

Interview with Samuel and Mattie Garner
Interviewed by Vernon Boyd
May 12, 1993
Detroit Michigan
Tape 1: 64 minutes
Tape 2: 64 minutes
Tape 3: 32 minutes (Side 1 only)
Transcribed by Mary Lee Bartlett

V. Boyd: Visiting in the home of Brother Garner. What's your first name? [*Mr. Garner: Samuel*] Samuel Garner. And I'm interested in doing Church history and specifically his role in the old Joseph Campau and the old Elmwood Park congregation, but first I'm going to find out where he was born and where he was raised, and that kind of stuff, when he came to Detroit. Just start at the very beginning. [*S. Garner: Okay.*] So Pleasant Union was your home congregation?

S. Garner: Yes, that was my home, that's where I grew up, in the Pleasant Union congregation. [*V. Boyd: Uh-huh. That's up on the hill?*] That's up on the hill. Right. And I hold very dear, members of that congregation and I've always, when I left, said I was going back so here's past twenty years of time and I still haven't gone back.

V. Boyd: Well, you got your kids here.

S. Garner: Yeah, my kids here.

V. Boyd: I understand that situation. Who were the key, I'm talking about preachers or people of influence, even non-preachers, that you remember?

S. Garner: At Pleasant Union. Brother D. J. Bynum used to come and preach for us. Brother Richard Taylor, which was my cousin, spoke for us for a number of years.

V. Boyd: Where was he from? I don't know.

S. Garner: Nashville, [*V. Boyd: Uh-huh.*] from Nashville. And he did most of his work down in Florida at Jacksonville, I believe, Jacksonville, Florida. So he always went South Arkansas so that's where he did most of his preaching, except Nashville. He lived in Nashville. I don't know the period of years until he died, you know. And we had Brother Tom Busby, T. H. Busby. Did you ever know Brother Busby? [*V. Boyd: No, I know of him.*] Well, he was from around Nashville. A great speaker. When I was a kid I wanted to preach and wanted to be like Brother Busby. [*V. Boyd: He was a good singer, I understand.*] Singer, yes, he was. Beautiful. And he lost his voice in the latter years. I guess that's natural for older people. And let me think. I don't

V. Boyd: Now I first heard of Pleasant Union from Levi Kennedy.

S. Garner: Levi Kennedy.

V. Boyd: Did you remember him preaching there?

S. Garner: He used to come and hold our meetings there, the early evangelistic meetings.

V. Boyd: How many years did he do that?

S. Garner: Oh, he did that I would say somewhere around twenty-five years or more. He was preaching out of Chicago. [*V. Boyd: Right.*] When he left Tennessee, he went to Oklahoma and he did work there for a while and then from there he went to Chicago so quite naturally,

V. Boyd: By way of West Virginia.

S. Garner: Yeah, West Virginia. I'm sorry. [*Both laugh.*] Yes, he and Nate Hogan and a man named James Kennedy. They left out of here really and went to Virginia and hunting work in the mines, the coal mines. So they were there during part of the period, who was the man that was in the union?

V. Boyd: John L. Lewis?

S. Garner: John L. Lewis and his reign, you know. And so but anyway, they left there, he left there and went to Oklahoma and then from Oklahoma back to Chicago. And well, Nate Hogans, he preached, that's his home too, he preached for us occasionally in our yearly evangelistic meeting. In that area, I know, you know that's a Church of Christ belt...

V. Boyd: That's true.

S. Garner: We youngsters always looked for the great minister coming in to hold the meeting so it always kept us.

M. Garner: [*Calling from outside of room.*] Vernon, is that your car in the driveway?

V. Boyd: Yes.

M. Garner: Was that your car parked?

V. Boyd: It's at the next door neighbors.

M. Garner: I mean out front. [*V. Boyd: No.*] Where you parked?

V. Boyd: I'm next door. Right in front of your next door neighbor's house.

M. Garner enters the room: How you doing?

V. Boyd: I'm doing fine. [*Laughs*] Good to see you.

M. Garner: Nice to see you.

V. Boyd: Come join us.

M. Garner: Ok. Be right there. I'll listen in.

V. Boyd: All right.

S. Garner: SoI want to get this in about my wife...[*Speaking very softly*]

V. Boyd: So she's from that same community.

S. Garner: No, she's not from that community.

V. Boyd: Oh, she's a foreigner. [*Both laugh.*]

S. Garner: A foreigner. From Columbia.

M. Garner: Are you doing ok? [*V. Boyd:* I'm doing ok.] How's [*name unclear*]

V. Boyd: I left her working so she's doing fine.

M. Garner: Okay.

S. Garner: He's putting it on tape now.

V. Boyd: That's all right. No problem.

S. Garner: He's putting this on tape.

M. Garner: Oh. Not now?

V. Boyd: Yeah. That's all right. No problem. [*Laughs*]

V. Boyd: Did you know Sister Novalene?

S. Garner: Novalene Kennedy?

V. Boyd: Yes, her family.

S. Garner: She's my cousin. [*V. Boyd:* *Oh really*] That's how Kennedy came into my family. By the way, she was here not too long ago.

V. Boyd: I know that she was in town for the Locke's.

S. Garner: Yes, that's right.

V. Boyd: Her daughter was especially there. And the daughter came and mentioned that her mother was there in town, but she didn't feel like coming. [*S. Garner:* Yes, uh-huh.] So you're kin to all of these folks?

S. Garner: Yes, uh huh. [*Both laugh*]

V. Boyd: Well, now her maiden name was Belk or Delk?

S. Garner: Delk.

V. Boyd: D-e-l-k. [*S. Garner:* *Delk, right.*] And that is at the Pleasant Union congregation that the Delk's lived.

S. Garner: Yes, in that vicinity. [*V. Boyd:* *Yeah.*] See that's a rural district. [*V. Boyd:* *Sure.*] But within a radius of ten or fifteen miles, it's was heavily populated, you know, with blacks and whites too, but we drew members from within that area, you know, Pleasant Union.

V. Boyd: Well, I remember Brother Levi talking about going to Fort Cooper, or Arrow Rock, or Cathey's Creek, [*S. Garner: That's some of them.*] but there was a lot of interchange at Gospel meetings and what have you. [*S. Garner: Yes.*] But I thought he met his wife at a church gathering, but a different congregation.

S. Garner: Probably Arrow Rock. I don't know what. [*V. Boyd: I don't remember now.*] There was a congregation at Arrow Rock. I think that's where she grew up around. Like I said there were different communities.

V. Boyd: Right.

S. Garner: But Novalene, his wife, she grew up in the Pleasant Union district.

V. Boyd: Uh huh. Okay. Any other key figures in the church that you remember from there?

S. Garner: That area. Other than... [*V. Boyd: Other than the ones you mentioned.*] Other than the leaders in the congregation we were talking about inspiring the preaching

V. Boyd: Any other?

M. Garner: Did you mention your other cousin Rich Taylor?

S. Garner: Yeah, Rich Taylor. Well, at Pleasant Union. Let's go back. Brother Clifford Dobbins was one of our stalwarts there. He was an elder at Pleasant Union. Brother Robert Price, and that's another subject, but he was someone, when I was a kid, I used to look at him. He had beautiful hair. We'd be talking about the Bible people, you know, and I used to just picture him as being one of those guys, you know. [*Both laugh*]

V. Boyd: Which one?

S. Garner: Paul maybe.

V. Boyd: Paul.

S. Garner: So we had a very good set up. We had a whole leadership, three elders and we had the deacons, which would consist of, with the congregation like that, about four deacons and so we were just one happy family, you know, in my growing up. I understand they had some problems after I grew up and got away. But it was always what I pictured in a church congregation.

V. Boyd: Very tranquil. [*S. Garner: Yes.*] Happy family. [*S. Garner: Happy family. Right*] What do you know about, what was passed on to you about the origin of those five or six churches in that area?

S. Garner: Not too much because when I came on the majority of these churches was established [*V. Boyd: Uh-huh.*] already. Now I have a - what you call it - a diary [*V. Boyd: History*] yeah, a history, that's what I'm trying to say, of the church of Pleasant Union, but I don't know just where it is and it has the beginning and how the lands became the church. It was the land for the church at Pleasant Union was given to the blacks by a widow white woman. [*V. Boyd: Her name?*] Her name was Mrs. Farris.

V. Boyd: Was she a member of the church?

S. Garner: Well, all of us was members of the church. Excuse me.

M. Garner: Can you stop there just a minute?

S. Garner: Cecil, he helped to compile this history when he was there at the homecoming every year. So he compiled a note of the history to make it a little interesting. I know there was some things that wasn't exactly right, but I thought he did a very good job on it. So I won't touch that history until I get you the book updated.

V. Boyd: Which is the oldest of those congregations in that area?

S. Garner: I think Pleasant Union. It'd be between Pleasant Union and Center Star. That's the name, right, Center Star ...

V. Boyd: Why do you say that they are the oldest?

S. Garner: Well, I really couldn't prove that which one was the oldest and what I base my story on...

V. Boyd: It's just something that you've heard from some family members?

S. Garner: Yes.

V. Boyd: Well, I had heard that Cathey's Creek might very well have been the oldest.

S. Garner: No, it was Pleasant Union was the oldest, I'm very sure. But Cathey's Creek, Center Star, Arrow Rock, Centerville, they were, you know, were there before I came in. That's been 78 years.

