Audrey Metz Gabriel: And don't it write down and don't record all that either.

Kate Ellis: It's okay. Do you want me to? Yeah. So let's see, where can we go? What church did you attend when you were growing up?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: St. Peter United Methodist.

Kate Ellis: Okay. So that, it's always been your church?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Always been there from a child. And we would go to St. Peter Catholic with my mother. So my mother was Catholic, my daddy was Methodist. So we go sometime with her, and sometime with him. But that was walking all the time. We'd walk to Four Corners, the Catholic Church. We walk to St. Peter, walk to Methodist Church.

Kate Ellis: What was the name of the Catholic Church?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: St. Peter Catholic.

Kate Ellis: Oh, so it was St. Peter United Methodist and St. Peter?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And St. Peter Catholic.

Kate Ellis: Catholic. And in the Catholic Church, was it segregated? It was all Black?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: No.

Kate Ellis: I mean in the church. So if was Whites and Blacks attended it.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They still do.

Kate Ellis: Did they sit?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Because there was the only one in that area, they had to go there.

Kate Ellis: Oh.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Everybody would go.

Kate Ellis: Did they sit separately though?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They sat on the bench where they found a seat. The Catholic Church was always integrated out there in Four Corners.

Kate Ellis: Right.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: People would go out there.

Kate Ellis: But they didn't sit in separate sections.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They just sat.

Kate Ellis: Wow.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Because that was a Catholic Church and that was the only church in that area.

Kate Ellis: But still, that's interesting. Only because I know of other Catholic churches where.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They're sectioned off.

Kate Ellis: Blacks and Whites attended, but they sat in different sections.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: No, they were going and sit where you found a seat. It was nice because we were going there since we were small with my mother.

Kate Ellis: But with the Methodist church, was that segregated?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: That's the Black church.

Kate Ellis: That was Black church.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: It still is, but you can go to anyone you want to go now. But they just was there and they just stayed there.

Kate Ellis: And it stays, they stayed.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: To where they were because that's the closest one in our area from that. But you can go to anyone.

Kate Ellis: Huh.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And they can come to you either way they want to go.

Kate Ellis: Yeah. So that's the way that things are different now, that people can go.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: You have a choice.

Kate Ellis: You have a choice. Uh-huh, yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And you have a choice. And you're welcome either way you go.

Kate Ellis: Yeah. What's I going to say? Oh, I know what I was wanted to ask you about as far as, you talked about people in your family who stopped working in the fields and took on other jobs, whether it was, well, some people went like you went elsewhere and I want to ask you about that in a little while, and your brothers did different things. I mean, that took place in the '40s and '50s then, were there a lot of people who came off the fields at that time and took other?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: When World War II came up in the '40s, a lot of people came out.

Kate Ellis: Because other jobs open, other jobs came available. Whether it was joining the army for the men or working on.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Shipyards.

Kate Ellis: Shipyards.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Fabrication plants and all kind of thing, all that came out. And so a lot of people left and went, started working and they cleaned them up going to the service. They had a lot.

Kate Ellis: They cleaned them up, you said?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: All those young, yeah. It's a lot. Just pick up, drafted everybody.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Went in service. A lot of them went in service. My husband did.

Kate Ellis: Your husband did?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh yeah. My husband been in service, World War II.

Kate Ellis: Oh, did you know him at that point?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yes, but we weren't married.

Kate Ellis: Okay.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Because I was still in Scott College and he went into service. My second brother went into service and so many others went in there in the World War II. Drafted them all.

Kate Ellis: What kind of changes did you notice in the community around World War II? I mean, a lot of people left and people came off the field to take other jobs. Are there other things that changed or?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Some of the women were working in the shipyards and all kind of thing if they were hiring women because they didn't have enough men. Most of the men were going to the service. Who could work? The younger men, the older men weren't be able to go on that type of job, so they hired some of the young women. They gave a lot of work.

Kate Ellis: So a lot of people.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They give a lot of work with good paying jobs. And it improved. It started, it really improved in World War II.

Kate Ellis: Really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Mm-hmm.

Kate Ellis: Huh.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Because some of those women were in the shipyard and that's when the women started doing the men work. They were doing good.

Kate Ellis: And doing it well.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh yes. Oh yes, they did. Well, so that was really a change for change for the better during that time the economy changed.

Kate Ellis: It did.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh yeah, during World War II, it builds up a lot.

Kate Ellis: I imagine it was a relief for a lot of people to not have to work in the fields anymore.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh yeah. But it's still some of the older ones stayed in the funeral because there was nothing else for them to do because they were too old for the service, and they couldn't get hired on those public jobs and nothing because they were older, therefore they still met the crop.

Kate Ellis: What about, is that the case for your father? What did he do around, I mean did he stay working on?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: He still working on a farmer.

