

Interviewee: Lorna J.E. Farquharson
Interviewer: Joan Safford
Date: February 19, 2009
Transcriber: Joan Safford



Overseen by Dr. Lisa Boehm, Worcester State College

Abstract: Lorna Farquharson was born in Jamaica in 1946. She spent her early childhood and early school years with her family in Jamaica. In this interview she explains how she came to the United States, the jobs she had when she first came to the country, and how she met her husband. She attended Quinsigamond Community College and Worcester State College where she took nursing and business courses. She also talks about having a Chiari malformation with syringomyelia that almost killed her when she was in her forties. . Lorna raised two sons and now her greatest pleasure is her grandchildren.

JS: I am sitting in the living room of Lorna Farquahrson.
Is it ok if I record this?

LF: Yes.

JS: So, when and where were you born?

LF: I was born in Jamaica, in a district, in Clarendon, by the name of Folly, F-O-L-L-Y. It was a district where the neighbors were farmed. People who lived in that region owned property, a great lot of land, so we weren't in an urban area. It was separate, bush.

JS: Okay, and when was that, that you were born?

LF: I was born January 28, 1946.

JS: Okay. Can you tell me what your childhood was like?

LF: I thought it was great, but now as an adult [laughs] I lament over a lot of occurrences, but it was great. I was with my, my mother, my grandmother, my uncle and my aunt. My grandfather died a few days after I was born, so I was more like a comfort in the gap for them. Yeah.

JS: Okay, can you tell me about your parents?

LF: Well, my mother and my father separated shortly after they were married because as my grandmother tells me, she returned home to her

Worcester Women's Oral History Project
30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – 508-767-1852 – info@wwhp.org
www.wwhp.org

parents, and she was three months pregnant with me. So I didn't know my father, but numerous inquiries finally brought me news about him when I was twenty-one, and I went to where I learned he worked and I finally met him. But the meeting was bittersweet.

JS: Really?

LF: Because when I introduced myself, he said "If you were my daughter," and now that I have come to this country and learned the term "waiting for the next shoe to drop", that's what I equate it to - I waited for the next shoe to drop.

JS: Okay. Can you tell me what was an average day in Jamaica like for you?

LF: Monday to Friday, we went to school. They started me in school because I grew up with all these adults.

JS: Yup.

LF: I was bright, so they started me in school at three. Here we call it preschool. There we call it, umm, can't remember exactly, but anyway, I remember the first day I went, my aunt took me on the donkey and it was about a mile from home, unpaved road, uphill [laughs], yeah. After that, I walked the rest of the way. Then after that school, I went to another school. Now this school would be like a kindergarten. And then at seven, I went to the elementary school, the same system as here, but we had forms and class because it was under the British system. Monday thru Friday, Friday was a half a day, we went to school Monday thru Friday. Saturday we did yard chores in preparation for Sunday. Sunday we went to church, dress up, come home, stayed dressed up and it was really special, Sundays were really special. And that's it - Monday you start all over again.

JS: What was so special on Sunday besides going to church? Did you have, like, big meals?

LF: Oh gosh, yes. Sunday was beef day, yeah, because Saturday the butcher killed the cow, and it would be going a bit far to generalize that everybody got beef, but considering the size of the cow, the population, and the fact that all the meat went, I'd say that everybody got beef.

JS: Right.

LF: Okay, so you'd have roast beef for Sunday dinner, and then there would be a piece left over for during the week, for some, you know, other part of the week. Oh yeah. And then we go visit because in my area, it wasn't exactly a township, it was more like an area. People were related, and even if you weren't related you were close, so we would go to somebody's house one week, they would come to our house another. So you know, we go visiting, yah, after church, we go visiting.

JS: Okay, and what brought you to Worcester?

LF: Ha,ha. I went to Worcester, it had to have been fate. I was in Jamaica --by now I was nearing twenty-three. I had no job, no prospect, no education, and knocking around. My mother wanted me to come to America. I wasn't inclined to come to America. All I wanted was to be supported where I am because, like I said, we had property, you could live off land, but you need a few legal tender for a few other things that, you know, clothes and stuff like that. Anyhow, my grandmother sent me off to Nassau. Before I went to Nassau, papers had come from America that my mother had gotten me a sponsor. But while I'm waiting for the final papers to come forth, uh, summoned to the Embassy, my grandmother got impatient, she sent me off to Nassau. That was quite a revelation. While I was in Nassau, the government passed an act that all foreigners must leave the country, especially Jamaican.