V. Boyd: Wow. When did you come to Detroit and why?

S. Garner: Well, you know the war was just brewing in 1941 and the jobs were picking up in Detroit, public jobs, so me and my wife, we decided we'd come to Detroit and visit my cousin. And not with the intentions of staying, I guess, but if we would find a job we'd stay. So we came to Detroit to visit my cousin. And I don't know if I should put this in there or not, [*Both laugh*]

V. Boyd: If it's interesting. She's saying no. [*Both laugh.*]

S. Garner: I got my wallet lifted in Louisville, Kentucky. [*V. Boyd: Aw, on the way.*] Lost all my money. I had enough money to get back home, but anyway that was the funny part of it. But anyway, everything all my identification papers were lost. My social security, and all of that. But anyway I got a job pretty soon after I got here. And the war kept brewing and brewing and brewing and we stayed here and then I got drafted. I should tell you that I had a job at Packard Motors. First I got a job at A&P. Then I went out to Packard's and they hired me.

V. Boyd: At East Grand Boulevard?

S. Garner: At East Grand Boulevard. Right. [*Both laugh.*] There's a lot of things she remembers better than I.

V. Boyd: I'm going to leave this closer to him because his voice is a little bit lighter, but it will pick up.

S. Garner: So we got a job at Packard. Well, I was going to tell you about the A&P deal. When I went back and I told my manager that I was quitting and that I got a job at Packard. So he said, "Why are you leaving A&P to go to Packard?" I said, "Well, to make more money." And that tickled him and he said, "I'd leave tomorrow if I could get more money. And he said, "If you don't like it, your job will still be here." I thought that was awfully nice. [*V. Boyd: Sure*] But anyway soon I got the invitation from Uncle Sam to go into the army. So I got my wife a job at Packard Motors. They gave her a job in my stead. And so she worked there until the war was over.

V. Boyd: What did you do?

S. Garner: I tell you, I started, I don't know if you know anything about working around the machines, the big cutting machine. When I got a job cleaning up the machine and then I worked on them. I learned those machines. And so the foreman came around and asked me did I want to be transferred onto another job. So I said, "Sure." Then he gave me a job of working in the cutting room and that was trimming down those.—Oh, what's the name of them? Valves on the PT-47. The PT-47, that's what we were making motors for. So anyway I had a good job all the way through until I was drafted.

V. Boyd: What job did you get for your wife?

S. Garner: What was your job, hon?

M. Garner: When I first went in, I worked on a machine called a de-greasing machine. Where you use a hoist to put the material down into this fluid [*S. Garner in background: Crankshaft*] and it would take the grease off of it. And from there I went to packing, [*S. Garner in background: Parts*] I don't know what you call those little parts, but we had to pack them in boxes and from there I went to the assembly line. We worked on these airplane motors. I had a good job. They were all good jobs.

V. Boyd: Were these all promotions?

M. Garner: Yeah, these were all promotions. I had to fight for them.

V. Boyd: Why?

M. Garner: Well, I was prepared to do whatever any other woman there could do because I had finished school, I came here and I went to business school and so when they started upgrading other ladies, so I went to the office and I said that I was prepared to do anything from the office on down and they started promoting me.

V. Boyd: Great.

S. Garner: May I inject in there? When I came home on furlough, my foreman, he took me around through the plant to see how much progress had been made of hiring black, black women. They had one trouble before I left. I think Roosevelt sent out an order that you ...to do government jobs to hire as many black women and black men, you know. He wanted me to see how much progress. They had a little strike, a walkout, because of they hired some colored women and the white women said they weren't going to work with the colored women, but that was kind of ...a strike, but anyway he wanted me to see how much progress that they had made. And I was just surprised a white woman working here and colored lady working next to her. That's something that Roosevelt pushed through.

V. Boyd: That's great. You bet.

M. Garner: When they first put me on the assembly line, I was turned over to a lady. The foreman told her to train me. And she, she gave him a bad eye and she didn't want to train me. And when we went to lunch, she found out I was from Tennessee. She also was from Tennessee. She became one of my best friends. We used to eat lunch together and everything. But at first, she didn't want to train me. It was a struggle, but as the war went on and I think as people learned each other, and it was better.

S. Garner: Well, you had a common goal.

V. Boyd: Now wait a minute. You talked about you had to fight, where they other struggles or just the ones you've told me?

M. Garner: No, no, I'm talking about fighting for my upgrading and this type of thing.

V. Boyd: Oh I see.

M. Garner: As a black woman in a factory. And this was new, this was just something new. They had no black women when we were hired during the war area. It's known that blacks were the last to be hired and the first to be fired. And this is what happened even when the war was over. As soon as they had D-Day, all of the black people, most of the black women were laid off, most of them, the black women. Of course, I guess this could have been because we were, there was no more need for this. [*S. Garner: Manpower.*] What am I trying to say?

V. Boyd: Yeah, but they would be adjusting over to making of cars.

M. Garner: That's right.

V. Boyd: Did they hire them back?

M. Garner: No. There may have been some. If they did I didn't know about. The factory didn't last that long after that.

S. Garner: I came back after the war and they give me my job back or give me a job, not the same job. This is where my transition was. I met Mr. [*name unclear*] he was a supervisor at A&P, and he was my manager before I left. I ran into him in the Highland Park A&P store and he said, "Boy you are just the man I want to see. I'm opening up a new store." That's when the big supermarkets were coming in. He said, "I'm opening up a store and I don't have nobody to do the stocking." They had a night crew stocking the store. And he said, "What about coming back?" I said, "Oh no, I'm doing all right." He said, "Come on I won't even send you downtown." [*Both laugh.*] "If you'll come out tonight or in the morning I'll put you to work right away." Anyway, I went back to the A&P and I'm glad that I did now.

V. Boyd: Yeah, because Packard did go out.

M. Garner: It went out of business.

V. Boyd: Yeah. Tell me when you first came to Detroit, the church experience.

S. Garner: Yeah. When we first came to Detroit, that first next Sunday, we found the Church of Christ.

V. Boyd: Why? How? [*chuckles*] I know why.

S. Garner: We were staying with my cousin and his wife. And they were familiar with the church, they wasn't members of the Church of Christ, but a lot of their friends from down home were members. And she, Pauline, that was my cousin's wife, she knew where the Church of Christ was on Cameron Avenue. "There's Church of Christ on Cameron and Clay." And anyway she took us up there. The little building was full, packed.

M. Garner: Something you forgot. [*S. Garner: Uh-huh.*] They had made us acquainted with Brother and Sister Bynum, who lived not too far from them. This was the pastor on Cameron Avenue.

S. Garner: On Cameron Avenue, Brother Bynum.

M. Garner: From then on, they kept us in church. We were young, we were in our twenties, but they kept us in church. He started teaching Sunday School. Brother and Sister Bynum were just wonderful.

S. Garner: They took, Brother and Sister Bynum just took us under their wing. We stayed friends until they both died. [*M. Garner: That's right.*] Years. But anyway I never will forget. I believe it was Brother John Holt said when they accepted us in the church, in membership and everything, why he says, he said, "One thing I can say about Brother and Sister Garner, they're young." He said, "In Detroit, the lights are bright." He said, "So many other places and things that they can find other than the church, I think that's commendable." You know, us a young couple. But anyway, Brother, Brother John, you never did know him.

V. Boyd: John?

S. Garner: Holt.

V. Boyd: Holt?

S. Garner: Yeah.

V. Boyd: No. That's the father of Sammie?

S. Garner: Yeah, right. Way he talked, it was like a father talking to his children. When he just put me in mind of like Christ was. Looked just like him, beautiful locks of hair. I always loved Brother Holt. His daughter lived in Idlewild and he was concerned about that little church and he would ask me, "Let's go, what about going, taking me up to Idlewild Sunday morning?" And he and I would get out, I would say around seven o'clock, six o'clock and we would get to before Sunday School was out. So I just, really loved the old man.

V. Boyd: Now when you, if I can just kind of stop for just a minute [*S. Garner: Yes.*] to get you in this picture here. Did you go to Columbia to meet her or how did this happen and were you raised in the church?

S. Garner: Let me bring this up.

M. Garner: Well, he wants to ask...

V. Boyd: I don't care.

M. Garner: I was a staunch Baptist and I knew nothing of the Church of Christ. And after I met Sam and we were married, I started going to church with him and then I recognized the Gospel when I heard it

because I had taught school and Sunday School in the Baptist church and there were questions that were unanswered in my mind. So when I heard the Gospel, I obeyed it under Brother Rich Taylor, wasn't it?

S. Garner: Rich Taylor. He's my cousin.

V. Boyd: Oh, this was at Peasant Union.

S. Garner: Pleasant Union.

M. Garner: No, in Columbia. Columbia, Tennessee is where I obeyed the Gospel and they baptized me in the river out there in Columbia. I'll never forget that.

V. Boyd: Sounds like you were scared of snakes. [*All laugh.*]

M. Garner: No, no, I wasn't afraid of snakes, but anyway ever since that I have loved the church and I'm so glad that I married him and he brought me into the church. His mother used to talk to me and I used to get angry with her. She would tell me that I wasn't going to heaven and that the Church of Christ was the only one that was right. Oh, I couldn't think of my mother and father not being right. They were such wonderful people, you know, but after I went to this meeting and I heard the Gospel preached, and I knew I had to believe for myself. That was brought out in the meeting. Then I loved her after that for making me angry enough to listen.

V. Boyd: To listen. But where did you meet? In Columbia?

M. Garner: We met in Columbia, Tennessee, and we were sweethearts for about one year. And after that he went to Chicago. He lived with Brother Levi Kennedy for a while and then when he came back to Columbia we were married in 1937.