Kate Ellis: Farmer?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Because he had a edge. He was too old. And my oldest brother didn't go the service either, because he had age and whatnot and all. But he ducted different thing and stayed on different jobs and all that. And then during that time, the farmers could have deferred you from going into the service. Sign on that they would give you work and this, that, and everything else and that you couldn't go. And they would fill out some papers and everything with the governor and they call that deferment and to keep people save their crop.

Kate Ellis: Oh, deferment for farmers.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Farmers defer his employees. He fill up papers and everything.

Kate Ellis: Did the employees want that?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Some of them did not want to go and some.

Kate Ellis: Not want to go to the war, and would prefer to stay down at the farm.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: For them to stay. And they got deferred and they stayed, and they worked on the farm to keep from having to go.

Kate Ellis: Were any farmer employers made to stay on the farm when they would've liked to have left? I mean, did they?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: No, that was volunteered. If you didn't want to go, they would go and have deferred to help you to stay on a farm and work with them.

Kate Ellis: In general, did the farms suffer around here? Because I mean, were the number of farm laborers who left so great that the farms?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: No, it was enough people that would run the farm and anything. But the people did leave. A lot of them who went to the war didn't come back and that made less people. And as much one think about it. And there was less people living, those that were working on a farm do things who did not get deferred and they went into service or they were working on some other jobs. They left and found refuge and home livings and everything in other cities when they got discharged, they didn't come back to the

area. So I mean, less people in the area.

Kate Ellis: So now let me just make sure that, I want to make sure this. So as far as what you did, you graduated in '43 you said. And you went to New Orleans. Now, how did you get to New Orleans? How did you decide to go to New Orleans?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: My aunt told me that told my dad and my mother, I could come live with her and go to school there because I went to go to business school. So I went still over there to go to business school, and I got re-enrolled in school and then I got a job working at a drugstore part-time.

Kate Ellis: In New Orleans?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And I work part-time and I go to school.

Kate Ellis: And you said you stayed with your aunt. Where did she live in New Orleans?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: She live on 3102nd Street. It was my daddy brother and his wife.

Kate Ellis: Okay. And what did they do in New Orleans?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: My aunt would do ironing and whatnot and everything at the house. And my uncle worked for a feed company.

Kate Ellis: For a feed company. And so when you finished school, how long was that? Was that a four-year program or two-year program?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Two.

Kate Ellis: Two-year program. And so when you finished, did you then come back here?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I came home. I got married in '46 when my husband came out the service.

Kate Ellis: Okay, so you had promised yourselves to each other.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yes. And we came home. We got married in April of 24th, 1946. And we came here and we lived here a while. Then he was a carpenter. We went back to New Orleans and we stayed in New Orleans 1948, in '49 we came back home. We had one child in New Orleans, my oldest little girl because I didn't have a child until after. I spent about three years and I had my oldest girl, she's born in New Orleans and we moved back here and he went to trade school, to finish taking up carpenter work and more skills. And we stayed right here in a smaller, because he built a house in '47 and we stayed right here in a small frame house.

Kate Ellis: But on this property.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: On this piece of property right here.

Kate Ellis: I see, but on a smaller.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: In the small little white frame house that he built. And we came from New Orleans in '49 he went to trade school in Iberia to finish learning carpenter and whatnot on he did it all around. In '50, Lorraine was born, my second daughter. And we stayed here and worked and whatnot and everything. In '51 he finished that and he went to Chicago in '51 to take up coins, electrical school to take up electricity. And I went to, I went to take a course and I worked as a nurse's aid at the Cook County Hospital. And he went and he would work, he go to school and he would work, carpenter work and everything part-time. And we stayed there about five or six years. We came back.

Kate Ellis: Really? Wow.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Came back home in '54, which was born in Chicago. And we came here, we opened. My father ain't gotten old so he turned his store business and everything over to us and my husband rebuilt it and everything. We stayed here and ran the grocery store and launch up until '87 is when it burned down.

Kate Ellis: What was the name of the grocery store?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Tri-level Grocery and Bar.

Kate Ellis: Tri-level?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Tri, T-R-I.

Kate Ellis: Oh, Tri-level Grocery. Okay.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And bar. We ran that up until '87 when it burned. We still have the motel down the street.

Kate Ellis: But you still run.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Okay.

Kate Ellis: So what did you think of Chicago? And especially in.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Love it, but it's still so cold.

Kate Ellis: I'm sorry, you loved it but it was so cold? Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: You didn't have too many warm months. And I had one fall running and had a fall running to catch my, during the lunchtime I was, had a perfume sale at a K&B Drugstore and I went to get it. I had boots on and I was running because I had to go and get back to work. I slipping, my knee was all swollen. The only fall I had and people would fall every day, but I had one fall the whole time I left in. And you see it would rain in the morning and then the snow come in the evening, it'd be ice and slush on top and then that'll drop. And next day the snow again. And it was thick and for was horrible.