JS: Why especially Jamaican?

LF: Eh, I'm in your country. If I come to your house and you tell me to leave, I should ask you why? It's your house! So I went back home, I can't remember exactly what month it was, but two or three months later, I got a call from the Embassy. So I went to the Embassy, and went home with my brown envelope. It was a brown envelope like this, [points to manila envelope], with a ribbon. And while I was on the bus going home, the man said "You got your," a man on the bus said "You got your papers!" I couldn't understand what he was saying, but apparently he was familiar with the brown envelope and the bow. So I went home, opened my envelope, and sure enough, I had gotten my papers to come to America. So, my grandmother shipped me off to America. I came, and when I arrived, my port of entry was Miami and the sponsor lived in Boston. I came to New England from Miami, and she and her husband had come to meet me. Now, her name is Eisenberg. You are probably familiar with the

Eisenberg name.

JS: Yes.

LF: Alright, that was Mr. Eisenberg's older daughter. Her name was Monique Dokton. Married name Dokton. They had a daughter and they employed me to come and care for her. But apparently since the papers took a while to come through, they had gotten somebody else from Ireland, so they brought me to Worcester, to be in their parents' house, which is up on Fenimore Rd.

JS: Up on?

LF: When you go up on Salisbury Street, there is Monadnock and there is a road in here and another road in here -- Fenimore Rd. So I came, and when I arrived in Boston, there was snow! And Mrs. -- I remember like it was yesterday -- and Mrs. Dokton said this is the first snow we've had, and the first we've had snow so early. I said "Oh my goodness." But coming from the warm climate, it didn't phase me at all. But anyhow, I came and I'm in the house and a few days later I wanted to go to the store, but I didn't, the sun's shining brightly, I heard on the television it's thirty something degrees. I didn't understand what that meant. I went out in heels, a sweater, don't laugh, I went down to Grove Street, at that traffic light down by Indian Lake. Alright, that was the closest store. While I'm going, it keeps getting colder and colder. Now I'm coming back, no glove but the bag in my hand, and the bag in my hand is hurting. So I came back, went in the house, I didn't know what to do. I turned on the hot water and put my hands underneath it. That was my first lesson in cold in America. As long as I live I shall remember that and tell that story. Anyhow, I was with the Eisenbergs. My obligation was for a year, and I was there. I could have stayed longer, Mr. Eisenberg was very generous, but sadly, Mrs. Eisenberg started to become abusive. So I decide I'm outta here, and by that time I had met John. I think I arrived here November tenth, 1968 and I met John February third, 1969. It was at that, it's called the Pallidum now, but remember when that theatre was there?

JS: Yup.

LF: I can't remember the name of it now. The Plymouth.

JS: Yup, okay.

LF: The movie I went to see was To Sir with Love because that movie came out when I was still in Jamaica but since I live in the bush you don't get a chance to go to the movie too much. So coming here, that was the first movie I went to see. Oh, I really enjoyed it! So anyhow, he knowing about this business of maid service, I was surprised because he walked me back from the theater, up there, and when I arrived, he called after he left me. He called to find out if I lived there.

[Laughs] So, so Mr. Eisenberg told him she went out and I don't know if she's back yet, because I had my own key you know, and I had access, free access. Mr. Eisenberg said, "she went out, I don't know if she's back yet." That time I back and snug in my bed you know. So that was how John and my relationship started. Yup.

JS: So what happened when you left the Eisenbergs?

LF: Oh, after a while at the Eisenbergs, after I met John, we got a room in that building that burnt on Main Street, you know, near Emmanuel Church? And that building across, so we took a room in that building and that was where we had our rendezvous.

JS: [Laughs]

LF: Don't laugh, ha-ha. Because I had Thursdays off and so that is where we would meet, on Thursdays. John worked at Best Mattress at the time, over there on Water Street, and so that is where we would meet. And so after I left the Eisenbergs, I just went to my room. When Mr. Eisenberg found me missing, he called John's sister, and John's sister, Ethel, John's sister contacted me, and so I called him back and said "I'm tired, I can't do it anymore". I didn't explain to him the entire reason, but I think he really understood, yeah.

