

Rich and Jackie McGinnis

David Crosby: This is David Crosby. I'm at the home of Richard and Jacqueline McInnis in Edwards, Mississippi, on April 4, 2015, and here to conduct an oral history review for the Wells Church Oral History Project. Before we proceed could you say for the microphone that you've given your permission for us to make this tape?

Rich McGinnis: Yes.

Jackie McGinnis: Yes.

Crosby: Good. Thank you very much. Well let's start with you, Jackie, if I may. You were born here in Mississippi, in Picayune.

Jackie: Picayune.

Crosby: And uh.

Jackie: The old Morton Sanatorium.

Crosby: Could you give us a sense of your family background?

Jackie: Well, my Dad was a barber. He met Mother at Kessler Air Force Base and she was from Picayune. She was working for the summer and he married Mom and her people were in Picayune and that's how I came to be born in Picayune.

Crosby: You say they met at Kessler Air Force Base.

Jackie: Yes, my Mom and Dad.

Crosby: Was he a Mississippian or?

Jackie: He was from Georgia. He was from Milan, Georgia

Crosby: So your Mom took him home with her?

Jackie: Yes. Yeah. He used to say that he would rather be dead in Georgia than alive in Mississippi.

Crosby: Oh, my!

Jackie: Wasn't that awful? But that was Daddy. He was a cross between Redd Foxx and Archie Bunker.

Crosby: Well barber shops were very important institutions.

Jackie: Well, in Picayune, we couldn't go to the public library growing up, so his barber shop was like the library. He had reference materials for children and he had a string that went from one end of the barber shop to the other and he would have magazines, you know, put on there. He also almost got in trouble giving the Chicago Defender and the Pittsburg Courier, I think that was the name of the paper. But anyway, he was a pretty brave old guy. He really was.

Crosby: And tell me a little bit about your schooling.

Jackie: Well, my schooling is crazy. I was the kind of person who; I liked everything, everything. I got out of high school too young. I skipped a grade because of a test. They kept making me take this test over and over and I would make more. The reason the test was so easy was because if you have seen something once you remember what you said then you just go on and do that. So they wanted to put me from the fifth grade to the seventh grade and Mother knew that, you know, I was too immature and still trying to get mature, by the way. We had the test the next year and so I scored high. So I skipped the seventh grade. Thrown into the eighth grade. The kids whom I left wanted to beat me and the kids whom I joined wanted to also beat me, so I became a fighter and I've been one ever since. That's right!

Crosby: With your fists?

Jackie: Um, I've been known.

Rich: Woo, I like this. I'm learning all kinds of stuff.

Jackie: But my family, music, you know, my family was, we were always church musicians, choir directors. Grandpa and Grandma used to sing do the "shape note singing." Do you know what that is?

Crosby: Yes, I do.

Jackie: Ok, well I never could get it together to tell you what it was but I couldn't get them together to give me uh, she divorced him and he followed her from Beaver Meadow, Mississippi to Picayune but they wouldn't talk. So I couldn't get them together to really show me what it was. I always wanted to know. I'll find out before I die hopefully.

Crosby: They probably used the old southern harmony hymnal. Which was a shape note hymnal. There were others too but that was the most popular one.

Jackie: One, my uncle, to this day, and he is 88, no he is 89. I think he is 89. Anyway, he still plays for several churches and I had another uncle who is a jazz pianist and he influenced me very much! I always loved jazz music and I always had to sing in the choir. I cannot remember not being able to have a venue someplace, you know, to do something when I was a little kid. I thought nothing of it. I thought everybody did that.

Crosby: So this was all in Picayune?

Jackie: Picayune, then I later started working with a group of The Blue Notes and we were actually better than The Supremes could ever think about being, ok? We were really good. We had tight wonderful harmonies and we were talking about that last year when my Mom passed and one of the girls came by; two of them came by and we were saying, "We were so good. Why couldn't we make it?" So, I don't know. I think we went to different schools but anyway, I sang by myself a lot. I used to sing jazz in New Orleans and up and down the Coast. Slidell,

Louisiana, and parts of Louisiana I never knew existed. There was a place called Appaloosas. You know we did shows with the renowned Solomon Burke. There was a group, when people would go on tours, they would come to Mr. Percy Stovall. I forgot the name of his agency but he would have bands that would tour. If somebody was coming down to tour, he put together the openings and all that. So we were quite known up and down the Coast and that was a lot of fun.

Crosby: Did you feel a kind of tension let's say between jazz singing and church singing?

Jackie: Oh yeah, they put me out of church!

Crosby: They did?