Kate Ellis: Treacherous.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And the wind was so high. When you make the corner to go be so cool, you have to back up and buckle yourself up real good to go back around and embrace it. That's when you be going to catch the L train to go in the south high to go home or some rough weather. Windy and water out your eye. It was some wind and cold.

Kate Ellis: So you prefer the heat?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I could stand in this building. In the wintertime I'd rather summertime than in the winter. Anything.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh yeah. I'd rather summertime. Anything than the winter. I can't stand there.

Kate Ellis: So what about, I mean many people traveled north at seams and things were different there and things were different in, I mean in some senses between how people of different racial groups related to each other. I mean, there was still segregation and stuff, but did you notice differences when you were in Chicago?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: What segregation in anywhere you went?

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: But it wasn't as bad. It wasn't showing as bad as it was showing in the rural areas. In the smaller cities and smaller towns, it wasn't as bad because you right side the next person. At the hospital, you wait on White patient, Black patient, just whoever was your patient, it had no problem.

Kate Ellis: So that was the kind of thing that went on up north that still hadn't, taking place down here. So what was it like when you moved back from Chicago and to move back to that, to the way that it was in the down here?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Well, I mean I didn't work when I came back here. I was working with myself. We had to

place of business and everything. I had Black customer, White customer, Black salesman, White salesman. And everything comes to the store and everything. I had no problem.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Because everything was over with that time.

Kate Ellis: Really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I had no problem. Work with them and go in and do what I had to do.

Kate Ellis: Yeah. I just heard about some people talking about soldiers who came back from World War II, Black soldiers and coming back into the South.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Hard to get a job after they went, served the country, they didn't have nothing come to do. All them have to go and take what they can find and do everything is, and you wouldn't have a preference to go and do the thing that they want to do. If there's a job here and whatnot, and the next one, Black one, the White come there. White man get the job, they didn't have a preference to push it.

Kate Ellis: Yeah. Wait. They didn't have a preference to?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Get with the jobs. The job printing, you get what you can find. Whereas the next fellow come in, you get promoted and go on and get a job, everything, and both for the same one.

Kate Ellis: Right. For the same principal.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: For the same principal, I'm telling you. For the same damages that came to one, it came to the other, whatnot and everything. But when you come back in the state, you get segregated. You still can't go to this restaurant. You have to go into the back door. You can't go into this bus station. You have to go into the back door. You get on the school bus, you have to ride on the back of the bus and everybody's just in front of you. There was no seats. No seats with the reserve in the back, you stood. All stuff. So there was still a share of it.

Kate Ellis: After the war.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Still was until '69 when integration came through full force. Well, everything changed. The school system and everything else changed. I had no problem with mine because I got on school in '78. I had no problem because I was the only Black lady and one Black man and 13 white men. I had no problem. I went where they went. I came in and came in. They took care of me. They watched me, and they look out for me.

Kate Ellis: Did they?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yes, they did. I would go, we were going to plan, going to different convention, whatnot. The first one you would look for, where are you? Just up thing. You had better come on, keep up there because we got to bring you back home safely. You come on here. And they were just nice.

Kate Ellis: Wow.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh yes. So I hadn't them. And I stood there, sit on the school board for 12 years.

Kate Ellis: Did you?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Going to 13, mm-hmm.

Kate Ellis: Now, I remember when we talked on the phone and you said that you lived on Gabriel Road. Is it Gabriel Road?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yeah. I asked them for it.

Kate Ellis: You.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: In a consulate government meeting. They were put street names and he was wondering where they going to put the name. I said, "Why don't you put it after me?" I said, "I have made records." He said, "Good idea." And I got it.

Kate Ellis: That's great.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yeah. And nothing but Gabriels lived on, there's Dudley Gabriel on the corner, George Gabriel here. Oscar Gabriel here, Gabriel family live all down here.

Kate Ellis: And these are all—

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Mary Gabriel used to live right there. Your daughter right there. She's a [indistinct 00:17:40], but she was a Gabriel, all that. So that's most of who's down the street.

Kate Ellis: Well.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And I asked them, they said, "Sure." Well I knew the sign was the front corner.

Kate Ellis: Well let me go back to the World War II period. And again, I'm going to ask you things and if you don't want to talk about it, that's fine. I imagine that you were in New Orleans in '44 when the whole incident, when the doctors in New Iberia took place. Is that right, that you were in New Orleans in 1944 when the doctors were run out of town?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I don't remember. From here?

Kate Ellis: From New Iberia.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I don't remember that. It's been away from me. I don't think I heard, but I don't remember that.