JS: So then what did you do for work?

LF: Well after that, John told me to go to HH Brown Shoe, up on Grand Street. They were hiring all ensembles. I didn't know - I had worked a factory job in Jamaica before I came here, in a citrus factory where they segmented fruit, yah. So, but when I went there, it was different, but it wasn't difficult because I knew how to work with my hands, you know. And so I was there, but the managers, the overseers - I think the biggest reason why I left HH Brown Shoe was, I was saying to somebody the other day, was the union [laughs]. When I was employed, I mean I didn't know anything about union in the first place, and then when I was employed nobody told me about union, and even if I was told, I wouldn't know what they were talking about. But when I got my little

check - union dues - ha, ha, that knocked me for a loop. So when I went to the office and inquired what that was and they explained it to me, aye,yi yi. Then I discovered that it's not something that you can't get out of because it's a union shop. So I don't know what it was that really caused me to quit, but after I left there I got a job at The Broadway's on Water Street. First I went, they had that Manpower Development for office practice.

JS: Okay, yeah.

LF: Yes. It was a program over at North High, not where they are now, but remember when they were over on Lancaster. So I went there, but also my grandmother had sent me to learn typing and stenography you see, so I had a little bit of shorthand skill, and oh gosh,I didn't come here a total novice. My grandmother had my hands in everything, yeah. So anyway, I took the office practice and I graduated. Oh, after I left there I got a job at W.T. Grant in the credit office. Now I can't remember if I worked at The Broadway's first or during, going through that course. But I got a job, as I said, in W.T. Grant's credit office.

JS: Was that the store, Grant's?

LF: Yeah.

JS: Okay.

LF: It was that big building, yeah. So after that, they went out of business. Grants went out of business and then it was after that now that I got a job at White's Cleaners. That was the one with Jennifer's grandmother.

JS: Yup.

LF: Right. Then after that is when I started having the other two kids. Phyllip was born 1973 and Andrew was born 1976. [Laughs].

JS: Okay. So, how was that like, having children here?

LF: It was great! With all the amenities, you know, yeah. I missed not having a tree to pick anything off, but as long as you have it in the store, all year round because in the warm zones everything is seasonal, but here everything is constant. And it was great, you know, and so when I worked until, yes, after, after White's Cleaners I worked at Best Rest Mattress. Yes, during that time I was pregnant

with Phyllip. And I worked until I was a way along, with Phyllip, yeah. I don't remember exactly how far along. Yeah, but to be able to have washing machine and dryer, you know, at first I started doing with my hand because you know I figure, I don't want to take my baby's clothes out to the laundry where everybody is doing their things, you know, but John got me a washing machine in the house and dryer, one of those, you know when Hoover first put out those indoor dryers.

JS: Yeah.

LF: Right.

JS: Now, you didn't have any family here in Worcester, did you?

LF: No. My mother and my sister were in New York. When I was at the Eisenbergs one day the doorbell rang, and when I went to the door, there was my sister and she said Mother is here. And then I looked out and there was this huge car, and I'm looking, I don't see my mother but I see this man, and then they stood up. And he's BIG, the biggest man that I've ever seen. So I say, "who is that?" She say cousin Festus. Now in Jamaica, we always had an album, and in the album was a picture of this man and my grandmother said that's cousin Festus, her husband's brother's son. So when my sister said cousin Festus, right away it started to bring up the memory, you know, conjure up. So, they got out of the car and I went out and my mother said "This is your cousin Festus, he live in Springfield". By now I was kind of familiar with Springfield because I had gone to New York a few times, and so that was even better because Springfield was only an hour away, you know, oh, that was nice, man. So after I got my license, I came here in November, and by October the following year I had gotten my driver's license, and I bought my car while I was working at HH Brown. And so, I drove to Springfield, and after a while Springfield became my second home. Yup, oh he's ninety now, he just had his ninetieth birthday in November, and he is strong as an ox. Praise the Father. He's the oldest living of us now, yeah.

JS: And now in Jamaica you were brought up with a lot of relatives around. Was it hard for you raising your sons here without family around you?