V. Boyd: '37.

M. Garner: '37.

V. Boyd: Well, let me ask you, why did you go to Chicago at that time?

S. Garner: I was trying to prove that I was grown.

V. Boyd: You were how old?

S. Garner: I was about nineteen.

M. Garner: No, you were older than that. You were about twenty...

S. Garner: No...

M. Garner: About twenty, weren't you? Nineteen or twenty.

S. Garner: Somewhere in that range. Yeah, you know, my mother was strict. She was strict on the church and all that. I guess I just wanted to prove that I could make it on my own. So she was in favor of that. She gave me the money to go and...

V. Boyd: She trusted Levi, of course.

S. Garner: Levi and Novalene. Yeah. Anyway then I was soon back home. I found out fast that there is no place like home. [*Laughs.*]

V. Boyd: Life in the big city is different. [*Both laugh*]

S. Garner: Said, "I'm going back home and marry my sweetheart." And we got married. I came back in July, the first of July and we got married in September.

M. Garner: September, yeah.

V. Boyd: Great. Good. Then back to your being in Detroit and you're going to Cameron Avenue, would you describe what it was like to go to church.

S. Garner: I tell you what....[*Side ends.*]

Side 2

V. Boyd: ...after coming to Cameron Avenue and what is it like?

S. Garner: One thing, like I said, I think the church was very well full of people. People attended church more then I think because, I don't know, but it seemed like they felt more closer to each other then really they do, the blacks do now. And we were received and we met just about everybody shook our hands. And then we found out that this was real, this was real people. I don't know if that condition exists today. When the same people, the stock of the same people that left the South, whether they feel that closeness that they did then, I believe that that's the truth.

V. Boyd: How many people from the Centerville area, for instance, were there? That you knew or knew of?

S. Garner: One of the deacons, I think, Brother [*Ennis? name unclear*]

M. Garner: Brother [*name unclear*] or Brother [*name unclear.*]

S. Garner: Brother [*name unclear*]. They were the same stock. [*Words unclear*] that came up. Oh, a lot of people.

V. Boyd: And they had recently come from the South?

S. Garner: In recent years, yes, before the war started. Yeah. I know there are lots more.

V. Boyd: But there were several. Go ahead.

M. Garner: And I would like say too when we came to Detroit and became members of Cameron Avenue, that everyone seemed to be so dedicated to the church. The ministers, the leaders, and they brought their kids to church, their descendents, they brought their children to church and the children were more disciplined. Some of the older members, I remember, Sister [*Yowell- spelling unclear*], Sister Blanche Yowell, her name was, and Sister Owen. I used to go to the Sister's Bible class and we went from house to house. We met from house to house.

V. Boyd: Was it Sister Beulah?

S. Garner: Sister Beulah.

M. Garner: Sister Beulah Owen and Sister Blanche Yowell. Uh-huh. Oh, there were about eight or ten of us.

S. Garner: Sister Bynum.

M. Garner: Yes, and we met from house to house, to this Lady's Bible class and then eventually we did all our meeting at church, but at first we met house to house. And it was such a little close knit group, we knew each other. And we formed a new club, the "sew and save" club from this group. We'd met socially, sew and make bandages for cancer patients and it was, serve and eat together and it was beautiful.

V. Boyd: How long did it last?

M. Garner: Oh, I don't exactly how long it lasted. I think it was, the Bible Class is going on even now.

V. Boyd: Oh, you mean, the United Sisters?

M. Garner: The United Sisters Bible class. But at first it was just Sisters in Cameron.

S. Garner: It existed for quite a while after we moved to Joseph Campau. But during the years of [*V. Boyd: Controversy*] yeah, it fell apart. That body began to move the membership from one congregation to the other.

V. Boyd: Now when you came to Cameron Avenue, it, and with Sister Owen being there, then it means that Highland Park had not gotten started.

S. Garner: No, Highland Park was started. Highland Park was in operation for quite a while before I came to Detroit.

V. Boyd: But her dad started that, didn't she go with her dad?

M. Garner: She stayed at Cameron because her husband was a leader there. [*V. Boyd: Leader.*] Brother Yowell was the leader and so was...

S. Garner: Yeah, that's right.

V. Boyd: Her husband was....

M. Garner: Wasn't her father Brother York?

V. Boyd: Yes. That's why

M. Garner: But see he was at Highland Park, but she stayed at Cameron.

V. Boyd: Okay I didn't...I missed that.

S. Garner: Highland Park. My cousin, I have another cousin, my cousin's husband was a little jackleg preacher at Highland Park before I came here, but it was small. I don't know how many members. I don't know if Brother, oh, I can't think, but I know it was in existence before I come.

V. Boyd: Okay. Well, I was just kind of curious why the daughter didn't go with her daddy. Who was the jackleg preacher?

S. Garner: His name was McGill, [*first name unclear*] McGill.

V. Boyd: He was from Down South too?

S. Garner: He's from my home, from Pleasant Union.

V. Boyd: And he helped Brother York? Or they worked together?

S. Garner: Yeah, they worked together. [*V. Boyd: I see.*] I tell you, all of these [*unclear*], you know, like at Highland Park, my cousin was a minister and he worked with the congregation. I asked my cousin, "Why did you leave the Church of Christ to take up with a pair of Baptists?" I believe it was her husband after she married. Anyway, I asked, "Now why did you leave the Church of Christ?" She was born and bred in the Church of Christ. She said, "Now I tell you I found so much wrong with the membership of the Church of Christ. When my husband was sick for a period of how long and the church members would seldom come to see about him."

V. Boyd: This is McGill, Mrs. McGill.

S. Garner: Yeah. She said, "After he passed, I just, after he passed, I met Lee. Lee was Baptist and I went with him."

V. Boyd: Well, can you answer me a question? Why did Highland Park get started to begin with?

S. Garner: No.

V. Boyd: Was that because of unhappiness. Brother York was unhappy over here or wanted to do his own thing. Exactly what do you know?

S. Garner: I'm not up on that. I really couldn't tell you. Because this all happened before I came.

V. Boyd: I understand, but I thought you might have heard something. My thought was if Brother York is the first preacher from the South that came up to Detroit, why didn't he stay with the major group?

M. Garner: That we don't know. That was before we came.

V. Boyd: I understand. But you understand my question?

M. Garner: Yes. Cause we may can find that out for you.

V. Boyd: Well, if you hear.

M. Garner: Because I still know some other people, we can ask the question...

S. Garner: Margaret [*words unclear*] a lot from that.

V. Boyd: Well, but anyway, it was kind of curious to me why he wouldn't stay where it seemed to be the largest group if he was the first preacher.

S. Garner: Well I tell you, let me tell you this. Cameron Avenue, to my recollection, was the oldest [*V. Boyd: Yes, it was.*] and what they would do like West Side, West Side congregation now, I know it got started. Brother[*Name*] and Brother Bynum, Brother Peterson, they were the leaders like. Now on the Westside, a man by the name of Brother Dayberry .

M. Garner: Dayberry. Was it Derryberry? Derryberry, I believe so.

V. Boyd: I've heard Derryberry from the South.

S. Garner: He was a plumber.

M. Garner: Are you talking about Brother Mayberry? It was Mayberry.

S. Garner: That's right. Mayberry, but anyway from Cameron Avenue he was trying to get West Side started, established. He tried to get a congregation started so he moved his membership there and he tried to get me to go over there. We were at Joseph Campau then at this period.

M. Garner: I think one reason these other churches sprang up because they were trying to get congregations in different areas and I think it was more of an area thing. And use some of the younger ministers and get them started, but I don't think it was from a split or anything like that. [*S. Garner: There was no split.*] Trying to get a different area, because at first people were coming from all over, everybody. Even out of at River Rouge, they came to Cameron. I think it's more of an area thing than a split.

S. Garner: Yeah.

V. Boyd: Now I understand that. Did economics have anything to do with it? Was it a financial hardship? Was there public transportation?

S. Garner: Public transportation. I remember Brother Bynum, he worked with a group and he came up with some selling a brick. He wanted to build a building. He sold enough bricks to build that little building, the building before what they have now, but it was nice to worship in. It was a place to worship in. And Brother Bynum worked with that and with Brother Mayberry and Brother..., what's his name, worked the West Side?

M. Garner: Brother Cole

V. Boyd: Yeah, Brother Cole, he was there at first.

S. Garner: Brother Cole. And, yeah, Highland Park, I can't name all those guys, but I saw them all go up to Cameron and Highland Park was already here when I came, but I saw established River Rouge,,,

M. Garner: River Rouge, West Side, [*name unclear*]

S. Garner: West side [*name unclear*]

M. Garner: And all the others.

S. Garner: Well, all the others. But it wasn't Cameron Avenue, I mean Joseph Campau era. That was the only one born in strife. There was no strife to the others.

M. Garner: That we know of, that we know of.

S. Garner: Big strife. I know money was scarce in all of them.

V. Boyd: Sure. Yeah. Well, that was the point I was trying to get some comments on. Most of the people that would be coming to church, were they be coming on public transportation or were they able to have their cars?

S. Garner: No. Most of them on....

M. Garner: I mean some came on buses.

S. Garner: Most of them on public transportation.

V. Boyd: Well, I understand the city used to have very excellent public transportation [*M. and S. Garner: Right.*] versus what it is today, [*S. Garner: Right.*] but I didn't know if that still meant it was a hardship [*M. Garner: It was.*] for some people and had some people moved out? I can understand you wanting to find a church.