Kate Ellis: Oh, really? It was when there were a number of, it was a period when the NAACP had just been organized in New Iberia.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yes sir.

Kate Ellis: And they had wanted, had been petitioning, I guess a superintendent to have a welding school put up or established for Blacks in the area. And I guess the superintendent objected to that, the superintendent of schools.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And I wasn't here then. I don't think I know about that.

Kate Ellis: And so they were.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: In '44, I was in business college in New Orleans.

Kate Ellis: Right. And so the doctors were run out of town. The Black doctors were run out of town.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I knew they had Dr. Dorsey and I don't know who else was because Dr. Dorsey was a—The eyes, I remember him.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And I don't know who else were, they were there when I left here, but I didn't know what had happened to them because I wasn't here.

Kate Ellis: Oh, okay, because they were probably gone by the time.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: By the time I came back, they weren't there. But I don't know why they had left.

Kate Ellis: Oh really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Because I didn't ask nobody and no one told me. So I just imagine. I just didn't know.

Kate Ellis: Oh, okay. That's interest. I mean this is actually, I guess this maybe this is the thing I've been

trying to—I wonder if, I mean, because you're in separate parishes and stuff, maybe I had assumed that information would travel more.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Sometimes.

Kate Ellis: But sometimes.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: But now it does because the reporters go from parish to parishes and whatnot and all the same day the people come out, it'll come out with we both.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Come out of that in both parish, because I did hear something that happened in Franklin and the [indistinct 00:20:13] had the same thing and whatnot and everything, so they coincides now. But at that time I imagine this was separate papers and whatnot and everything. So I don't remember that.

Kate Ellis: Oh, I see. Okay. So people, the news didn't necessarily travel as far.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Being a teenager, I guess I didn't pay too much attention anyway at that time.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: But now I'm just into, and I look for things of interest.

Kate Ellis: I'll maybe bring you a copy of an article that came out in 1969 about what happened, because it might be interesting to you. It came out in the crisis.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Well, I guess I don't have that. No, I never did get that.

Kate Ellis: Well, actually I'll bring you a copy when I come by to photocopy because you might.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Okay.

Kate Ellis: You might want to add it to your—

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Add to my collection honey? Add to my collection, because I just wish I had to place them to open up those things for others to see. But when somebody come for something, it's a lady wants something for the church, during Black History Month. But I went in to pick out several books that I have that I think would be interested to her of local people. But the football players from here and from the doctors had been here and teaching somewhere where it was already offered Franklin and Senior High and all about that. I brought that book out for, and she said, "I'll be here all day." I look and I said, "You just tell

me something because if I go through this, I'm not going to ever leave you." So I have a lot of everything and I have autographs of them and all different things like that. Just I have them more just stacked up then somebody need to see them.

Kate Ellis: Yeah. Really sounds like you could open up your own personal library.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yeah. I mean with all those things that I already have, I have enough that needs to fill up one side of shelves and everything with different things and all them to start off. Any other books that I have or school books, I can put all that in. I have spot enough to start with and I just have to get some more collection. But I don't have to get those different things, cutting them more because I have nowhere to put them.

Kate Ellis: What was your mother's full name?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Viola Barabin Metz.

Kate Ellis: Did she have a middle name?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I don't know. I don't remember what.

Kate Ellis: Can you spell her maiden name?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Her maiden name, B-A-R-A-B-I-N.

Kate Ellis: Barabin.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Barabin.

Kate Ellis: Just like it sounds. And when was she born? Or I can make it.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: My mother was, was my daddy born 1894. My mother was five years younger.

Kate Ellis: Okay, so 1899.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: She's five years younger. Papa was born 1894.

Kate Ellis: Right. And so she's young. She was born after he was.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: My mother was born after pop.

Kate Ellis: So 1899. If it's five years, if she was born five years after.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Okay. That she put around 1899.

Kate Ellis: Do you know what year she passed?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: My mother passed in 1974.

Kate Ellis: And your father?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Father passed in 1979.

Kate Ellis: [indistinct 00:23:09]. Where was she born?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: New Orleans.

Kate Ellis: She was born in New Orleans, huh. Why did she come out here? How did that happen?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Well, her mother and father died and she came here with her sister. Her sister took her.

Kate Ellis: Now why had her sister come out here?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Well, her sister's already out here. I think they were, we see if they were two sister children. The father had married their mother, and they were living out here at that time, the father was. And then when my first aunts and uncle mother died, the daddy married to my mother and he had them and my mother, my grandmothers from New Orleans.

Kate Ellis: Oh, okay. Can I move your microphone a little? Only because I'm looking at the monitor and I'm not, that's fine. Perfect. Okay, thanks. So this was your father's second?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Second family.

Kate Ellis: Second family. Okay.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And they were from New Orleans, they were New Orleans people. But his first family was from here. Until his wife died.