LF: [Slaps hands together] Yes, especially without my mother, their grandmother, you know, because I was pretty much raised by my grandmother. My mother, I concluded that because of the relationship with her and my father, it made her more stern with me. So my

grandmother and my aunt were the buffers.

JS: Okay.

LF: You know, my uncle, he was my trainer, and I talk about him and I think about him and the thing that impressed me most was the thing that is said “If you fall off a horse, get up and get on again”. When I was five years old he sent me on an errand with a pan of milk. It’s a covered pan. The horse was a big horse, my head was under the horse’s belly, and I fell off. Ha-hah, I was so happy I hadn’t spilled the milk that I brought the milk back leading the horse. My uncle put me back on the horse and sent me with the milk. So whenever I hear that adage, I say yup, that’s what makes me the woman I am today.

JS: Alright! So with your boys then it was extremely, it was extra difficult without having a relative there.

LF: It was, but I made adjustments in my head. I want to be strict, but lenient. I didn’t want to be overbearing because I didn’t have anybody to buffer them, you know?

JS: Okay.

LF: And yet I didn’t want to be so lenient that they would become juvenile delinquents. And I didn’t spare the rod, heh-heh, heck no. And praise the Father, I saved their souls. Because on one occasion I had to have my Phyllip assume the position in front of a police officer. I was, I worked eleven to seven. By then he was about fifteen and I was working at the Hermitage here. I worked eleven to seven. I worked three days a week and I went to school five. And I was fixing their dinner so that I could lay down before I go to work and there was a knock on the door. Andrew was home. I said see who it is. He said come. I said, “Who is it?” He said, “You better come!” The tone of the voice made me angry but knowing that it’s urgent. When I went around the corner from the kitchen, there stood three police officers with my Phyllip in the middle. All I could say is, “What is it?” The police, one of the men said, “I’m going to let someone tell you.” They’re standing there as if they were in front of a lion, and that was the way I felt too. I said, “ Well somebody say something.” One of the officers, the one in the corner said to the one by the door to watch the car. So the one in the corner now started talking. He said, “We caught Phyllip with some other children over in the private area taking tools out of a workman equipment.” I said, “What?” So I started to sweat so I went into my closet and I got my belt and I said to him “Assume the position”

and I think this was the same couch too.[Points to couch]. Assuming the position meant drop your pants and drop your underpants. When it's severe you drop your underpants. And when I raised up and gave him the first one, I started to wail. I said "Lord have mercy, you see how hard I work. You know we don't need anything. Your grandmother died and left us money and now you are going to put me in trouble." And when I hit him, I feel as though he didn't feel it because he wasn't saying anything, and something inside of me say use the buckle and something else inside me says, no, you'll get arrested. So, I just doubled it, not that doubling it would make it any worse because the thick of the belt hit no more than the one. I gave him three or four and I turned to the officer and said "You see this, he's fifteen and he's almost as big as you. If he was seventeen I couldn't do this, all I could say is take him." He said "That's why I brought him home," and I think that's the greatest accomplishment of my life.

JS: Really? Wow. Well they obviously have turned out fine.

LF: Humph, not so fine. You know, not so fine. Andrew, we all make mistakes of course. Don't look at me like that, we all make mistakes. Hey, what am I going to say, you know?

JS: Right, right.

LF: But I'm a female, I'm entitled. You know growing up without a father. A female growing up without any, a female with a father is a more stable female, right?

JS: Yup.

LF: A female without a father, you become prey to every male. You become susceptible to every sweet word the man utters, right? But once I found my strength, I turned thirty and something inside me say your're going to be over the hill. The things you used to worry about, you don't have to worry it anymore because you are coasting now. And that was the philosophy that I developed, eh? So no sweet words mattered anymore, no. My grandmother said, my grandmother, oh Lord have mercy. The things she said, it took me forty odd years to discover that she wasn't all that, all in the book. [Laughs] It's just that she read it.

JS: And by the book, you mean the Bible?

LF: The Bible! Yeah, dear Lord, the things that lady used to say. One

Worcester Women's Oral History Project
30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – 508-767-1852 – info@wwhp.org
www.wwhp.org

of the things she said that helped me is that, “Never let a man lean his backside to give you a shilling.” It was pound, shilling and pence in the country. And the first time John did that to me it just slapped me right in the face, and I said never again, because it’s not like when we met I wasn’t a working individual. I’m only out of work because I’m raising these children. So as soon as I was able to go back to work (claps hands) there I went, yeah. And boy oh boy.

