, and my grandmother was the only one she had. I didn't come from a big family. I had a lot of children, but I didn't come from a big family. My grandmother had two children, two girls. And my aunt had children, but they died babies. So it didn't leave anybody but me. And she [indistinct 00:21:00] too. Because I was the only one.

Michele Mitchell: What sort of things did you do for the people that you worked for?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Clean house, wash dishes and things like that on Saturdays. Light housework. And they paid me. They gave me a little salary. They gave me a little salary.

Michele Mitchell: Did you think it was a lot of money at the time?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Well, I didn't know too much about— It was just a little something just to help me— To help buy little things for me, but I used to waste it.

Michele Mitchell: Would you use it on going to other places or—

Agnes Chatman Landry: Well buy foolishness, shakes and candies and things like that. Maybe some stockings if I needed it. Little light thing.

Michele Mitchell: Do you remember how much that they would give you about?

Agnes Chatman Landry: It wasn't too much.

Michele Mitchell: Enough to buy cake?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah, and candy. And catch the bus. See, when I first went out to the south end, when I first went out there to live with my mom and them, I used to go back into the north and quite often to a lady that I know really well. I used go spend Saturday nights, I used to go spend with her out there. She had one little boy. I used to go spend the night with her on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. The funniest thing, she was from here too. She moved back here too. She moved back here. She died here. And her son died here.

Michele Mitchell: Both of them dead?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Both of them. He died first, and then she died. But a little while ago. Her name was Rosa Edison.

Michele Mitchell: Yeah?

Agnes Chatman Landry: I used to like to call her Ms. Rosa, because we used to stay up at night, we play cards for the fun of it. Whisk. I used to go there. My mama didn't need to worry, I'd be right there. Right there. They wasn't rich people, but I had a fairly good life, coming up. I was the only one.

Michele Mitchell: But this is this during the '30s? During the 1930s?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-huh. Around that time.

Michele Mitchell: Did The Depression seem to affect people around?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Oh yeah. Now you see, Depression came and a lot of people from Louisiana moved to New Iberia during that time, during the high water. See, Depression came after the High Water in '27. High Water was in '27, then Depression came. And people had to leave their home here in Louisiana, move to Texas.

Michele Mitchell: So a lot of them moved to Beaumont.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah. A lot of them moved to Beaumont. I went to school with a lot of children from Louisiana.

Michele Mitchell: So you talked to a lot of these people. Did they lose everything here in New Iberia?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah, some of them lost everything. Now the way I can understand it, this was family property, my husband family property. The High Water right here, this high ground they call it, it didn't mess them up over here. Some of the people live around, because not many of them left from here in '27 High Water.

Michele Mitchell: So then, when you were in high school, it was during The Depression, in the '30s?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah.

Michele Mitchell: Did a lot of people seem to have it bad off, around you?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Well, yeah. A lot of people came— And at that time, people used to ride the freight train and everything. A lot of people came freight train, throw their clothes in the box card and move. You know what, they did have to accumulate. It was sad with some of them, but when it got better, they went back. They came back to Louisiana.

Michele Mitchell: When they had more money.



Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah.

Michele Mitchell: So then, you came here in '37?

Agnes Chatman Landry: I married in '37. December '37. No, not December, January. I married January. My husband was born in December.

Michele Mitchell: Oh, when was your husband born?

Agnes Chatman Landry: December the 5th.

Michele Mitchell: The year?

Agnes Chatman Landry: 1916. And my oldest daughter born in December. Her birthday was on the 4th. She going to be 56 this year.

Doris: [indistinct 00:28:30].

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah.

Michele Mitchell: What's her name?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Rose Marie Joseph. She taught school here. And then she worked at the school board office. She worked with the— They don't call them retarded, they call them special ed. She worked with them. She retired from the school board.

Michele Mitchell: So then she's born '38?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Who? Rose?

Michele Mitchell: Mm-hmm.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Rose was born in December '37.

Michele Mitchell: '37?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-huh.

Doris: [indistinct 00:29:30].

Michele Mitchell: So she's born here in New Iberia?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah. She born in New Iberia. And I had a son too, my oldest son. He died in the mine. He got trapped down in the mine. The salt mine.