Kate Ellis: Oh. I think I just lost you. I know you just explained it and I just lost it. Will you say that last part again? That his, your father's.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: My grandfather was from here, and his wife and all was from here. And he had children from here. But after his wife died, he moved to New Orleans and he met my mother's mother and they married and that's where my mother name was born.

Kate Ellis: Okay, I see. And then they came back here, huh.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: After he died, their mother died. But they came to live one of those stepsisters out here.

Kate Ellis: Wow.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Raised them.

Kate Ellis: So as far as what I should write for her occupation, should I?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Housewife.

Kate Ellis: Okay.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Most of what she did, she did little other ways, but.

Kate Ellis: It was primarily housewife, okay. And then your father's full name?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oscar Metz. Oscar T. Metz.

Kate Ellis: Do you know what the T stood for?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Thomas.

Kate Ellis: Thomas. T-H.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: O-M-A-S.

Kate Ellis: Metz. Okay. And he was born?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: May 15th, 1894.

Kate Ellis: Okay. And he was born in?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Here. He was always from here.

Kate Ellis: St. Mary, Louisiana.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: St. Mary Parish.

Kate Ellis: Oh, and his occupation, he was a farmer. That, okay.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yeah. Farm working, farm for himself so help with that.

Kate Ellis: Okay. Now what I wanted to ask you about, you have just in our conversations, I think even just off tape mentioned various community groups and self-help organizations here in the community. When you were coming up, do you remember various organizations that were around, or benevolent societies?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They had benevolent societies, church groups at the church, Sunday school and whatnot and all that. But as far as those NAACP came later, and all these other organizations came later.

Kate Ellis: Do you remember much of a presence of the NAACP around here? When—

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Later, but not soon.

Kate Ellis: Right. So later being? What is later? Later is the '60s or later is?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: '60s and '70s, and whatnot and everything. That's when NAACP organized and became strong and whatnot and everything. And we had different things that they had done and whatnot all, but it wasn't up until the later years they really got publicized and really got well that interaction.

Kate Ellis: Would the benevolent, did your parents belong to a benevolent society? What was the name of their society?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: St. Peter Benevolent Society.

Kate Ellis: St. Peter.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: At the Methodist Church.

Kate Ellis: And was that the sort of thing where they paid dues once a month?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Paid dues once a month and you would get doctor, medicine, and if you would die, it would give you a certain amount on the funerals and whatnot.

Kate Ellis: So that was, I mean it's interesting the way you've described the community. It sounds like when you were coming up, people shared what they had.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: You talk about.

Kate Ellis: If somebody had hard times.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh yes.

Kate Ellis: You'd come there.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: In a country, I can tell you in the rural areas and everything, people will give you something. But in the cities, you don't get nothing. You have to pay for everything and buy it or do without. But in the country, if you say that you have this, they'll get together and bring things to you and all also stuff. But cities, you ask them what direction to go in, they'll you send you another direction.

Kate Ellis: So that was like in Chicago?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yes ma'am. People fall on the street and on the fish, they'd walk over. You'd get help if a policeman would come and everything else and pick up that person and see what's wrong with them. But the other people keep going.

Kate Ellis: So when you fell in Chicago, did anybody come and help scoop you up or anything or?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I got up too quick because I know I was doing wrong. I didn't have no business going there.

Kate Ellis: Oh really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I had no business going to the store. At that time I did because I was on work. So I just got up and hopped into the store and it passed off and I went and got my, what I was going to get and went on back to work. But I've seen people on State Street where it's hot and crowded, it's the main street. I've seen people passed out from heat exhaustion or something like that and other people just going on by.

Kate Ellis: And which city was this?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Chicago.

Kate Ellis: Oh, Chicago. Wow.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: On Main Street. They called it State Street. That was the main thing, where all the stories and where all the action was. And we just fall in, stayed there.

Kate Ellis: That was it. But in the community that you came up in.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: People shared and they were good.

Kate Ellis: And there was a benevolent society to help with expense, like medical expenses and funeral.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I said, now mind you take your little book and you go to your dresser, get your medicine come. And medicine wasn't as high as it is now. Medicine is three and four time high as it was at that time because getting more money and everything is higher.

Kate Ellis: I'm assuming that it was probably hard to get a doctor, or for Black people to get a doctor in those times. Am I right about that?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They would come.

Kate Ellis: They would come.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Doctors would go out at that time.

Kate Ellis: Black doctors would come?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They'd go on calls. Yeah, we had some good white doctors would come. They would come on calls.

Kate Ellis: Oh, okay.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: That's mostly what they're having. They'll come on calls and work on a patient at their house. And if they have to go to the hospital, send to the hospital and so forth.

Kate Ellis: What hospital did you go to?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Iberia General was there, but it was real small, just a little straight building and they had Lafayette Charity, New Orleans Charity.