JS: Now you mentioned that you were in school. What were you going to school for?

LF: I was attempting to become a nurse. I went to Quinsig [Quinsigamond Community College]. They had a program there that introduced people back into college. First I went and I got my GED and then, I can’t remember the name of the... pre-tech. That was the name of the program, pre-tech, operated by a lady named Maura Gordon. It was her program. So, I was attempting to become a nurse and when I was in my final semester I applied to the nursing program and they declined me, saying I needed biology, which I had already taken. I had taken anatomy and physiology, biology, lab, everything, so I said forget it, I haven’t got much more time to waste here. So I took the associate’s degree and I left. When I left there I came to Worcester State with the hope of going into the business program. Well, I was there a semester when I discovered they had me majoring in economics and minoring in business. I said, “Lord have mercy” and I didn’t even know nothing about no economics, you know, much more to be entering into... so, but anyhow, I would have proceeded with it but I started feeling poorly so I took a sabbatical and I ended up really becoming ill. I had a hysterectomy and really wasn’t able to get back on my feet with the school and the work. I had to work to support my kids, yeah, and then five years after the hysterectomy I suffered the stroke, and it left me here. [Gestures around apartment].

JS: And how old were you then?

LF: I was forty two at the hysterectomy and forty seven at the stroke.

JS: Wow. That must have been tough because the kids, you still had Andrew at least.

LF: Yes. Andrew was seventeen, Phyllip had just graduated high school, yeah. And so when the stroke, they didn’t call it a stroke, it had the earmarks, but it wasn’t like an average stroke. It’s a Chiari malformation with syringomyelia. Now this Chiari was a pathologist

Worcester Women's Oral History Project
30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – 508-767-1852 – info@wwhp.org
www.wwhp.org

and he discovered this malformation in the deceased. It's when a person is born with their pons down in the cervical column, and in my case, working as hard as I was, I got strangled.

JS: Oh,no.

LF: Yeah, yes, so that caused my stroke. And the syringomyelia is pockets of trapped fluid, like when you get a burn and get a bubble.

JS: Yup.

LF: Yeah, it started, the whole thing started out that suddenly I was in so much pain that even my hair hurt and I started shaving my head. And I went to the chiropractor, and one of my co-workers told me about the chiropractor, I was working for the agency at the time doing homemaking for the elderly. She told me about the chiropractor and I went. I was in so much pain that I had to sit on the floor for the interview, I couldn't sit on the chair with the legs hang down. So, after they sent me and have the x-ray to see what was required, the doctor did the first treatment and I felt like a new woman! Oh, I don't think I felt that good when I was young, yeah. So anyway, that's when I'm feeling that, then things started happening. Things started happening - tendonitis to the point where the arm is locked, TMJ, only to find out it was a tooth, and then final collapse. I came home from work that afternoon. I got caught up in the Foxwood thing and I fathomed how I could run trips to Foxwood, yeah. I had the mini van but I figured if I could get a larger one, you know that could transport more, so I went the dealer. I was passing over on Millbrook St. and I saw this dealer and I stopped in there and I saw a van I liked, fifteen passengers. And the man said "Okay, we'll run it through, see if you can get the credit". So I went back the next day, he says "Sure, you can get the credit". So I'm taking him for a test whatever, test drive so we went to Water St. to pick John up because he was due to get out. We picked him up, drove around, took him back to - no, took the car back to Millbrook St. then I drove him home and I went home. I got home, Phyllip was there. So, he said he's going out to play basketball. So I looked in the fridge because I was hungry, I had been out all day and I don't remember eating anything at all. So, I said, "Oh, could you go get me a gallon on milk please?" So while he's gone I had the phone on, I'm talking on the phone. I had the phone at my left ear but there was this pain on my right ear, like a slow burn pain. So I got through talking on the phone, and I'm trying to eat something, then I couldn't swallow. And the pain keep moving down my neck and then down into my arm. I

didn't consider it a heart attack since it was on the right side. So by then Phyllip returned and oh snap, so quick you know, and he's handing me the milk and I said, "Phyllip, I can't take it - I think I'm having a stroke." So he came around and put the milk in the fridge and I laid down on the couch, and it was this couch. I, "Phyllip, lift my arm." He lift the arm and I was able to keep it upright. Then I say "Lift my leg". He lift the leg and the leg went plop. I say call the ambulance, I'm having a stroke. So they came, took me to Memorial and my greatest difficulty was the fluid was building up and I couldn't expectorate and I couldn't swallow. But since I work in the nursing home, I knew about the basin, the emesis basin and when you got to the hospital they could suction you. So when I got there I asked them to suction me because the mucus is filling me up.