Jackie: What happened was my Grandpa on my Mother's side was very big on politics. He bragged about the fact he was very intelligent, the fact that he was an eighth grade scholar. He said it with great pride and he says I can't understand why these children don't know what they are supposed to know for the eighth grade? But anyway, Papa told them, "Well, if they are going to put these girls out of church, I got me a list here, and I'm going to start reading things off I know." And someone decided that the meeting needed to adjourn and it was. So I was told I was put out, but I was never officially put out. Let's just say I could not be a part and then they had their meeting and everything was all right. By then, I didn't want to go.

Crosby: Ok.

Jackie: I love the Lord. Now don't get me wrong. I really love the Lord and I still do.

Crosby: So, did you stop singing in the church choir then?

Jackie: Oh yes! Because by that time I would be too tired from singing in New Orleans. I couldn't open my poor little eyes!

Crosby: Now the venues where you would sing. Were those mostly segregated venues?

Jackie: Oh yeah! Oh yeah! That's what I believe that you can be born at a certain time to be a bridge. I sang like they had the black water, they had the white water and there were times for a dressing room they wanted you to change in a room where they do flowers and all that so it was kind of rough on the road. On the road it was rough. We had to go long distances, you know. I was reading *Lady Sings the Blues* and I didn't know how deeply I had hidden that hurt in my heart. We had to perform, you know, and they paid us. We got paid. But we could not like sit down and order a meal or anything, you know. So, I decided I wouldn't have anything. My stomach would be growling. I refused to go to that back. So, that's enough about me. Don't you think?

Rich: Keep on going!

Crosby: Well sure we can talk to your husband some.

Jackie: I have some other things I want to share. I've been talking to long. It's time for my sweet husband.

Crosby: We'll get some interaction going here in a little bit. Rich you were born out on the West Coast, right?

Rich: That's right.

Crosby: Where about?

Rich: A place call Woodlands. It's a place near Sacramento. My father worked for a sugar company. He started the research part for the company. It was right in the middle of all the central part of California that is completely flat. So they had a company that people made sugar beets. No cotton. No sugar cane. So they turned out other parts and they do this as a regular form of their; you take the beets and do the same thing that you get from cane but different.

Crosby: I don't think I have ever seen a place that reminded me more of the Mississippi Delta than the central valley of California.

Rich: That's right.

Crosby: Around Sacramento.

Rich: The main difference, at least when I was there, the people that worked the fields, for the most part, would come for a month and then go. Migrant workers. There was a little section across the tracks we called the labor camp, and they would stay there for a while until they moved on to the next spot. In school, we would see these kids, they would come in for a month and leave. Then the next year they would come back. And you got an education under those circumstances. One of the brightest students in the class was a little Mexican girl who had somehow managed to stay and she was quite good.

Crosby: So most of these migrant workers were Mexicans?

Rich: Yeah.

Crosby: And your schooling, could you tell me a little about that?

Rich: Well I went to, I guess, it's the eighth grade my father got promoted to the position in San Francisco, which were where the headquarters of the company were. We lived in San Rafael which is about 15 miles north of the Golden Gate. Went to eighth grade through high school there.

Crosby: Is that Marin County?

Rich: Yes, right. I took my favorite picture of Jackie. We weren't married yet and she is sitting on a bench in China Cap which is? Anyway, from there I went to college at the University of California at Berkley where both my parents and my older sister had gone.

Crosby: Do you have any idea of the time frame for this? When did you graduate high school?

Rich: I graduated from high school in '59. Is that right? Yeah, '59 and went to Berkley until '63. That fall of '63 was when all this stuff really took another level.

Crosby: I was going to say. It was just before the?

Rich: It was a wonderful place to be. My father was a dedicated Republican. He didn't like the fact that Roosevelt had taken us off the gold standard but he worked for all the Republican candidates and they all lost. When it came to Barry Goldwater he stopped voting! Or he stopped because that was too far off for him! But what I liked about Berkley, and again, you came from that environment and you walked on the campus and there would be people standing up on little platforms telling you about the latest political stuff. You walked on to the campus and there was a line of tables you had "Fair Play for Cuba" which was a great place because those things you would not otherwise be aware of. Definitely opened my eyes and ears. I think it changed me for life, I guess.

Jackie: But your Mom's political views?

Rich: Oh yes, they did not agree. She also went to Berkley. He was actually 12 years older than she. Supposedly, he married his brother's wife's sister. So but at that time, she was in high school and he was in graduate school. It was almost like, you know, some sort of?

Crosby: Jerry Lee Lewis?

Rich: Exactly! Two years later they got married. She went on to Berkley and so forth. But I remember, she was one of seven kids and I remember one time, I was not there, but I heard about it, that she and her sister, Loylah, who was the one that was married to her husband George, had this rendered discussion about the war, about the Vietnam War. They didn't talk for seven or eight years. It was that bad.

Crosby: What did you study at Berkley?

Rich: It was chemistry.

Crosby: Chemistry?