Kate Ellis: And those accepted or okay, I see.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Anybody.

Kate Ellis: And New Iberia General accepted African Americans at that time?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yes, you had to pay.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I know I paid a penny because my brother went there when he has appendix removed and I went to stay with him. But it was so small at that time.

Kate Ellis: Huh.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: It was tiny.

Kate Ellis: What—

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Well, just the three or four rooms and whatnot and everything. And they would take whatever they could hold. But now you have the big one on the side and it's beautiful.

Kate Ellis: Oh, well one thing I was just going to ask was, I've heard from others that there were elders in the community who might know remedies and things like that.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: To use all those little midwives delivering your babies and they would bring teas and rubbing you and all different things like that and they were good at that. And it would help to prevent some of the sickness. And all the little children have cold, they'll make a lock, what you call with egg and honey and.

Kate Ellis: Oh yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And lemon. They'll fix that and everything and get the cold off the kids' chest. They'll rub it with Mentholatum and put a paper, a greaser bag and put on your chest and all that kind of stuff helped.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: You had the hiccup, to put a piece of paper on your head.

Kate Ellis: Put a piece of paper on your head, really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: All the brown paper on your head right there.

Kate Ellis: Oh, your forehead.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: A small child, yes.

Kate Ellis: Who had the hiccups. And did it work?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yeah, it would pass. I guess they thought it was passing because—It's some funny things that be done. I tell you, they go get that tea and boil it and let you drink that tea and that will help.

Kate Ellis: Really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: There's a lot of things they were doing. It was helpful. But now you better not change

that because everything make you sick. You can't eat this and give you cancer. You can't eat that. It does this. Oh, strange. And those old people eat everything they thought they could eat and they all lived to be happy, ripe old age.

Kate Ellis: Right. Yeah, I've been interviewing a lot of 90 year olds.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Sometimes, they live on, Ms. Chorus, 84.

Kate Ellis: Yeah, she's incredible. Yeah. Huh. So again, one things that's interesting in this project is again, because in the context of a segregation that existed at that time, one of the things we're looking at is all of these very, these self-sustaining communities and what were they able to provide for themselves when services were denied to them during the Jim Crow period. So things like how did people get medical treatment if that wasn't available? Or really important things, things to document, things for people of later generations to know about. See what I mean, does that?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: It is, it was very much of interest. Different thing that they couldn't get done. But the generation coming up now. Because a lot of things that we did and said and thinking my kids and grandkids would tell me, "Oh mama, that was old time." But over time, you had a hard time trying to get those things. Getting services. We had to walk from here, walk up there and sit on the corner and wait for a bus to pick you up, to bring you to Jeanerette, to the town where you had to go get your shopping and get on the bus.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: If it's full, you have to stand up to Jeanerette because you couldn't sit and they had empty seats in the front, you couldn't sit in them. You have to stand up in and get on and go get project again. You had have your shopping bag, whatnot, they come. And then after they had taxis, you can get a taxi to bring your bag home and then come from Jeanerette over here. The orange taxis, the first one had [indistinct 00:33:57]. They had taxis and we'd catch the taxi and come home after you do your shopping. But that was the only transportation you had because nobody, too many people had cars place. They have a car. Everybody knew that's that person passing by there because it saw very few cars. They would know who was in that car.

Kate Ellis: Oh really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Why, yes.

Kate Ellis: Knew exactly who had the cars.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Because there was so many that didn't have.

Kate Ellis: Yeah. So you tell your kids that now, but.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh mama, that's old time.

Kate Ellis: Really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh mama, we can't do that. Oh mama. Oh, I wouldn't do that. But they don't know. You had to do that to survive.

Kate Ellis: Uh-huh.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh yes. If you wanted to survive and be in Southern middle class and do the thing that you have to do, you have to do, said do what you have to do.

Kate Ellis: Yeah. Did your parents get to go to school much? Did they have?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yes. My mother went to school. My mother could read and write and do a lot. And my father helped us get a lesson up until we got above him.

Kate Ellis: Really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: My daddy went to school because his old uncle on Four Corners. Mr. Eddick Martin, Eddie Martin had the first little school on Four Corners.

Kate Ellis: Wow.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: AAVE Martin, one of my daddy's uncle.

Kate Ellis: Huh.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And he would teach school from there before school was on Four Corners.

Kate Ellis: Before. Wait, he would?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Before there was a AV Martin, before there was the school on Four Corners, he had the first school.

Kate Ellis: Wow. Did he have it in his home? Where did he?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: At his home. And he would teach. He taught my father because my father was his nephew. Taught my daddy went up to about eighth grade.

Kate Ellis: Wow.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: My father was good at figuring and doing and nice handwriting.