S. Garner: Sure, I know me and my wife soon after we became established here we bought us an old jalopy to get us from here to there and we just pick up everyone along that we could. People were close to it if we see them riding the bus...

M. Garner: And before we got the car, we had to go on the ...

S. Garner: Streetcar, yes. And the church membership was beautiful. People wouldThey'd get there, more so than now in my church . About eleven, ten-thirty, you don't know whether you're going to have a meeting or not.

V. Boyd: Yeah, I know about that. [*Both laugh.*] Then when the church simply outgrew that facility that was what made them want to go to Joseph Campau. [*S. Garner: Yes*] So they got an opportunity to buy that building.

S. Garner: Well, you know, that after we bought the building some of them agreed to stay there [*V. Boyd: Yes.*] and carry on the work there, you know, with the building. You want to talk about that building.

V. Boyd: Yes, our previous conversation, you lived through that controversy. I want to hear your perspective on it, unpleasant though it might be, but I just want to be able to tell the story.

M. Garner: [*Laughs.*] Can I give mine first. He can inject. You know, we were just delighted to have this lovely building, but when we got in there. We bought it and we moved. Brother Bynum's voice was very [*V. Boyd: Weak?*] Right. We didn't have a PA system and I think that's one of the reasons that they got a new minister. I think that was part of it. [*S. Garner: That's what some of them said.*] Got rid of him and got...I think that was very wrong because Brother Bynum worked so hard to get this congregation. As soon as he moved in there, then the elders found fault, but I believe that it was because

of the acoustics. You couldn't hear him very well. They want this, this young man came along and he was very...

V. Boyd: Aggressive, enthusiastic.

M. Garner: Right. Aggressive. And so the elders, I think that's where they made a mistake, I really do. To get rid of Brother Bynum to could get this young man although I believe in giving young people chances, but Brother Bynum worked so hard to get this church

V. Boyd: You're saying that he was one of the main ones who sought out the building and helped the church to get it?

M. Garner: Right! He's the one that did it. Brother Bynum did. He started it. I remember he came to Sisters Bible Class and explained all this that we had this opportunity to get this nice building and everything. And I went down in my pocket- I was working, my husband was in the army. And I was the first one that gave him a donation on this building. And we were everyone was very glad and we were working and they were liberal and we were able to pay down on it.

S. Garner: I know my wife she wrote me a letter, I think I was in, let's see, [*M. Garner: Germany?*] in Belgium about the church raising money for [*words unclear*] she did and they went on and they got it to raise the money. I consider at that particular time we had some very stout men, strong men, [*M. Garner: leaders.*] leaders, like Brother Morrison. W. D. Morrison, he was a good money raiser. In order to raise, he put his money in first, you know, it encouraged other people to give. So when I came back, they were in the building and I thought it was beautiful. [*V. Boyd: Sure.*] Sure was a beautiful building

V. Boyd: Who at this point, you mentioned Brother Morrison, were the key leaders from those days?

S. Garner: Brother Yowell, we talked about him.

V. Boyd: This is Blanche's husband?

S. Garner: Yeah.

V. Boyd: What was his first name?

M. Garner: Is it George? I believe it was church. [*S. Garner: George.*] Seems like it was George, wasn't it? George and Blanche Yowell, wasn't it? I'm not sure.

S. Garner: Yeah, you can get that somewhere else. Yeah. Brother Manual, Brother Samuel Holt, Samuel Holt, Brother John Holt, Brother Mitchum,

M. Garner: Brother Mitchum came on later, didn't he?

S. Garner: No, he was in on it. He was a deacon. He was a deacon when he left Cameron.

V. Boyd: Brother Peterson was he...

S. Garner: Brother Peterson was not in this picture, he was at River Rouge.

M. Garner: River Rouge.

V. Boyd: All ready.

S. Garner: He lived in River Rouge.

M. Garner: Now what about Brother Ennis, was he a leader too?

S. Garner: He stayed at Cameron. He didn't come over. Anyway they had this middle group like Brother [*unclear*] Buddy Locke. Now these were just under [*V. Holt: the older men.*] these older men.

M. Garner: Sam, what about Brother Mayberry, [*S. Garner: Mayberry.*] was he one of them?

S. Garner: Brother Mayberry. He went to Campau before he went to the West Side. Mayberry and he get the money. Liberal, you know. He wanted to work with the West Side. He thought that there were so many at Joseph Campau, they don't need, and the West Side was begging for some help in membership. That's why he went over there.

V. Holt: What about the name Lamar?

S. Garner: Yep.

V. Holt: What do you know about him? [*Mr. and Mrs. Garner confer softly*] Was it his last name or first name? I don't know. [*M. Garner: That's his last name.*] What was his first name?

S. Garner: Blanche's husband

V. Boyd: Blanche's husband.

M. Garner: William.

V. Boyd: William Lamar.

S. Garner: William. That's his name. His wife was named Blanche. Lamar and Flowers. Flowers was in that age group.

V. Boyd: You mean the older guy?

S. Garner: John R.

V. Boyd: John R.

M. Garner: Sam, what about Brother Jones who used to live on...

S. Garner: He was just the treasurer and a good treasurer.

M. Garner: I don't know his first name though.

V. Boyd: I've met him and I talked to him one time. He was the baseball player at one time before he was a treasurer.

S. Garner: Uh-huh. The money was always there. He kept it up to date.

V. Boyd: So you think that the seat of the problem that became the big problem started out by the elders simply wanting Brother Bynum to go.

S. Garner: No. Well, maybe so. Are you going to interject anymore in here?

M. Garner: Well, after they let Brother Bynum go and brought Brother Trone in then Brother Trone tried to get rid of the elders. So he would go from house to house and talk about these old elders, you know, outdated. He wanted to be progressive, do a lot of things that these old leaders didn't believe in. He wanted to branch out and then they went to court to try to get rid.... At first the elders tried to put him off. And then he tried to put the elders off. And then Brother Trone came up with some bylaws that he made up. He didn't have them at first. He made up the bylaws and the court went along with him.

S. Garner: Well, the courts said you've got to have bylaws or we can't make judgment, you know. You know you've got to have by-laws. So Trone, that's when he set up his by-laws. The elders they used only the Bible as the jury. The judge can't deliver on decisions on the Bible.

V. Boyd: Did you go to court? [*S. Garner: Uh-huh.*] How many times?

S. Garner: We went the first and the judge sent them back to get the bylaws. [*M. Garner: It continued on.*] So the initial going back was the first me going was the first time. And the next he went back with the bylaws. And it went on and on for a while, you know, until it was finished and judge made his decision.

M. Garner: Sad. The whole thing was sad.

S. Garner: But this thing, I was against them firing Brother Bynum. It's all right to bring another minister, a young minister, but the older minister for the sake of wisdom, I think they ... Brother Bynum was salaried [*unclear*], which [*unclear*] been very good for Trone to draw upon his wisdom. But, uh, ... They didn't go with that. You know whenever you are an elder and deacon, you have the last word on the decision. And then everybody steps in and tells you what to do and how to do it. And that's when an elder has to insert his patience in whatever...

V. Boyd: Uh-huh.

Break in tape

S. Garner: Like I said Trone became my friend. We were really close. In fact on the day, the Sunday before the thing busted, he and his wife were at our house and we were together going to have a meeting at the church. We weren't open yet, but I don't want to relive this with Trone, because he's still my friend and we held our friendship all the way through this ordeal. [*unclear*] I believe in eldership, because I believe in that and the Bible endorses it highly. But anyway we held our friendship where a normal person when get a court order banning you from something you hold dear You usually fall out with the person. But anyway, I know what someone else would have done, but if I hadn't kept friendship with Trone, I wouldn't have been able to reach him. I wouldn't have been able to reach the elders if I hadn't kept friendship with them. So anything this thing it ripped and ripped, in court and out of court. Ministers coming in from all over the country trying to settle it. They did more harm than they did good. And so I was able to... [*V. Boyd: Keep both sides*] ...keep both sides and get a meeting. They had come to a place where if one would call a meeting, and the other side wouldn't go. If the other side called a meeting, the other side wouldn't want to talk to them. Because he had done some things that weren't Christian, you know, such as, what's the word I want to use, holding somebody together- don't bother me.

V. Boyd: A judgment against them to keep them away.

S. Garner: I talked to the elders. I used to scold my elders too, time and time again, "You guys remind me of the South where I grew up, they have a lot of tornadoes, every evening there was a tornado or a big storm. It got to be that every time, my mother every time it would cloud up and look like thunder would hit, she'd grab us and run to the cellar. That's the way you guys remind me of, you know. You're just scared of a clap of thunder. But anyway the elders told me that they would meet with Trone anywhere at any time day or night, they were willing to meet. We were living on Crane and Trone was living on Burns, the next block down and it was in the summertime. Something told me that it was time to talk to Trone. So I walked on down to his house and I got down there and he was dressing his dogs. He had some dogs that he put in the dog show and he was grooming them in the basement. His wife told me, "Trone's in the basement."

Side 1, Tape 2

V. Boyd: You got to Trone's house and he was in the basement grooming the dogs and you said what?

S. Garner: I told him that, I said, "Brother Trone, now the elders tell me that they want to meet with you anywhere, but you won't come to meet." He said, "Oh Brother, who told you that I wouldn't come to meet?" "That's what the elders told me." He said, "As long as they're in the Bible, as long as it's about the Bible, I'll meet with them anywhere." I said, "Well, that's good, but they say what they are holding out on is concerning the Bible, Bible questions. He said, "Well, I'll meet with them." I said, "Okay. We'll set the date." We set the date. We set the time. We set where. The meeting would be held in his house, Trone's house. So when I carried it back to the elders, they said, "Yeah, we'll meet him." And so they did. The meeting was held at his house, in his dining room. They got started. I can't tell you all of the details. So they got started with the meeting, but I told them first, "Now if it's difficult, you guys can consider this, but if it is personal I don't know if you will be able to sell it." Now all of them, you know, a personal thing. So anyway they talked and talked and it looked pretty good. Then it got gummed up. So it looked like they would have to postpone it.