Rich: Yeah. I look back on it, and I say you could do what your Dad did. I really didn't know what I wanted to do and I said what should I do? And he said what would you like to do? Why don't you try that? And I said ok. I think I was pretty good at it but when I look back on it, I probably would have been wiser. But as I look back, I certainly always liked teaching. I remember when I was in high school this girl was in real trouble and I helped her out.

Crosby: So you went on to graduate school?

Rich: I finished graduate school too. I was the first advisee for a young professor who was actually truly brilliant. I found out many years later, it was probably me, but he was not a very good mentor. He just left you off to be on your own. He thought we were all supposed to be as bright as he was.

Crosby: Yeah.

Rich: But I got involved in a lot of things there. I got involved in a strange way. In December of 1965 Harvard, Yale and Columbia started a program called the Intensive Summers Study Program which was supposed to take students of African American black schools and get them into graduate school. I heard about the program from a janitor somewhere and wound up teaching in it. But then after that they said well you know we need to send some people out because we can't really trust what these professors say at these schools. So I went for a couple of years and then in '69 they said this Tougaloo base will be different from the other ones you have been to. Indeed, they were correct. Ernst Borinski who was a sociologist, a holocaust survivor was my host. He was amazing. The faculty at that time was just fantastic. Jeanne Rozman's husband is probably the only one left of that group.

Crosby: Expand that a little bit for me. Something changed in the program?

Rich: Oh, I was going to say I happened to be visiting Tougaloo School. I liked the students. They were very welcoming there and Dr. Borinski. What happened since then of course, the Civil Rights purge is over.

Crosby: I was thinking about the transition from Harvard to Tougaloo.

Rich: Oh, well I'll tell you. Harvard was a lot of brilliant folks and there were a few demonstrations against the war. In fact, I think one of the big ones when I happened to be coming down here. But I really found, in certain respects, was more Berkley like because of the strength of the people you met. It really was very liberating.

Crosby: Well now maybe we can talk about how the two of you met.

Jackie: Well, I do want to say I was involved in the anti-war movement, too, before we go on to the greatest love story.

Rich: In slow motion though.

Jackie: So I got in involved. I was teaching French and English which is now a subsidiary of Hinds Junior College.

Crosby: Was that Utica?

Jackie: At Utica, yeah. I found it to be a; it was weird. First, I was too young, had two children, and it was my first teaching job. I think I was 19. Two children! That shows you what happens when you get skipped. Don't let your children ever get skipped. So anyway, I got involved with the anti-war movement and I had some things happen to me. They tried to get me fired. So there were these men, and I won't mention these men's names but I remember them in their little brown cars and they would follow us around and I didn't know how to drive but whoever I was in the car to ride with, and still don't know how to drive! But these gentlemen would come and hang around with and look so; it got to where my babies were little ones and say, "Oh, there are your friends' brown car." So one

day, I went out to the brown car and told them to come on in. We talked, and talked and I didn't know that someone would actually ask you to work with them. You know I thought that was the most horrible thing. So I, of course, refused to do that.

Crosby: Well did they identify themselves at that point?

Jackie: Yeah, yeah. They did to me. Later on, it was much later I was watched. All I did was make a speech or two. I got involved because I saw people leaving my classes and then I hear somebody died. So I said I've got to be a part of this and do something. So, I had been a part of the Civil Rights voter registration things. I found out about the extreme poverty in Hinds County. My children, they were little, and I would take them and drop a group of us off and we would fan out, you know, and go. I saw some things, you know, like they were third world. I know that is a bad term. Let's just say underdeveloped places. It was pretty rough and it just made me, I did things down in this area. I knew of Edwards because I used to come down to Mt. Beulah and do workshops in black literature. It was, something was not right! It was, I saw little evidence of children caring about anything literary or wanting to read or even talk about their feelings. You know there was a few. And while I taught at the college I taught some extremely (?) people. One of the former mayors who was one of my students. I found that a lot of my students remembered as I later came to Edwards and got involved with Rich. Later I found out I influenced more people than I thought. And they told me crazy things I used to say and do. I was a little embarrassed. You know the truth just came out. I would just say how I felt and in a faculty meeting, I remember being at a faculty meeting and this man came down and L.B.'s looking him up. I won't say his name because I always stay in trouble. He said, "How we were?" to ask how we were doing. When I got over here everybody was just fine. Just fine, you know. He said, "Well, you know for a Negra school this, you know, is really a good school." I say, "Sir one of the things I need to ask you for, for my negras, I say I'm using that term because I want us, you know, to be able to understand each other, we need a language lab. I said it would help so much." Everybody started whispering and going on like, "That nigger is going to get lynched. She is crazy!" So, what he said was, "Them that makes the most racket, sometimes get what they want!" Something like that. That is what he said. Something like that. Anyway, I

knew I was on my way out, probably out. It was hard getting up a four every morning and getting children ready. They had a wonderful daycare facility there on the campus and it was very difficult. And, of course, nobody wants to give you a ride when you got two little children let alone with you. But we trudged on and we made it!