Kate Ellis: Really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And he would help us as long as we were under him. But when we got in high school over him, well there's things he didn't know.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: My fathers had good. And my mother, nobody couldn't beat her figure and do anything.

Kate Ellis: Really? Where did she go to school?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: In New Orleans I guess.

Kate Ellis: Yeah. Okay. That's weird.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Because my father went to his uncle's school. I think it'd be AV Martin little school.

Kate Ellis: AV Martin School.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: That's right. And he's smart. My dad was a smart man. My mother too, they had good education. So I don't see why some children younger than those old people that they don't have education, because I guess the parents had no interest in sending them.

Kate Ellis: You mean during what period?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Afterwards, because some people my age don't know how to read and write different thing because they didn't want to go, and their parents did not push them.

Kate Ellis: Or the parents wanted, felt like they needed to keep them in the fields most of the time?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Not all the time, no. Lot of them wait to go fishing, sit around the house, do whatever they wanted to.

Kate Ellis: They just didn't make them go to school.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They didn't want to go and do it and push him.

Kate Ellis: I see.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: But my mother would get us up in the morning, have breakfast, hunt for us to eat and get our little books out, we get dressed in our nice little clothes and hit the road because she'd get up first

and she prepare for and then she call us something. That's right. She wanted us to go to school and all of us did.

Kate Ellis: Yeah, it sounds like she got all of you educated. Wow. There's another community that just sticks out in my mind as an interesting area, which is the Grand Marais area. Do you know much about that community?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Mm-mm.

Kate Ellis: Because that's another perplexing area in a way. I mean it seems like a community unto itself.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: It is.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They stuck to themselves. But I don't know anything about people. I didn't go in that area.

Kate Ellis: Are a lot of communities like that? That they, do you—

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yeah, [indistinct 00:37:36] and Centreville are the same way.

Kate Ellis: What is it called?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: [indistinct 00:37:39] and Centreville.

Kate Ellis: Bordenville and Centreville?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They have the same type of perplexity as Grand Marais.

Kate Ellis: As in Grand Marais. And people, they stay to themselves?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Both those areas, that's about the three close around in John, pass [indistinct 00:37:56] city at [indistinct 00:37:56]. Down in Amelia, that's another one. That's that sort of community too. But everybody everywhere else is just.

Kate Ellis: Other communities are more.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Mingle better.

Kate Ellis: They mingle better. That's what I was asking is I was wondering how much people in Loreauville—just stick with people from Loreauville and people from—

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And all those areas, at that time they were all like that and everything. But right now, they're beginning to mingle up.

Kate Ellis: I see.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: They're beginning to be easy, beginning is better.

Kate Ellis: Uh-huh, and I wonder partly if that's because transportation's easier now. Do you think?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: That helps?

Kate Ellis: Is that what?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: That helps.

Kate Ellis: Uh-huh.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: That helps. They can go where you want to go and come back. You don't just have to stay there in that area. You can go someplace else and explore.

Kate Ellis: Yeah. Huh. That's interesting. Oh, I guess the thing I've been wondering about as far as people going to different jobs, it seems like if people wanted to move out of the fields, one thing they might do was go to New Iberia as the place where they could be offered jobs and stuff.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Go to unemployment office. They have a unemployment office in New Iberia on Center Street.

Kate Ellis: You mean.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: It'd been there a good while.

Kate Ellis: Yeah. You mean a good while?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I don't know exactly how long, but I never been there, a good while. They go there and see for jobs and whatnot all. And once you get a job off the farm, you could not hold that house. You'll have to move off that farm and find yourself somewhere to stay.

Kate Ellis: And how would they? And they would do that by, you mean?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Just look for some other house to rent, or if you made enough money you can get another house to rent and if not, you might get another house later on. Some bought houses. After the war,

people start buying their own houses.

Kate Ellis: After the war they did.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: After World War II, a lot of people buying their own houses, getting off those farm. And a lot of times some of the farmers went, they working the land and whatnot. Sometimes they rent the land out now. And the houses that the persons are in, they would just the more farm houses loan, they give it to them. A lot of people got houses.

Kate Ellis: That were given to them by the farmers?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yeah.

Kate Ellis: By the people they worked for?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And then like Weeks Island back at the south mine.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: When they stopped working and they rent that mine out for storage of oil and using some different thing and they move out. All those people we had house living on Weeks Island, they gave them those houses.

Kate Ellis: They gave. And then those houses were actually moved off the island.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Moved off the island and they moved all different area. The people had bought some property and whatnot and put their houses on them. Some of the farmers gave the houses that the people only when they were renting their houses out, renting their property out and they got older, they weren't working anymore and they didn't need any arm hands and whatnot and everything else because they at lease their property after somebody, some younger farmer to work. They gave some of the people in houses what they were living in.