V. Boyd: You mean it got heated?

S. Garner: A little heated on some things, you know. And so I told them, "Now look. We came here with the idea we were going to put our cards on the table and to come to some kind of a decision" I said, "You told me that it wasn't personal. It was Biblical." I said, "Now if we can work around on the Bible, I think we should get together and go on with the meeting because this thing is ruining the Church of Christ in the whole area of Detroit." And it was. I said, "We have members drifting from one congregation to the other." I said, "And those members are going to be lost." So anyway we got started back and I won't quote all the details, we got started back, and finally way late in the night, they come to an agreement. And then they poured out their soul what had happened. And some of Brother Manuel's was what Trone had done to him like putting him out of the parsonage and how he treated he and Sister Manuel. Now I wouldn't want this to go back to Trone, you know. To say I told you. But anyway, now where was I?

V. Boyd: They were coming to an agreement late at night.

S. Garner: Oh yeah. We called Sister Trone because she was involved in it. She was upstairs. We called her down. She came down. We asked him if forgiveness was in order. And so they all did their thing on asking each other to forgive 'em, you know. Sister Trone did hers and what she held against Brother

Manuel. A lot of hers was personal. But anyway their forgiveness was in order, you know. I said, "We have to go farther than that because we have Joseph Campau members at the time that this started, they saw it." I said, "They're involved....So they came up with the idea that one or two, on the preacher's side, Trone's side, would go to the Lemay Congregation with Brother Sammy and Brother Manuel, I believe, would go to Joseph Campau. So that's what they done. So it was supposed to have been settled. It was to go out through the brotherhood that the thing had been settled. The reason that I wouldn't want my name called because people would be quick to say you're seeking self-righteousness, self- whatever you call it. I'm not and I wasn't then and I never will.

V. Boyd: But even though that statement was made, that was several years after the courts or this was during the courts?

S. Garner: No, no. This was after the courts. We'd gone through a whole lot of other stuff.

V. Boyd: I'm aware that there finally did come out some kind of a resolution, but an awful lot had gone on before that point. [*S. Garner: Right, right.*] Yes, I did know that they finally came to some kind of a resolution, but this was after the elders had gone out and started Lemay.

S. Garner: Oh yeah, we started from [*M. Garner: Arndt. Arndt Street.*] Joseph Campau from the building. We met in the building after their meeting was. Remember? And then Trone kicked on that and we moved over into the parsonage, Manuel's place. And we met there for a month or two, two months. And then he come out with that they interfere with the service. So we found this place on Arndt and left this place and rented that. I don't know how long we stayed there, maybe a year.

M. Garner: A year or more.

S. Garner: Or more or over a year. And then we bought this Lemay. So we grew from about 18 or 19 to a pretty good congregation. So that's the way that went.

V. Boyd asking Mrs. Garner: Did you want to add anything?

M. Garner: What I wanted to add is that, it seemed that Brother Trone was very down on elders and he had some help from some of the older ministers and I'm calling these names: Brother Levi Kennedy of Chicago; Brother Nathan Hogan of California, Los Angeles, California; Brother J. S. Winston of Cleveland, Ohio. They became very close those four. It seems that they didn't believe that any man was capable of being an elder.

S. Garner: Some of them didn't.

M. Garner: They were saying all of this about "children on good behavior" and all this to prove that they didn't think anyone was able of being an elder.

S. Garner: Brother Keeble.

M. Garner: Don't leave Brother Keeble out? Was he with them?

S. Garner: Do you know Brother Keeble?

V. Boyd: Uh-huh.

S. Garner: Brother Keeble preached, coming up during that time and he came to the congregation and he said, "I've been teaching, preaching for I don't know how many years." I always loved Brother Keeble and I bet my soul almost on him, but when he said that he had been preaching for fifty years - I don't know. I don't remember - He said, "I have never seen a man that's qualified to be an elder."

M. Garner: To be an elder.

S. Garner: Don't you tell nobody I said that. A lot of people in there that heard that.

V. Boyd: He'd never seen a man that was qualified to be an elder.

M. Garner: ...qualified to be an elder. Isn't that something?

V. Boyd: I wonder. That just doesn't sound like Brother Keeble.

M. Garner: No, it doesn't.

S. Garner: No, but he said it. I'm sitting up there looking for Brother Keeble to do something else, but that's what he said.

V. Boyd: That had the effect of really underscoring Trone.

S. Garner: Yesirree. [*M. Garner: Right, right.*] Now I didn't quote you what Brother Keeble said on the way to that because I don't remember, but this stuck in my craw.

M. Garner: All these brothers that I named, none of them had elders and they had been preaching for years.

S. Garner: Tell him what you said in our house, what you told Levi and Nate.

M. Garner: You tell him.

S. Garner: She lit in on them. Like I said, Levi married my cousin and he stayed with us while in town usually if a minister is from out-of-town would come there to see him and talk. But anyone Mattie told them, she said, "Who all that should be on trial is you guys. You've been preaching at your congregations all these many years, twenty-five or more years and no elders, that tells me that you're not qualified to do what you're doing. You haven't been encouraging all young men to seek eldership in twenty-five years or more. Seems like something is wrong, you haven't been preaching the doctrine."

V. Boyd: Good. What did he say?

M. Garner: They got me off to the side and tried to cool me down. And I asked the same question when we had the conference. Remember we had the conference at Joseph Campau and I got up and asked this question, I said, "Now if a person has been preaching in a congregation for twenty-five or thirty years, do you think in that length of time they would have encouraged someone to aspire for the deaconship or eldership?" They tried to answer it, but they gave all kinds of answers. It didn't satisfy me. And we had ministers there from all over the United States. I stood alone. [*All chuckle.*]

S. Garner: The day they was at our house, Levi said "Wasn't nobody over him telling him where to go and when to go." And Nate, I went out to California and he and I went over to his church, Figueroa Church, and he's showing me around. I saw the press where they print the *Echo*. I met Bethel Smith and

he had two white brothers doing the editing. He was doing pretty well, but he had run into trouble before. The editors, not these two, but others before, were not doing their job. Wouldn't stay on the job. He showed us the deacon, the elders' office. Another place he showed me was his office. He's an elder. And I said, 'You mean you're an elder.' He said, 'Yeah. This is my office here. I'm an elder.' He wanted to show me that. He didn't have no elders before this happened. He had been alone. He had ordained elders and, I guess, placed himself head elder. I just imagine. Now I'm saying these things. I love Nate. I always thought well of him from being a boy. I just think if a person if they're going to preach, preach the Bible, you know.

V. Boyd: Where do you think Winston and Hogan and Kennedy got this idea of being so negative about elders?

S. Garner: One thing Levi and Nate did a lot of evangelistic work. When I stayed with them in Chicago in the summertime, he'd be gone and I used to tell his wife, I said, "You must have been born to be an elder or preacher's wife because you take this thing so," you know. But anyway....

V. Boyd: Where'd they get the idea?

S. Garner: Like I said they did a lot of evangelistic work and they were gone from their congregation most of the summer months and they don't want nobody to tell them where to go, when to go, how much money to spend. "That's too much money you're asking for for this trip." I think that's the real thing that prompted them to have that attitude. I don't know of no other thing that would cause them to feel like that.

M. Garner: I think there were some weaknesses in the eldership because and I think this was probably from a lack of Biblical understanding because so many things they said were wrong just like you couldn't go swimming. I think they went to extremes in some places. I could see some extremes in that the elders did, but they held to the truth in the Bible, but they went to extremes. Because there were a lot of assumptions, for instance, like "such like" in the Bible. I can't quote the scripture, but they named off several themes and then "such like." So they put a lot of things into this "such as like." I think they went to extremes.

S. Garner: Say, for instance like say dancing, I think they drove a lot of youngsters away from the church on arguing about "such like." You see the Bible speaks so much about dancing in the Old Testament and the New Testament, but I don't know...

V. Boyd: Well, many of the evangelistic places that they would go, Pleasant Union, [*S. Garner: Yeah.*] and other places, they had elders. [*S. Garner: Right.*] The elders that Levi grew up with, Brother Hogan grew up with, were they negative images to them?

S. Garner: This I don't know. Like I say, they shouldn't have been because what I could see after I came on the scene was that those congregations throughout the Christian belt they were stern on their belief and they'd call you down quick if you were preaching they didn't think [*unclear.*]

V. Boyd: Would they call these fellows down?

S. Garner: Yeah, they called them down any minister, who came through there preaching what they thought. A lot of things, they thought were wrong too, you know,

V. Boyd: You think the preachers just didn't want to hear that kind of stuff.

S. Garner: Yeah, but Levi and Nate, they were lean more, should I say, liberal, along that line than really the elders of those congregations.

V. Boyd: Why?

S. Garner: Well, why? Nate is a strong preacher and he cuts going and coming but come down to the real issue maybe not so stern, maybe he's not so steadfast in what's he's teaching.