Crosby: About what period of time was this?

Jackie: This was around 1968, '69, '70. Yeah.

Crosby: Did you ever run across Dr. Walter Washington?

Jackie: He hired me!

Crosby: He hired you?

Jackie: He hired me.

Crosby: He hired me, too.

Jackie: Wow! Let me tell you what he told me. The mayor came to a Christmas party here a few years ago. He said Mrs. McGinnis, no he referred to me as Mrs. Dedeaux and I was widowed in 1989. He said, "Dr. Washington told me, 'you don't have no Ms. Dedeaux here to come into the office with these crackers and come in and act a fool and cry.' Said, 'you going to have to put you out if you don't have your money this time.' " You know he was at Alcorn then. And then he said, "Yeah, she's not here and she can't do anything for you." I never knew, first of all, I didn't know that he paid me any attention, you know. I just thought maybe, I didn't know that he had made an exception in that man's case. Anyway, he's the mayor here now.

Rich: He was.

Jackie: Oh no, you are right. Poor fellow. Yes, he's replaced now. He tried, and it's very hard to do things in this area. It's very, very difficult because we have nothing. We have no industry to speak of. There isn't much to do.

Rich: There is an egg plant down the road. Didn't there used to be some sort of furniture thing?

Jackie: I don't know, but I just know I thought about how I would just get in trouble jumping off into things. As a matter of fact, I remember the first, Charlie Horwitz. He was with the Civil Rights Movement. And Charlie said, "Jackie, you need to come on down. We need you down here for something." So, I went on down and my husband was always disgusted with me. He said, "Well, I heard you were down there trying to make history."

Jackie: I said, "What?" He said, "Weren't you at that news conference where they were announcing about gay rights?" First time anybody had ever announced about gay rights. They haven't said anything about gay rights. So, he always thought me odd in many ways. But I was there and a Mr. Sandifer was the spokesperson and he said, "Do you know everybody there?" I said, "Well, you can understand people and humanity without dealing with their sexuality." I said, "I am not trying to announce my gayness, which I don't have it, you know!" But anyway, that was a big stink! But I was always trying to get involved in things and always try really hard. I always thought, I always said to myself, "Just because you don't have a car, because you don't know how to drive, does not keep you from being a citizen, you know, and saying what you feel."

Crosby: Ok. Well, can we move on and tell how you met Rich? What happened?

Jackie: It's going to make it seem as though I'm bragging, but I'm not! I had this baby that started talking, saying words, at six months. I said, "How is Mommy's baby?" She said, "Just fine!" I almost dropped her. "Just fine!" Oh, my God! So, I called the pediatrician and asked them, "Is a baby supposed to talk at 6 months?" "Oh no, all mothers say their babies are geniuses. Oh no." So, I let it go. So by the time Dede was nine months old she was getting me in trouble. She said, she told a lady, she said, ah, we will just call her Mrs. Johnson for a name because the

lady is still living and very much alive and feisty. Dede said, "Mrs. Johnson, is your other face in your purse, because Mother said you had two faces!" You know, so she was that kind of baby. Ok, this is just to kind of give you one idea how this child was. Then, oh we could tell you stories about this baby. But she; I worked real hard and I was a Director of a program at Tougaloo College called teen counseling when I left Utica. I came there and it was a place where my college students went into the homes of children who could not read or needed some help or something to break the chain. We would send two into a home. Well, I worked constantly. During the month of June I did not work. So, I am in the faculty cafeteria. Rich came in. No, it was about May. It was about May because I only had 30 minutes, 30 minutes so they could help you get it together.

Rich: Ok.

Jackie: So he got this money. A million dollar grant?

Rich: More like \$100,000 a year.

Jackie: Well, it was a million to me. This was to help students so we could get more scientists and doctors. This baby came from (?) and got up. I mean she just ran all over Tougaloo. She thought she was a student because people would ask, "Is it my turn to keep the baby?" And they had taught her all kind of crazy stuff, you know, and she was just grown. And she told Rich, "Come over here and sit with us and eat." She got up from our table and I didn't even know she was gone. I didn't know she knew him but she did. She said, "You know people don't eat alone." So, she brought him over to our table. You just obeyed Dede. You did whatever she said. So he brought his stuff over and we were eating and he started talking about what kind of work and asked what kind of work I did. I told him how difficult it was to watch and to know how many children were not being taken care of. Their needs were not being met. So anyway, Rich said I just got a grant and I'm not sure how to organize this for kids to be more scientists and doctors. So I said, "Woo, that would be fun." I said, "I would love to do something like that." And he said, "Really?" So we just started talking and I was telling him things he needed to do. I was great at organizing and getting stuff done because it didn't matter, you still have to go through certain kinds of things. You know, get your