Kate Ellis: I see. And a lot of that took place after World War II.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yes.

Kate Ellis: Yeah, okay. Let me ask you more about your family, but let me just ask you one more thing about just a couple more things about when did you first try to register to vote?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh, when I voted. When I got old enough, I registered to vote because they wouldn't allowing you to vote. When after I made 18, I was able to vote and whatnot and everything.

Kate Ellis: I'm sorry, after?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: After I made 18, I was able to vote. I didn't register to vote and everything because they had already started letting Blacks register to vote. Now I don't know when they first started, because I don't remember that. But when I made 18, I was able to register to vote.

Kate Ellis: Oh.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And then in 1978, I have it somewhere, what the year that I was the first Black commissioner to in this area to work on the poll. I was among some of the first ones to that put Black in all area. And I was the first.

Kate Ellis: Really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Black commissioner too. I was the first of a lot of things.

Kate Ellis: Yeah, sounds like it. That's, wow.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I just stuck. I just went out and stuck myself in the area.

Kate Ellis: You did, didn't you?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Yes.

Kate Ellis: Wow.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And then after that, when they reapportioned, well, a Black can run in this area, I went. Signed up to run for school one, and I won and won and won until I retired in 1991.

Kate Ellis: Well, that's when you retired. Okay, '91. Wow. But you voted, so you started voting when you came of age.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Mm-hmm.

Kate Ellis: Uh-huh. And there wasn't any, because I'm trying to think if you were born in '25. So that would've been in the mid '40s that you first, am I right about that?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: No, they didn't have it at that time. I said they were able to vote when he was around 18, when I was around 18 years old in '43. But I didn't even actually vote until later on when it came and I don't remember the year, I forgot. After the integration, they start voting, everybody start voting.

Kate Ellis: So was that in the '70s that you first started voting?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Should have been.

Kate Ellis: Okay, not in the '60s.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I don't think so, no.

Kate Ellis: Yeah. Okay.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: But I was eligible to vote.

Kate Ellis: Did you ever go to try to register or you just knew?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: When it was time, I didn't even go.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Because I knew they weren't letting Blacks vote. But after the integration, I started voting, and in '72 I ran unsuccessful because the territory was too large because you had to run six who all wanted. But the top six runners would be district one school board members. But in '78, they had brought a lawsuit and going to court and had a reapportion all that a Black can run and get in.

Kate Ellis: I see.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And that's the year I ran. And I said yeah, I got in and I've been going ever since and could have still been if I wanted to, but I had got older to travel up down that highway, whatnot and everything so I just retired.

Kate Ellis: Okay.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I had no problem. And the school board members, they love me and I love them. We got along so good. That's right.

Kate Ellis: That's great.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And if I make an error when I first got down there, they'd take me under their wings and show me how to do it.

Kate Ellis: Really?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh yes. They were good. They were very good.

Kate Ellis: I mean, again, just from what you say, it sounds like you've seen a real mixture of good and bad and as far as Whites are concerned.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Good and bad. I've had good, and I've had bad. We went on pretty nicely and I'll withstand it, I'm still here.

Kate Ellis: How are you? This takes a lot of.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: A lot of courage.

Kate Ellis: A lot of courage.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And strength to keep on going.

Kate Ellis: I bet it does.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: And then you just have to look up to the Lord. And that's real one thing about it, if it wasn't for the Lord, I don't know what I would do.

Kate Ellis: Really.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Some of those things, they just go.

Kate Ellis: Because some things were really trying?

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh yes.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I've had different things and all, the death of my children.

Kate Ellis: Oh yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Still forth and so on, two within three years time.

Kate Ellis: That must have been absolutely—

Audrey Metz Gabriel: It was rough.

Kate Ellis: Devastating.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: My mother-in-law during that time, and she was a doll. And my father and mother and

a brother. From '73 to '83, I had 10 persons die that was near and dear to me. My parents, my father-in-law and mother-in-law, my kids.

Kate Ellis: Wow. That's—

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I've had a rough time in that category, but I'm still here. The Lord has brought me through.

Kate Ellis: And I have to say, you don't show it. I mean, what I mean is because of.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Everybody ask me, "How do you go that way? How you do this and how you get along that way?" I tell about just lean and depend on the Lord, and he bring you through.

Kate Ellis: Really? Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: Oh yes.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I pray a lot and ask the Lord to give me that strength, oh yes.

Kate Ellis: Yeah.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: I do church work, do community work and all kind of thing that keep me going. Keep me from being idle.

Kate Ellis: Well, this whole history project you have, again, I mean, just sounds really fascinating.

Audrey Metz Gabriel: That's a lot of things that I do. So when I sit down, I have that box full in. I already have the book, but by having my eye surgery, I had cataracts removed on both eyes. And I've had this car accident, but I just can't get there right.