JS: Yup.

LF: So, within a little while, I wasn't able to talk at all. That's the reason why I tell the kids now, anytime I'm not talking, call the mortician, I've gone for sure. [Laughs and claps]. Oh my word, so anyway, I don't know if it was the same morning or the following day, they did a CAT scan because I had all of the symptoms of a stroke. They did the CAT scan, it might have been the same night, because this was early evening. They couldn't find anything wrong. So they put the tube, the feeding tube, and IV and everything, and then the neurologist came. Dr. Weaver, Dr. John Weaver, oh God bless him. He was a sweet young man. He came from Memorial, UMass Medical, and he said, "Young lady, you have a fifty-fifty percent chance." I'm writing on my hand, "I'll take it." [Laughs and claps]. I had my seventeen year old to go home and take care of, so I'll take it! So the next day they sent me down to the MRI and so they discovered what was the difficulty. And Dr. Weaver operated. It was maybe two weeks later, he operated. And when I awakened the first thing I remembered was that I didn't have a headache. Oh, how sweet it was! I did not have a headache.

JS: Wow.

LF: So, that's it.

JS: Did that change the course of your life a little bit at that point?

LF: Yes, it changed the course of my life a lot. That's why I'm sitting here now with time for grandchildren because if that hadn't happened to me, I would still be running up and down. I wouldn't have time

to enjoy my grandchildren which I so prayed for. Right, you know because I had him at thirty, so you know, as a male, I didn't expect that I would live to see grandchildren. Yes, man, and so I went through therapy and everything but I wasn't regaining my balance. And the pain, the pains became indistinguishable, you see, and because it's the nerve I was affected. I get cold spots and in the summer time I get bites, bites like being burnt. And, so, ask me another one.

JS: Okay, well since we do share grandchildren, I must say I am jealous that you get to spend a lot of time with them because I don't get to spend a lot of time with them!

LF: You're younger, you'll have time when I'm gone. That's what I keep telling myself all the time - Joan will have them when your gone. Joan's busy. So you can see what I mean, you're working, right, and I'm not. So, I not working had said to Jennifer, "I can." And as I said before, sometimes Sunday I'm in so much pain [laughs] by Monday morning, I'm raring to go! And when the young man get here - did I tell you about how he said I'm like a man?

JS: No.

LF: Alright then, well let me tell you this.

JS: Okay.

LF: A year ago on Martin Luther King Day, now Monday, the holiday, his dad like to keep him so I didn't expect him that day. So when the doorbell rang, I was surprised, and there he was. Now since he wasn't expected, I didn't know what was to be on the agenda.

JS: Was this Alijah or Anton?

LF: Alijah. And so the chair was here and I'm sitting in the chair, and something or other was on TV, but neither of us was interested, and he went and stood over there [points toward kitchen], and I heard when he said, "Grandy, you're like a man." I said, "What did you say, my cookie?" He said, "You're like a man." I said "Come my darling, come." So I shift in the chair, and pull him in beside me and I said, "Honey, the Father gave me only sons and now grandsons, so I have to be tough and strong." And we both went silent. And the next day when I got up, that was one of the first thoughts I had. The child say you're like a man, he didn't say you look like a man, you're like

a man. And I say “Glory hallelujah, I have been affirmed!” Because I have wanted affirmation and here it is, my four year old grandson gave it to me. So after that, whenever I have things to do, and I wake up and I feel poorly, I say “Listen, don’t bother with that...”

JS: Okay, we’re on the other side of the tape now.