V. Boyd: Give me a for instance. You were just about to give me a for instance of the liberal trend with these two guys. You think coming up North and going out West and getting them out of the small parochial environment of a hill in Tennessee had something to do with it?

S. Garner: Well, maybe that too, but I don't believe that was the real issue. Like I said awhile ago, they didn't like to, they wanted to be free. Say, for instance, I got a congregation and I want to go to Cleveland and hold a revival. For my congregation, I say, "It will take five hundred dollars or a thousand dollars to carry on this work." What they didn't want to see was a lot of jawboning over it. Now if their congregation without strong leadership, they asked their congregation to give them so much money to do this job, didn't have a problem and then their congregation would take up money to Brother Levi. Levi say he didn't want no elder telling him where to go and when to go. That wasn't right. Paul was sent [unclear.]

V. Boyd: All these guys are students of the Bible and they read these passages, what do you think they did with these eldership passages?

S. Garner: Well if you hear them in a class or in a lecture, it was high thing on their priority that you would have to walk the chalk-line in Paul's decision on who make an elder and who don't make an elder.

V. Boyd: In other words, they were preaching the Bible, [*S. Garner: They were teaching the Bible.*] but they weren't practicing that particular part.

S. Garner: That's what I'm saying, yeah.

M. Garner: Brother Burt, [*uses wrong name*] I don't think there was any scripture telling the leadership how to get rid of a preacher if you didn't want him and I think this was one of the main issues. I think that the preachers said that they had families to take care of and they didn't want to be hired and fired, you know, if they came up with something wrong and try to find another congregation. I think a lot of it was money, security and being able to go out, like Brother Garner said, on evangelistic work, trying to make money for their family. They had children to rear and educate. They thought that the elders had too much power over them, being able to fire them at will without paying them any money or anything. I think that was one of the big issues.

V. Boyd: Security is an important issue for all of us. [*M. Garner: Right, right.*] Well, let me throw something else out and see if you have any comments on it. One of the ways I got into this issue was the black church grew out of the evangelism of the white church primarily. And the white church often had elders and sometimes the elders would have arbitrary decisions that they would impose upon the blacks that would not necessarily make the blacks happy. I heard a kind of an overdrawn story, but the whites would build a building, send a preacher out, Keeble, or whoever else, in the black community, would evangelize. Once some people were baptized, they would build a building and they would come over and look around at the few people that were gathered and anyone who had grey hair they'd say, "Well, you, you and you, you are elders." They probably didn't do it that bad, but that was the kind of overdrawn. They figured older people ought to be the leaders, but sometimes who they appointed elders were not at

all qualified. [M. Garner: Right.] And therefore there grew up an attitude in Hogan, in Winston, in Levi of some negative ideas about elders. [S. Garner: Yeah.] Sometimes the white elders were arbitrary in the way they treated the blacks and if they had any part in making elders in the black community – and sometimes they did – then they would use very poor judgment and therefore these preachers grew up with a very negative attitude about elders. Plus security and some of the other things. [S. Garner: Yeah, I understand.] Can you make any comments about any of that?

S. Garner: In some of it, I don't know, you know. Like Pleasant Union, for instance, was quite late, was probably. Now I don't know what transpired before the organizing of this church. I don't know whether I don't know if the blacks were meeting with them probably this was probably [several words unclear] But anyway this lady saw a need and she said, "Let the blacks have their own church." So she [unclear] and gave it to the blacks and deeded it. That property had a building on it, was there when I come on the scene. Now Cecil said that this lady died [name unclear] - No, her daughter, her daughter, she died, 'cause Cecil said he didn't get to quiz her on it and she would have known more than any of us, but she died and he didn't get all of her statement and history, but this was the way that came about. I guess a lot of places where the black church was came about like that - white people gave them the property for a small sum of money and helped them on their way to being Christians. Some of those I don't know.

V. Boyd: Well, there's no doubt the racial prejudice was so rank in the South, it's no wonder that blacks would grow up with a very negative attitude about whites or whatever the white institution was and that white institution had white elders [S. Garner: Right.] being the bosses and so there would be some natural antagonism that would grow up.

S. Garner: Well, I know that the white congregations in the South were very well indoctrinated on Church of Christ doctrine and were very sympathetic towards the blacks and they put forth an effort to do anything with their money. Always have. Like in Columbia, I left the rural area and went to Columbia and I got a job as an undertaker [unclear] Williams. The West End Church of Christ was made up mainly of well-to-do people, like your business people, you know, and he belonged to the West End. They had money to do with. I know this because Mr. Williams would tell me everything that was going on and most of the members in there, the business people, they'd make their donations the first of the year. They estimated how much they were going to make and they had money to do with if a project came up, if they wanted to give the black congregation 1500, 2000 dollars for whatever they wanted to do, they had the money to do it. The blacks couldn't do that. They didn't have the money. They depended on the white congregation. They'd help them with the needy and all kind of projects. I can't say that they have nothing, anything to do with what you were talking about. When Martin Luther King first came about and he was having a lot of trouble in the South [unclear] I knew they would have trouble. It can be easily settled that when they move North. I said because the white people in the South and the black people in the South they have more in common than the black people in the North. They were more closely, in fact, they were more closely than each group realized. [unclear] You can go right down South now and you'll get a better reception from the white people down there than you would in the North.

End of Side one

Side two

V. Boyd: ...Joseph Campau and the troubles there. I understand that the first thing that the judge did was to quote the Bible. Were you there when he did that?

S. Garner: No, I wasn't there when he did that, but I heard it.

V. Boyd: You heard the judge?

S. Garner: No, no, I heard someone tell what happened.

V. Boyd: Yeah, that you're Christians and you're supposed to settle it yourselves. You're not supposed to bring it to court.

S. and M. Garner: Right, right.

S. Garner: That's what he said. That's what they told me he said. I heard so many of them say that. You see when Trone came back to collect his, get his - what you call it?- [*V. Boyd: By-laws.*] by-laws set up that's when he had trouble. Even his people believed in that that the Bible should settle. They never heard nothing about no by-laws in the church. Oh, that was a no-no, always has been among Church of Christ people. That's not right if you're going to use the court law. The judge has to have something to make a decision on.

V. Boyd: Were you much acquainted with Brother Trone's leaning upon Wilcox?

S. Garner: Yeah.

V. Boyd: Any comments?

S. Garner: Well, I guess, no, but I know he depended upon Wilcox. Even before he got his bylaws, I don't know exactly how Wilcox acted according to the by-laws, but I know he gave Trone a lot of books to read, you know. Trone was up on it pretty good. He has a brilliant mind, Trone.

V. Boyd: Who did the elders lean upon for advice?

S. Garner: Bible.

V. Boyd: Besides that. [*Chuckles*]

M. Garner: The congregation.

V. Boyd: But they didn't have very many people. If they only went out with nineteen people or seventeen people. Most of the people were on Trone's side.

S. Garner: It was lost from the beginning, wasn't it. It was lost.

V. Boyd: Well, just a lot of things hindsight would tell you.

S. Garner: Yeah.

V. Boyd: I was just curious to know. I've heard that the elders brought in some people once it got down to the nitty gritty. I'm just trying to get your understanding.

S. Garner: Let's see about that. They brought in, but I don't remember who.

V. Boyd: Ernie Stewart was one.

S. Garner: Ernie Stewart?

V. Boyd: Gerald Montgomery was one.

S. Garner: Uh-huh.

V. Boyd: You weren't there when they testified then?

S. Garner: No, I wasn't there. I was working days. I didn't hear the testimony, their testimony, but I know Trone and Wilcox . [unclear] but I can't remember what had happened. Wilcox and Trone were ahead of me and they made some kind of remark, but I can't remember what it was now, but I remember it. I know Wilcox helped them quite a bit.

V. Boyd: Douglas Greer.

S. Garner: Greer came from Washington to set Trone in order, but Greer did more damage than he did good.

V. Boyd: Why?

S. Garner: Well, he set himself up kind of as really a God. He preached in Washington and most of his audience, most of the time were men, that wrote and all that stuff and that didn't go over with nobody. I think Greer spoke that one time when that was going on.

V. Boyd: So he didn't appear here very much then.

S. Garner: No.

V. Boyd: Okay. The court case went all the way to the Michigan Supreme Court. It was appealed.

S. Garner: Never argued.

V. Boyd: Not argued, but it went up for a judgment. The elders must have appealed it because they didn't like the judgment that the lower court gave. [*S. Garner: Right.*] And so it went all the way to the Michigan Supreme Court and it went in favor of Trone.

S. Garner: Yes. It went in favor of Trone.

V. Boyd: Yes. How would you describe the history since then of Elmwood Park, Joseph Campau?

S. Garner: To tell you the truth, I'll be honest with you, I meet Trone occasionally and talk to him and he always says [unclear] times. "Yeah, that's the truth." As far as what happened to Campau, he worked hard and put that building up, I know that. He drove a lot of his members away. I don't know why or what happened. But I do know that he's having some trouble there now so I really, tell you the truth, after he let me down, I just didn't have too much to do with him. Well, I go occasionally to affairs they'd have there. [sentence unclear] Why he let it go so long.

V. Boyd: That's something that I can't figure out.

S. Garner: Trone had a good following when he first started because I know that he went to the younger people, like me, I can still [unclear] on Saturday night when he was getting the tracts out, not tracts, the little thing out, little magazine. [*V. Boyd: Bulletin*] bulletin, working his can off. He said, "Brother

Garner you know, why [*unclear*] lazy elders sit around. The younger people try to do it, it's a sin." Well, he would go to all of the younger members like that. Most of them would side with him because it made them, I guess, feel good, but this is how he got his following.