goals in order and everything. And your rules. Especially if you are going to bring kids on college campus. And that is how we met. I worked for him for years. I was quite married. He never once had one eyeball to look, you know I looked differently then. But he never said anything. I never thought anything about it because we use to play good cop/bad cop. He said, "I pay you enough to do all the dirt." He wanted to be Mr. Goody Two Shoes with his students and have all the love. And, you know, I had to be horrible. I remember one Fourth of July, Richard McGinnis wouldn't let those children go home. Got them some bologna sandwiches and make it a little lunch. Gave them a bag. He said, "Y'all should get together and get to know each other more." They didn't care about that. So he told them, you know, that it was my rule and that was it. I had to take the fall. They got outside my window of the office and started did verse after verse of horrible things about me, you know, just, I couldn't get mad. I thought it was hilarious. Because you know I needed that little money. I really did and I wasn't about to mess with Richard or anything. I just took it. Took the pay. So I worked for him for almost a decade in just a summer program and then I would go back to directing my own program, you know, during the year. I just remember he knew my children. Of course he knew Dede because she introduced herself, you know. And Monique would, he would let them come to work with me. I didn't have family here. I remember my children having frogs and I remember letting them go on a trip. I remember my son asking one of the researchers at a medical facility. Did he feed the animals that were – what do you call that thing that goes around where they have the?

Rich: Yeah, I don't know what you are talking about.

Crosby: A treadmill?

Jackie: Come on you guys. A treadmill! That's exactly what it was. He said, "Well other than giving them a lie that looks like black people's lives, he says, "Do you feed them?" You know, ham hocks. And, I thought, how blessed I am. How very blessed for my children to have been in situations, you know, and not being put out. You know or felt like they had to get somewhere and play, you know. My kids always had me to talk to. They always had people around. We shared our

home with kids who didn't have things and from other countries we sometimes had people. They knew a lot about the world.

Crosby: Were you living on Tougaloo's campus?

Jackie: No, no, no we had a home.

Crosby: What about you, Rich?

Rich: At that time I lived on the campus until 1981 when I bought this house.

Crosby: So, what changed?

Jackie: Oh, oh, ok. So, back to the romance, ok. What happened was the death. So, in 1989, Julian Dedeaux died and we had been together since I was in high school. So, I was, really, I think I was 43 when he died and you know we are still at a place where America knows what to do, you know. You can't go out and shake, you know, and then you don't want to just turn into a nun type. So, I said, "The best thing I can do is to commit everything over to God and let him fight my battles." Well, I had also been a bit in the Black Power thing. I thought I was Angela Davis when he met me. The Afro, you know, and everything. I was out there. So, and I was known as being very radical, but I knew this man's heart. I knew him! He never thought about me as a person. I never thought about him, the person, you know, of possible interest or anything like that. He had a student who was staying over with him. He said, "You know, we need Mrs. McGinnis, Mrs. Dedeaux back, we need her." I had left and gone down and done music down on the Coast. A woman had fallen out drunk under the red light and they needed a teacher right away. I was taking my guitar to be restrung. Man said, "You play that thing girl?" He had on a red plaid shirt. And my lips, I was getting ready to just ream him, and tell him about calling me a girl! What happened? My mouth wouldn't move! I got ready and nothing would come out! This God! Knowing I was getting ready to act a plum fool in Picayune, Mississippi, you know, at Wurlitzer (?) Music Shop. So, finally I realized God is saying to me, "Do not act a fool, this could be a blessing." Well, he was a principal of the school. "You play that thang?" I said, "Well, yeah, I play it. He said, "You've been to college?" I

said, “I went.” Then he said, “You play something for me.” So, I thought everybody loved Willie Nelson. So I broke out with, “You Were Always on my Mind”! Oh, I thought I was crooning! After a while I forgot I was mad. Singing music does that to you? It takes away negativity. He said, “Can you start to work tomorrow? Come on by here and I’m going to tell you a little thing about the job!” I had five choirs and never been a director before in my life! I was two steps ahead of the children. We had a magnificent concert, just magnificent! Anyway, after I left there, I came on back. My husband and I were on a break. I came on back and I heard that Dr. McGinnis had this thing. Dr. McGinnis still had everything going along and I started teaching. From there I was thrown into another choir, teaching situation, but I had to teach French I and French II. I had to teach creative writing. I think I had four or five preps and it’s against the law to do that kind of stuff against people, but the kids needed. Anyway, I did that.

Crosby: Where was that?