LF: See, even at this age, like a crossword puzzle, they talk this, that, and the next thing. Speaking of crossword puzzles, when I discovered that I wasn’t recouping to get back to work and I was climbing the walls, the doctor thought I was becoming depressed. Despite the fact that I was in so much pain, I took up crossword puzzling. Now I find crossword puzzles to be the in thing, but it is wonderful.

JS: Alright.

LF: It keeps me alert, and I need to be kept alert for your grandson, Cookie! He said to me one day, “Grandy you’re so bossy.” I said, “I know!” [Laughs]. Oh my Lord, yeah, so anyway. My cousins, my grandmother, she was one of seven, her mother was an only child, but she had seven. My grandmother only had three. Except for one of her siblings who didn’t have any, some of them had ten, twelve.

JS: Wow.

LF: Yeah. Then their children had multiples also, so you know, we are many. And I got to know many, many because since my grandmother had migrated to Cuba and met and married my grandfather, my grandmother was from Clarendon, a district called Richmond Park, R-I-C-H-M-O-N-D P-A-R-K. And my grandfather was from St. Elizabeth, that’s another state down. So they, I remember now what I was trying to say. So my grandparents, my grandmother’s side, since they lived in Cuba they accumulated wealth. They were there during the Battista era, when people were living in democracy. So now when they talk about Cuba, this, that, and the next thing, there’s a few things I could say about that, but that’s another story. Anyway, they went back, my grandmother went back, bought land. My mother was born in Cuba, my grandmother went back, bought the land. My uncle was born in Jamaica, and they built the house, and then my grandfather came from Cuba, and they retired in Jamaica. Then my aunt was born. So the fact that they had property made them, uh, the ones that the family members, my grandmother’s also, that their family members cleave to because they were generous also. So that’s how I get to know a lot of my relatives, both from my grandfather’s side and my grandmother’s

Worcester Women's Oral History Project
30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – 508-767-1852 – info@wwhp.org
www.wwhp.org

side. And then my grandmother used to send me with things, with supplies.

JS: Okay.

LF: You see, so she used to say “Hand, the packie come.” You give something to somebody, they give something back. But generally in our case, we don’t get anything back. We were just, you know, giving to those less fortunate, yah.

JS: Okay. Any last words you would like to say?

LF: Oh, boy. I hope the day never come when I have a last word.

JS: Well, for the purpose of this tape.

LF: Yes, for the purpose of this tape.

JS: What other thoughts would you like to put out there?

LF: Oh, as I sit here this nineteenth day of February, 2009 on needles and pins, waiting for my granddaughter, oh, I give honor and glory to my heavenly Father, just keeping me out of the pit so that I can have this much joy. Yes sree, Avery Joi, Alijah James, not to forget Anton Jamari, he’d never forgive me. And now, his brother tell me his sister is going to be named Ava. Did he tell you that?

JS: Yes, they told me that too.

LF: Oh well, so, glory halleluiah, my cup runneth over.

JS: That’s wonderful. I wish we all could be as happy as you are, and so (illegible).

LF: The fact that I know what death feels like makes me enjoy life even more. You’ve heard it said, “If I knew when I was going to die I’d do this, that, and the next thing?”

JS: Yes.

LF: Okay. I didn’t know I was going to die that day - I was out working and planning for tomorrow, and go home, twenty minutes later I was in the hospital, a half-dead person. And here I am,

Worcester Women's Oral History Project
30 Elm Street – Worcester, MA 01609 – 508-767-1852 – info@wwhp.org
www.wwhp.org

fourteen, no sixteen years later. In the Scripture, the Father gave King Hezekiah fifteen years, and He's given me sixteen! I beat Hezekiah by a year and I'm no king. So who loves me, baby? Glory halleluiah, how can I not praise my heavenly Father?

JS: Well Lorna, you have led an incredible life.

LF: The half has not been told, believe me. Those are just the pimple. The spiritual, the spiritual is in this book (points to journal). One of those ministers on TV say to keep a journal of what the Lord has done for you, and I started keeping a journal, and it's in here. So one day, you can read this and tell your, our grandchildren about it when I'm gone.

JS: Oh, the grandchildren will be able to hear all this, and generations to come.

LF: I hope so, and I hope they will take something from it.

JS: I hope so, too. Alright, I'm going to stop the tape now, and thank you, Lorna. Good night.

LF: Thank you, Joan.