V. Boyd: This is back when the controversy was there. He was very pro young people.

S. Garner: Right.

V. Boyd: And very anti the older.

M. and S. Garner: Anti older. Right, right.

V. Boyd: I heard his mother played a role in some of this.

S. Garner: Mattie, she probably know more about that because they were together in Bible School. What did Sister Trone used to say?

M. Garner: Well, the only thing that I remember is that she was very fond of her son, as all mother's are. [*V. Boyd: Sure.*] One time when he went to preach down South, he called her and said he told her that he had to sleep with a person's son and she said she was going to get on a train and go down and get her son. See she was, just as most mothers are, thought her son was great. He couldn't do anything wrong.

V. Boyd: He was going to sleep...?

S. Garner: You don't probably know too much about it. When he be in somebody's home like the preacher..

V. Boyd: And he'd have to sleep in bed with someone else.

S. Garner: They had limited space.

M. Garner: The Mother Mabel's son and she didn't want him to have to share the bed with someone else.

V. Boyd: Now she wasn't worried about homosexuality?

M. Garner: Oh no, nothing like that.

V. Boyd: She just wanted her son to get royal treatment. Oh, I see.

M. And S. Garner: Right.

S. Garner: Most mother's do that, but she was behind him, whatever. She backed him to the hilt.

M. Garner: And the father. That was his step-father, wasn't it? [*S. Garner: His step-father.*] Brother Trone. He was the step-father. He was just the opposite. He could see right and he could see wrong. Like most parents, you can see if a child does something wrong and if he does something right, you reward him for the right, but you advise him for the... Now that was the type of person he was, Brother Trone.

S. Garner: I heard him a lot of times, you know.

M. Garner: But it seems that she was for him right or wrong.

S. Garner: But he was one fair fellow, I thought. He was a Sunday School superintendent. So everybody thought well of Brother Trone, the old man.

M. Garner: Brother Burt, it seems like in talking to some of the people that are leaving the congregation now, because of the trouble they are having now, they seem to think that his sermons, he fights people in his sermon. He doesn't just get up there and preach a sermon. The sermon is always, he's fighting some issue that is going on in the church and they got tired of that. I've talked to several people.

S. Garner: And visitors too. What did Novalene say?

M. Garner: I don't know. Tell him.

S. Garner: I don't know to tell. I know she said, "I've never heard Trone just preach a sermon. It looks like he's always throwing bricks at somebody." [*M. Garner: He always picks a fight.*] She was just visiting there one time. She said that's the type of sermon he preached. Well that's the kind of trouble he's having now. About the trouble, I don't know nothing. I don't even try to find out.

V. Boyd: Well, he's been fighting most of his life for one reason or another. [*All laugh.*] It's kind of natural by this time.

S. Garner: By this time. Right. I went down to Crockett Lemay Church of Christ the other night, on the back, on a speaker lecturing, he sat there in the back, nobody sitting beside him. I sat down and reached my hand over and shook his hand. And usually he always has a big smile on his face, but he just sit there and didn't shake nobody's hand unless they just made him shake it. I thought one time that he must be kind of, you know, cuckoo.

M. Garner: Who is that? [*S. Garner: Brother Trone.*] Oh, he's just getting old and senile like we are.

V. Boyd: In all fairness, I really think that there is some truth, not to senility, I don't know about that. But I think, at his age, he's bound to wear out a little bit.

S. Garner: Right.

V. Boyd: He's not got the enthusiasm that he had as a young man. You know, you get tired.

S. Garner: I know you used to see him with smile on his face, he'd say, "Oh, it's good to see you." "Good to see you, Brother Trone." But he's changed. But like you said, old age, I guess, has a lot to do with it. I know it does me, but I try not to lose that. If I lose that it's all I got.

M. Garner: Brother Burt...

V. Boyd: Boyd.

S. Garner: It's Boyd.

M. Garner: Brother Boyd, I think in the black Churches of Christ, I should say Church of Christ, leave the "s" off of it, a lot of the trouble stem from a lack of education. People are becoming more educated now and are learning the different types of languages and the root words and everything. They are more able to divide the word and I think that lets us have more stability in the church because we don't have all

the questions behind of what our ministers when our leaders used to say, “This is wrong,” and “This is wrong.” We’d be questioning. But today our leaders are more educated. They’re more able to lead. They have the ability to get along with people and we don’t have the turmoil in the church we used to have. I think that’s because of education. And more of your congregation is educated too.

S. Garner: Yeah, that’s was what I was going to say. Education is a big part in the communication and if you don’t have - like I say most of your kids, black or white, have an eighth grade education and up - and if you can’t communicate with them then you really can’t teach them.

V. Boyd: In all fairness just to build on this when you look back at the fifties and that’s just the early days of the Civil Rights movement, segregation, and the impact of segregation was very hard in those earlier days. And the elders, Brother John Holt and Sammie and others, of course, Sammie, I know, had a college education, [*S. Garner: Yes.*] but they did not have an education by and large to understand what that judge was saying. When they held up the Bible and say this is what we believe and the judge says, “I understand you believe the Bible, all of you believe the Bible, but if you are going to be a legal entity in the state, you’ve got to have to have some bylaws because you are an ecclesiastical organization.” That’s an educational concept. And I believe that the elders were a little unprepared for that. [*M. Garner: They were.*] I think education was a factor in that.

S. Garner: Brother Manuel didn’t have any education. He was a good Bible student. He put himself into...

V. Boyd: To learning it.

M. Garner: Self-educated.

S. Garner: Like you say there that neither one, even Samuel Holt – he had a degree in Bible.

V. Boyd: No, none of them had degrees in Bible. He went to Tennessee A and I.

S. Garner: Yeah, A and I. Right

V. Boyd: I don’t know what in.

S. Garner: He had college work, but he didn’t have no degree. So well, Sammie was the highest in education. He wasn’t really able to talk with the judge or explain himself to the jury on [*V. Boyd: On that issue.*] Right. So Trone didn’t have too much education, but he had, I guess, some people who were backing him that did have a college degree. Like Wilcox, Wilcox, he advised him on a lot of those things. I don’t know what education he had, but I know he had a good education.

V. Boyd: Let’s go back to one other issue and that is these out of town people that came in, these bigwigs. How many times did they come? I know Keeble came one time.

S. Garner: One time.

V. Boyd: I understand that they were having the national lectureship in Indianapolis when this fight was going on and they asked all of the people, all the bigwigs, from Indianapolis to come up and help solve this problem. Is that when they came to town?

S. Garner: No, well, they probably came then too, but they, from time to time, was here.

V. Boyd: For a Gospel Meeting or this kind of thing.

S. Garner: On one occasion or another. Some of them was invited specially [*V. Boyd:* ...to help solve the problem?] yeah, to help solve.

V. Boyd: Like who?

S. Garner: I know Winston was invited and Levi Kennedy and Nate Hogan.

V. Boyd: Who would invite them?

S. Garner: Oh, who, now I couldn't tell you.

V. Boyd: Elders? Or the preacher, Trone?

M. Garner: If I make no mistake here, they were invited by Brother Trone.

S. Garner: Trone, I believe. Yeah, I don't think elders. They didn't have that much confidence.

M. Garner: And the reason because Brother Trone used to go from house to house and talk about these old, ignorant elders and, in fact, they met at my house one time.

V. Boyd: Who is they?

M. Garner: Brother Kennedy, Brother Hogan, Brother Winston and Brother Trone and they were talking about the elders then.

S. Garner: Not Trone. [*M. Garner:* Wasn't Brother Trone?] Not at this time you're talking about when we lived on Green.

M. Garner: Green. No, no, not on Green, on Mayberry. They were our guests. They were talking about the elders at that time. And I would really think that maybe Brother Trone invited them. I'm not sure.

S. Garner: I'm pretty sure Trone, all right.

M. Garner: They were friends. And they all seemed to have the same beliefs.

S. Garner: Do you remember Brother, Brother?

M. Garner: Who?

S. Garner: Rose.

M. Garner: Brother Rose.

V. Boyd: Alonzo.

S. Garner: When he first came here, he moved here, brought his family and we were at a little thing that [*unclear*] was having, you know, when you invite your friends selling pots and pans and whatever, but anyway. Rose and I were talking and I told Rose, "Brother Rose, now you have a good reputation in the South. Throughout the South, they are crazy about you. Whatever you say almost is law." I said, "Don't

become involved in this issue. If you do it will kill you, just kill your reputation.” And he said, “I know, Brother, I know. I may advise somebody, but I’m ain’t going to sit with one side, you know.” But he did.

V. Boyd: How?

S. Garner: Protecting Trone.

V. Boyd: Rose? Alonzo?

S. Garner: Yes

V. Boyd: In what way? Where?

S. Garner: Yes, he did. In his sermons.

V. Boyd: Here in the city?

S. Garner: Uh-huh. I told him, “Don’t become involved. You can give advice, you know. Advice is free to whoever, but don’t become involved in whether this is right or this is wrong because it won’t be like that.”

V. Boyd: Why do you think that he became involved?

S. Garner: Well, I don’t know. I tell you the truth, it is pretty hard something to get around, to not become involved. I don’t think that you could hardly work in the city of Detroit with that going on and not become involved because you see so much how badly it needs to be [*V. Boyd: Addressed.*] Yeah, right. It was hurting a lot of people. And probably, I don’t know, a thing like that probably reaches into the white congregations. I don’t know. It could.