Jackie: This was, I worked at Flora High School and then I worked at Madison Central. Oh, I’ve got all kind of good stories about Madison Central. We don’t have time for that right now. I’m going to roll on and tell you about back to Richard. So, he came up, he called and said, “We were going to get together and talk – is what we are going to do – about some ideas I may have.” So, we went to the Iron Horse Grill before it burned.

Crosby: Which time? It’s burned about three times.

Jackie: This probably was the third time.

Rich: Well it would have been in?

Jackie: The third time. This was the third time. Ok, so, we are sitting there eating and people were just looking and a woman dropped a potato in her lap she was looking at us so hard. He had a red Mazda with the top down and just, you know, and my children were terrified we were going to be shot! You know, or lynched! But you know, he was like Mr. Magoo and I was like Mrs. Magoo, right? We were just grinning and talking, not even thinking. We respected each other’s brains and

I never thought. I said, “Oh no, Lord, this is not what you had planned for me. No! In the name of Jesus!” Anyway, I went to Mama’s down in Picayune. He drove me down there and he said ... well, I had only seen him a couple of times and, at Thanksgiving, I just invite people that could handle some more friendship.

Rich: You invited me to Thanksgiving a couple of times.

Jackie: Yeah, that’s what I am talking about. So Mama said, “I know y’all are in the closet.” I said, “No, we are not in the closet. No,” I said, “He is just a friend and he’s a good person.” So, then he took me down to see about her and she said, “Jackie, you ought to come on out of that closet. This isn’t good to grow old alone. And, she said – my Dad died young, too, so she was in her prime of life too when he died – and she said she didn’t want that for me. She didn’t want me to be alone and that I need to start dating. I said, “It’s not like that!” He didn’t want to like me. I didn’t want to like him. I cried all the way back to Hattiesburg.

Rich: She wouldn’t tell me why.

Jackie: I was just crying, crying and crying. I used up a box of Kleenex and he stopped at a station and got me another box. I just kept on crying. So when he put me out, he said, “I think I know why you are crying. Let’s just wait and see what happens. Let’s just, you know, see what happens.” So, I think we had our first date, no we had had a date. He had taken me out to a movie to see Forest Gump and somebody had broken the windows out of his car. Then the police said, “Wonder why they knocked them out?” He said, “They didn’t take anything.” I was so mad because glass was everywhere. You know, I said, “Take me home.” We were supposed to be going to a movie and then to dinner. I said, “Take me from this side of town. I don’t want to be put back in the hood. Take me home!” He said, “No, I promised you movie and dinner, and that’s what we are going to have.” We got to this place. It was at the Metro Center but it was Tuesday’s.

Rich: Yeah, that was right.

Crosby: Ruby Tuesday’s.

Jackie: Ruby Tuesday's. Then a man said, "Oh, I'm sorry, it's so late." And I said, "See, see, that's why I wanted to go back to the house." Anyway, then he looked at me, and he said, "Oh, come on, we can do something." That gave me maybe some hope that, because my kids didn't even like that we were going out. Just having dinner or, you know, they didn't like it at all. They were afraid for me and so anyway, that is how we started. Then I started back teaching for him and we just – I don't know when it happened. I really don't know. I try to think when the bug hit! I don't remember.

Rich: It kind of happened.

Jackie: Just kind of happened.

Crosby: Maybe we ought to get Rich's side of this story.

Jackie: Oh, wow!

Crosby: When did it happen?

Rich: I figure about the same way as Jackie on that one. It just kind of.

Jackie: We are so alike.

Rich: That's right. And she is an amazing, crazy, wonderful.

Jackie: Oh God!

Rich: Person!

Crosby: Let me ask you something. Was the music a bond between the two of you do you think?

Rich: It was. We both were interested in music, although I was raised totally classical, totally, and I became interested in early music when I was in graduate school, I think, but when Jackie and I started going places and stuff I realized there

was another whole kind of music that my father had (?). He had taken piano lessons and he had played piano for silent movies. His teacher apparently had told him the only thing that was going to pay anything was classical music. So being a good son for far too many years I believed. But what I've heard Jackie sing several times, there is another whole world there. Yeah, that's right.

Jackie: Oh!

Crosby: Let's move ahead now to about the ostensible subject of this oral history. How did each of you get involved with Wells Church?

Rich: We did it together. I think you probably made the selection.

Jackie: No, I got kicked out of my church in a nice way. They said some of our members don't like it that you are, you know, when it's your time to minister, you know, do the music ministry and so we just feel that it would be, you know, better if we sit you down, you know, for a while and see what we can do. This was right after the wedding.

Crosby: This was related to their objection to their being in a?

Jackie: Yes.

Crosby: Mixed race relationship.

Jackie: Yes, and.

Rich: Remember there was something that was supposed to happen and didn't happen at the reception. We didn't have any chairs.