Michele Mitchell: Was it on Jefferson Island or—

Agnes Chatman Landry: Jefferson Island. You hit it right on the nail, Jefferson Island.

Michele Mitchell: [indistinct 00:30:04].

Agnes Chatman Landry: That happened in '70. When Integration just started. He got trapped in the mine. He had seven children. Wife and seven children.

Michele Mitchell: Was working conditions bad for folks in the mine?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Well, the funniest thing about it, he said they had told the boss man, who was over. And that told him, something bad was going to happen. But he just had gone back to work. He was off on a vacation. No, he was off on his days off or something. And he just had gone back to work that morning, and the salt fell, and crushed him. And there was one Black and five White.

Michele Mitchell: What was your son's name?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Lennis Landry Jr.

Michele Mitchell: Lennis?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah, L-E-N-N-I-S. That was the first time I heard that name. I married Lennis.

Michele Mitchell: That's your husband's name?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-huh. I had four boys and five girls. No, I had five boys and four girls. Because all the girls living Rose, Brenda, Diane, and Doris—

Michele Mitchell: And then there was, Lennis and?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Lennis, Richard, and Michael, Terry. I said Michael?

Michele Mitchell: Mm-hmm.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Well, Terry before Michael. Is Lennis Junior. We used to call him junior boy. And it was Richard Herman.

Michele Mitchell: Herman. Okay. Did all your sons work in the mines?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-uh. Terry is the police captain, Terry Landry.

Michele Mitchell: Now?

Agnes Chatman Landry: He wakes out Baton Rouge. He's over crime lab over there. And he owns all the casinos over there in whole state of Louisiana.

Michele Mitchell: You must be proud of him?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah.

Michele Mitchell: Ma'am, what did your husband do? Where did he work?

Agnes Chatman Landry: He worked at the water plant.

Michele Mitchell: And he never worked in the mines at all?

Agnes Chatman Landry: This boy was the only one of my son who worked in the mine. Lennis Jr. Richard drove Greyhound bus and then they had that strike, the other day. And Herman is a minister in Baton Rouge. He live in Baton Rouge. Michael work in a oil field. That's where he work at.

Michele Mitchell: Yeah. And now I'm trying to remember what you were telling me about before we started talking about the children. You were telling me about coming to New Liberia.

Agnes Chatman Landry: When I came to New Iberia?

Michele Mitchell: Mm-hmm.

Agnes Chatman Landry: I came to New Iberia on a trip. On a summer trip. Summer with my grandfather, and I met my husband. And we maybe courted for about two years, and then we married. We had nine children, like I told you. We got 33 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Rose [indistinct 00:35:30], Brenda is a housewife. Diane is a teacher in Monroe. She live in Monroe. And Doris went to college too, but she didn't finish. But she going to— Betty is in school right now.

Michele Mitchell: Richard, I think you told me about him. I didn't write it down.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Richard had seven children. He got seven children.

Michele Mitchell: Richard.

Agnes Chatman Landry: He got five girls I think it is, and two boys. Oh, that's Eva. Oh, Eva's got five boys and

two girls. That was Lennis'. They had seven children too. One is a lawyer, one is a teacher, and one is a policeman. And William works out in the field. One in service, that's him over there in Woodson. He in service. That's my grandma.

Agnes Chatman Landry: My oldest daughter had three girls. Three fine girls. The girls didn't give her many trouble. One of them is in Connecticut right now. She's finishing engineer. Then she got the other girl in New Orleans, the one I was telling you about. Then they got another one in New Orleans who would go to Dillard. She go to Dillard. Chindela Went to Suno. Diane has five. Doris has one. My son, the policeman have two boys and one girl. And Richard has seven children too. I got to count them up to see how many girls they got. Shari, Robin, Christie. Four and three. Seven, yeah. Four girls.

Agnes Chatman Landry: They got the oldest one. And then they got Robin. And they got Christie, and they got the baby girl. That's four boys and three girls. His oldest boy named Joel Richard. And then he have Ryan, and then he have Craig. That's the three boys they have. Sometimes I get mixed up with them.

Michele Mitchell: Well no, I think you just did a good job.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah. And Michael, that's my baby. He's the baby. He had two children. A boy and a girl. A big family.