Jackie: Oh, let me tell you what happened there. We had 36 people in our wedding party. The party.

Rich: Everybody wanted to be in her wedding.

Jackie: Our wedding!

Rich: I had a couple but yeah, right.

Jackie: Anyway, they all had escorts. The pastor kept telling them to bring their things to clean the church on that Saturday morning of my wedding. And I would tell them, excuse me sir, that's when I'm getting married. Next Sunday, same thing, next Sunday, same thing. That's what happened. I don't know if he just didn't remember or what. Then he set up a revival that was in concert with a predominately white church who previously owned that church that was bought. And we couldn't find any chairs and were told we had one hour. You talking about soldiers. We were just, and everything was just fine. I even cooked my own rehearsal dinner. I was so ignorant, you know. I was just so used to working and doing if it was going to get done, you had to do it! My doctor was in the thing and he said, "Jackie, you are walking funny." I said, "My back is killing me Doc." He said, "Sit down and don't do anything else." I sat down and I looked and everybody else was sitting on the floor. The chairs disappeared. The use of a limousine service from the service disappeared. A lot of things disappeared! We went right on. Rich sang to me in the wedding. I sang to him. People were clapping. Old folks look like that had hope one more time, you know! It was beautiful and that night he had special music done.

Rich: A friend of mine had a – what was it about? It was about an old man getting married.

Jackie: And his soprano was wonderful. It was gorgeous wonderful. And anyway, so we had a big reception, but at the Baptist church, you know, you can't have at receptions, things that people normally have at receptions, you know, blues or anything like that. So, I had my little children's choir.

Rich: There was also one at your house.

Jackie: Not at my house. It was at this house. No. No, nothing.

Rich: But there was something.

Jackie: No, no nothing. People thought I was supposed to come home and entertain them!

Rich: Oh, ok.

Jackie: I said, "I'm a bride." They had my nerves so bad I hadn't even packed! I've been cooking. Doing this and doing that!

Rich: You had something with your son.

Jackie: And then had a five minute rehearsal with my son from Oklahoma. Five minute rehearsal. It was a glorious time.

Rich: It really was.

Jackie: Which is wonderful and I guess time doesn't do what love; I realize you can't put ages and races and stuff. You just don't know. I'm just into the bible. I said, "Oh Lord, please help me out." I said, "I just don't know what to do." My son boycotted the wedding. My only son. But right there, two little boys come in and say, "We'll be in it." Got a son, yeah no problem. So, it was just, to me, it was the prettiest wedding I have ever seen in my life. I don't know if it was just because it was ours, but it was wonderful. We had a lady from PRM. She was from England and she read "How do I love thee, let me count the ways." Oh, that woman read that poem! It was nice. It really nice. So, we have been happy. Well, I've been pretty happy.

Rich: I've been happy, too.

Jackie: Good! Alright.

Crosby: You did find resistance to the idea of your being married.

Jackie: Oh, yeah!

Rich: Oh, yeah!

Jackie: We were both just grinning. You can just get with the program. See you can probably tell. I don't care how you feel one way or the other. I'll be nice to you, but if you have a problem that's a personal thing. You know, you have to deal with it.

Rich: Well, you should tell him about your first meeting my mom.

Jackie: Lord, Jesus! Well!

Rich: We went out to California for Christmas time. My father had passed. Go ahead.

Jackie: Well, I don't know. That would take too long. Let me just say that.

Rich: Your daughter had offered to fly you out.

Jackie: Fly me back home. I was not what she had in mind for her son and he had waited so long to marry – because he was 54? Were you 54 when we were married? Because I was going to be 50 in two weeks.

Rich: 55, something like that.

Jackie: Yeah, but anyway, everybody saw a change in him. The change came because I'm touchy feely so, he was not touchy feely, and he hugged his sister. She said she almost fainted! He had never hugged her before. And he just was different, you know. They say. I don't know. I just knew my boss McGinnis and my friend McGinnis. So anyway, we just went on and so it was going to take place, you know. She told me, you know, her opinion about some things and, "Promise me there won't be any children. Promise me." She went on and on about how hard life was for somebody who married a chinaman and she brought him up about 13 times. He never got married because.

Rich: Biracial.

Jackie: Yeah. So, she decided, I mean, here we were. We were old! We are not really thinking along those terms. But anyway, she had, you know, she came to appreciate me. I just went on. When she came to visit us, we treated her like a queen. You know, not like I was treated. Because I was ready to go on back home. I knew I had a temper and I didn't want to be in jail in California so, I just asked the Lord to calm me down. He did, and I put myself in her place and her age. I realized, you have to deal with people where they are. You have to deal with what is given to you to deal with and somebody has got to have some compassion, some sense and you know, move on. Later, everything got to be quite alright.