Michele Mitchell: Yes.

Agnes Chatman Landry: A big family. I had to call a roll at night. [indistinct 00:39:55]. But I enjoyed these children, I really enjoyed them. It was a good thing. Because they have really took good care of me. For two years, I've been— I had the stroke, like I told you, last year. And then I had pacemaker. Heart problems. Before that, I fell. I broke my ankle, the bones and my feet, and I broke my hips. I did my feet in January. Six months after that, I broke my hip bone. Both of them was away from home. I go a lot with the church. One was in Baton Rouge, and the other was in 304. And all that was after my husband passed. If I didn't got children, I'd have been—

Michele Mitchell: Well, they taking care of you?

Agnes Chatman Landry: That's right. Because I don't have no sister, no brother. Was just by myself.

Michele Mitchell: It's good to have children.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Oh yes. A good deal. And them grandchildren is just as well. Sometime back, it hadn't been too long, Carisma got all word up there in Connecticut, she came home. She had to come and see about her grandmother. They call me, Big Mama. All of them call me big mama. And she come here. She took me out to— We went out to Jefferson Island to visit out there. To go down at the park. You been out there?

Michele Mitchell: Just last week.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yes. Nice out there.

Michele Mitchell: It's pretty.

Agnes Chatman Landry: You been to— That's Jefferson. Then they got Avery Island. That's another place. I've been to Avery Island, but I haven't been all over like Jefferson. Rose had a friend that lived that there.

Michele Mitchell: At Avery Island?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-huh.

Michele Mitchell: Because there's still houses back there, aren't there?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Well, I don't know. They was the longest one in— They done moved to town. Well, Maddy married— Anybody told you about Coach James? Coach. We call him Coach James. His [indistinct 00:42:58], what is his first name? Well, he married Maddy and Maddy used to live out there in Avery's Island Road. She's born and raised. Her and all her brothers. Born and raised out there.

Michele Mitchell: And her name's Maddy James?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-huh. Maddy James.

Michele Mitchell: She still in this area?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Not too far from here, no. She live on [indistinct 00:43:30], I think it is. That's the— Oh, right over. The street right over. Harmon James, that's what his name.

Michele Mitchell: It sounds familiar. So somebody's told me.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Yeah. He was a principal. He just retired a couple years, junior high. Back here where old Anderson used to be. He was the principal back then. Harmon James.

Michele Mitchell: Okay. So she married him, and she grew up on Avery Island.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Avery Island.

Michele Mitchell: Said, she came into town when she got married.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Uh-huh.

Michele Mitchell: So she's about what, 50, 40? How old is she?

Agnes Chatman Landry: I don't think Maddy quite as old as Rose. I don't know, but they was friend together. But I'd have to find out exactly. She might not be— Doris!

Doris: Yes.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Maddy ought to be about 50 or—

Doris: [indistinct 00:44:37].

Agnes Chatman Landry: Rose 56. Rose probably going to be 56. Rose going to be 56.

Doris: That's interesting.

Agnes Chatman Landry: What did she do?

Doris: [indistinct 00:44:58]

Michele Mitchell: Oh, because she grew up on island?

Doris: Yeah.

Agnes Chatman Landry: And Harmon James was a principal. And Herman was the principal. Maddy is a teacher too.

Michele Mitchell: You have to remember this.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Hopefully, because I talk scattered.

Doris: Yeah. My mother had a stroke, I thought—

Agnes Chatman Landry: Bad.

Michele Mitchell: So far I think—

Doris: It just, she was much sharper.

Michele Mitchell: No, so far it's been great.

Doris: [indistinct 00:46:01].

Michele Mitchell: Do you remember what it was like here in New Iberia when you moved here?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Sad.

Michele Mitchell: Sad?

Agnes Chatman Landry: Dirty Street.

Michele Mitchell: Dirt Street.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Field Street was a dirty street. When it rain, it floods. Had to take off your shoes. I remember one night, we was out, me and my husband, when it rain, I'd take off my shoes. I was ashamed to take off my shoes. All this been developed, because all this was dirty road. Dirty street. All that was dirt street.

Michele Mitchell: When they paved it.

Agnes Chatman Landry: Oh, they paved the good wall. Doris?

Doris: Uh-huh?