Crosby: Well you had some problems with people in your church. You were leading choir. Is that right?

Jackie: Right. I mean yes.

Crosby: Well, when that started to happen, you went looking for another place to go to church?

Rich: Absolutely.

Jackie: I left when I thought that. Because, I mean, I had started working and built up things. I had built and I was known, you could take a choir and the Lord could just help you to have a gift for communicating that with, you know, my choir members. It was ... I left. After they had made how things were going to be, you know. They didn't say, "Get out." But the fire was so hot until you jumped right on out that skillet! And I jumped into Wells! I had a friend who had been my secretary when I was at Tougaloo who was there. Her name was Ms. Maggie Bass and she was a very, very intelligent woman. We went there and then we knew John Garner and Margrit (Garner).

Rich: I lived next to them for 10 years! On the campus.

Crosby: I see.

Jackie: And we knew some people who were there and for us there was no other place we could go. Then we met other couples who had been put out of churches. My friend, Diane (Parkinson) and Dr. Tony (Parkinson), her husband, had been made to feel, just unwelcomed. They were asked not to come back really. So, it was the only place that we could go. Plus, he preached, Keith preached, love and understanding and acceptance and plus he was from New Orleans and Bay St. Louis. You know places from around near my home. I remember I had surgery, my first surgery, no my second surgery. He came over and cooked red beans and rice, you know? I mean you just don't find that. You just don't find that. He would come to the Christmas parties. Once, he said to me, he said, "Jackie if Jesus has to choose a Christmas party to come to, I believe it would be at your house!" Because it was looking like the United Nations with all the; Richard was the Science Dean at Tougaloo College. So, of course, we have a lot people who are not Americans in the Sciences, you know. And we just met a lot of good folks. And then, of course, I went around and found out people who needed a party. One man from here, a white gentleman, became very upset because she's got a couple of the bums coming into her party. It's not my party. It's just a party at Christmas and we sing and I cook my head off. Fresh greens from the fields. Gumbo in a big old pot and I baked and baked. Friends would come in and ask, "What can I do? What can I do?" It was just a wonderful time. So that's, we are known, I guess through entertaining a lot. Oh, my students ... each summer they could write down anything that they wanted to eat. I said – we had a certain quote that if the grades were looking ok – I would cook whatever you say. And I did it, like a fool! I've been doing it for 19 years. Anyway, then word gets around and people know about this house! As a house of love and just togetherness. We don't do a whole lot of entertaining intimately like we want to because you can't invite one person and not invite the other person, you know. It's just been a very, very wonderful marriage in that you got to meet people from other countries and could practice, you know, your language things with them. It's interesting when the French come they don't want to speak French. They say, oh we are trying to work on our English. Anyhow, that's about it.

Crosby: Besides the acceptance that you felt at Wells through Keith, particularly, were there other aspects of the Well's experience that are important to you in one way or another?

Jackie: Well, they use to ask me to sing at Wells Fest. I always enjoyed doing that and they had a coffee house. I use to bake my chess squares. I was going to make some today but I decided that I wouldn't go overboard, you know, with sweets on you! But we just, we got involved in that and they asked me to write something, you know, for publication. For in house things.

Rich: The Lenten.

Jackie: Lenten season and something else. Christmas time, you know. So, what else have I done? Ok, we do things like, Richard and I help people. We had to learn how to do it and we had to learn how to stop when it's time up. Ok, you've had your turn now. We have done everything. Now you have got to grow up. You can't keep being breastfed. You have got to go on out and get where you can get you a chicken or a drumstick. Something, you know. You have got to move on. But, we have done that and we've helped many people in many ways. Rich and I think that we have a big S for suckers tattooed on our foreheads.

Rich: We have heard that there was a limit.

Jackie: Yes.

Crosby: Wells helped you to deal with that?

Rich: I was at the Good Friday service last night. A guy came in dragging a suitcase with him during the middle of service. I wondered what was going to happen. Everybody treated him just as if he was anybody else. What I think I really like about Wells is the inclusiveness and the fact that it is not; that there is room for all kinds of beliefs and levels of beliefs. That, I think is rare, particularly in the society of 'I've got all the answers.'

Crosby: So everyone welcome all the time.

Rich: I think that is basically true. Yeah, to the extent that is basically possible. I have been amazed. I have been there once, three or four years before Jackie and I got together and I noticed it right away.

Crosby: Did something just happen Richard?

Rich: No.

Crosby: Well, we have kept you well beyond what's reasonable. You have been very generous. I certainly would like to express my own appreciation for the way you have shared this with us and I am sure the people who encounter this interview in the future will be very much impressed and interested as I am. So, thank you very much.

Jackie: Thank you, thank you.

Rich: Thank you for talking to us.

Jackie: Yes, thank you for finding us worthy in talking to.