V. Boyd: Sure, sure.

S. Garner: Anything hurt one congregation, it hurts the other.

V. Boyd: Yes. Well, let me just run another idea by you. I’m getting the idea from John Flowers, [*S. Garner: Yeah.*] John R. and this is a little bit oversimplifying the issue [*S. Garner: Yeah.*] but what I’m trying to understand is what went on in Detroit, just as you said, has affected the church quite a bit for a very broad scheme, but John R. says that in the *Christian Echo* and in the pulpits of these leaders from out of town that most of them were saying up until the trial about everything they were reading in the *Gospel Advocate*, which would be virtually what the white church was saying, but once they came here, they tried to put Trone down. At least, they tried to make peace with the elders [*S. Garner: Yes.*] and not let him be the rebel, but once he went through all of this thing and won that they went home and they began to rethink all of this issue and they began to promote the role of the evangelist over the elders. Do you agree with that or not?

S. Garner: Well...

V. Boyd: It doesn’t sound like you would do that [*S. Garner: No.*] because they were supporting Trone while they were in town, [*S. Garner: While they were in town.*] but were they changing their minds? Did they used to say that the elders had authority?

S. Garner: Well, they, yes ..

V. Boyd: What do you mean?

S. Garner: In some cases. Now when this happened, at the time it was happening, they would teach that the elder had no authority to do this or do that.

V. Boyd: After the fight?

S. Garner: No, this was while the fight was going on. Say for selecting or firing. Now firing was one of the big issues. That an elder, they held that an elder had no rights to fire.

V. Boyd: That an evangelist had more control, authority.

S. Garner: That's right. You have to give me time to think of what transpired and what I'm giving you now may not be exactly what I'd really want to give if I was to think on it. But I think that those people who came here, which I know all of them knew the right way to preach a sermon, the right way to teach in a class. It seemed like to me that a thing that they thought might hurt them, they would kind of soft peddle it. Not exactly preach that it's wrong, you know. In fact, Levi told me one time. It was after his first trip to Africa and he baptized quite a few people. And some of those people, what you call it, they had chiefs. They had more than one wife. He said, "I don't know in studying the Bible then going to visit with these people, I don't know, there's right and wrong." I said, "Yeah, I know there's some right and wrongs there, but you have to know which teaching where you are coming from, you know." Like dancing. We find that Solomon in order they come on dancing.

V. Boyd: David.

S. Garner: David. This was a thing, I don't know if it was pleasure, but it was consoling. If a chief come home, you know, they sing and dance. Where would you put dancing? I said, "I'm not for dancing, not because of Bible said [unclear] condemns it because I don't know how to dance." Lot of those things, those guys knew was wrong, you know. So I don't know.

V. Boyd: Are you through?

S. Garner: Yes, I'm through.

V. Boyd: Let me just hit on this nail one more time. Do you ever know of some cases of where these key guys, Kennedy, Hogan, Winston, G.E. Steward. Do you ever know of a case where before the trial they preached the role of an elder?

S. Garner: Brother Boyd, I know they have. A lot of those guys that came in here to heal that thing preached on, you know, the role of an elder. That's not really hard to do. A preacher would be more inclined to preach on the role of an elder because it's so plainly written out. I don't think there's no room for doubt, but they would come in there was co-existence or co-ruling, that an elder has no right to just up and fire a preacher, you know, but they go and give scriptures on their belief, but as far as the qualifications of the elder, they were very [unclear] on that, but the hiring and firing. This was the point they were hot upon.

V. Boyd: They were sensitive about that issue.

S. Garner: But the qualifications. I always think that they used, like where the Bible says an elder must have or must do this, this is where they would come in with a different...

Side ends

Tape 3, Side 1

S. Garner: A lot of people would say that. I think the big issue wouldn't be for none of them at any time that they preached [*V. Boyd: The qualifications.*] Yeah. Like I say, the knowing how to get rid of an elder – I don't know how you go about it in your congregation to set an elder down or a preacher. But when I was young, I used to sit in on the meetings. I didn't have anything to say, it wouldn't have mattered anyway. But I know the way they used to do it in the South. They would call a preacher in and then they would go over with him the issue, what they would be meeting for, and then they would go over the reason of the meeting, which was to release him. And the big reason would be that he has become, for this congregation, not effective. He had not baptized a certain amount of people in a certain amount of time or the people have lost confidence in you for some reason and we think that it is time for you to seek another congregation. Not condemning him beyond [*V. Boyd: Effectiveness*] effectiveness, yeah. But to would release him, but to give him time to do so and so and so until you get yourself situated. After I grew up, I go over a thing and would read the Bible. Read Paul's charge then. This is the way you do it. It was the right way for the older people. When I'm an elder this is the way I want to work that.

V. Boyd: So you saw them do this at Pleasant Union?

S. Garner: Yeah, Pleasant Union.

V. Boyd: Who did they let go?

S. Garner: They let, this man's name, not Keeble. No, no, I can't think of his name. He was a young man.

V. Boyd: Wasn't your relative, Brother Taylor?

S. Garner: No, no, wasn't him. This was another one. I can't think of his name. That's my problem now – forgetting names, but I know.

V. Boyd: Did he continue to preach after that?

S. Garner: No, he went on.

V. Boyd: I mean did he continue to preach in some other pulpit?

S. Garner: Preach? Yeah, because they hadn't done no damage to him, you know. It's just like if someone in your congregation become accused of adultery - just accused - and you don't put forth no action to [*unclear*] and if he goes on, you still haven't withdraw from it, if you don't put it in the street and then it doesn't spread, but if it's in the street and it spreads then you have damaged that man. If he's damaged to the point that he's [*V. Boyd: Non-functioning.*] non-functioning, yeah. I've run across that a lot there too.

V. Boyd: Well, that was unusual for you as a young man to sit in on that kind of stuff, wasn't it?

S. Garner: Yeah. See at Pleasant Union they would never stop a young boy or young man from doing anything.

V. Boyd: Oh no, but what I'm saying is that you must have been interested in church affairs very young.

S. Garner: The elders and the deacons there, they tried, not just your daddy or your father, this was elder members of the church, they took a lot of interest in the young men and we'd have prayer meetings through the week and you got to bring in the prayer and the young man gets so he likes that and he won't miss it. So like Brother Seth Marlow, he was a deacon, and I went to see him when he got sick and he said, "Well," he said, "When one of my boys come to see me and I've never advised, never chastised you wrong. He'll tell you." Everything he tried to tell 'em was the truth, you know. So that's kind of the atmosphere that you came up out of. [*V. Boyd: That's good. That's good.*] And so when they had the mid-week Bible class, not Bible class, prayer meeting. We'd go, sing, pray. My prayer never did get above the ceiling. I never did learn how to pray. I can pray to God, me and him, but I mean in public. Don't ever call on me. [*Both laugh.*]

V. Boyd: What was the down payment for getting the Joseph Campau building?

S. Garner: No, I couldn't answer that.

V. Boyd: You were making some of those contributions, but do you remember what it was?

S. Garner: No.

M. Garner: I probably could get it for you.

V. Boyd: Well, I was just curious. You said Brother Bynum worked hard to get this down payment [*M. Garner: He did.*] and he did get it. I just wondered how much.

M. Garner: I don't know.

S. Garner: I wasn't here. I was in Europe.

V. Boyd: You were around when Bowser came to try to set up school in the building? [*S. Garner: Yeah!*] Tell me what you remember about him?

S. Garner: I remember Brother Bowser as being a wonderful old fellow. He, Brother Bowser, I think he saw the need for educate, educating the young men. And I'm so sorry he didn't get to live to see, maybe be able not to need money all the time. To put an idea into action. I remember one time Brother Bowser was over to the "john," you know, in the other building and he came in. This fellow was discussing talking on tongues. They were talking about talking on tongue. And this brother was discussing and talking on tongue. And anyway Brother Bowser came in and they were talking. And I said, "What do you say? What do think about talking in tongues?" He said, "Nothing wrong with talking in tongues." He said, "Nothing wrong with it. If I come in here and I preach a sermon in tongue and all of you don't know nothing, but English, then what have I done. I haven't given you nothing." He said, "Talking in tongue would sure be Hell to interpret." Talking in tongue, you know, is sure hard to communicate. If you listen or hear and you can't understand what you're saying, you can't communicate with nobody else. He said, "Nothing wrong with talking in tongue." He didn't know how. [*Both laugh.*]

V. Boyd: Let me just run another theory by you. [*S. Garner: Yes.*] Brother Keeble and Brother Bowser were young men together in the church in Nashville around 1900. They had a hard way to go, both of

them. [S. Garner: *Oh yes.*] Brother Bowser tried to work with white people. He tried to get them interested in Christian education and he had his schools and he got some money, but nothing like anything he needed, [S. Garner: *Nothing like, no.*] so he finally gave up on white folks. And decided that he would serve the Lord in his poverty with whatever the Lord brought him. [S. Garner: *Yes That's pretty well accurate.*] Hogan, Winston, Kennedy, Stewart – they were his pupils. [S. Garner: *Right.*] Do you think he, in that sense, gave them a negative attitude toward white people and therefore white elders? In other words is he the source of the underlying problem, if you want to say, that kind of surfaced at Joseph Campau?

S. Garner: No. Did you say [*unclear*]

V. Boyd: I'm just trying to go back to the question that I asked you before, why these key guys, what was their attitude before they came to town and did they change their mind during the trial? Did they say something else about elders that they did not say before? But what I'm hearing from you is that all throughout the difficulties they were not changing their minds? They were pro-evangelists. [S. Garner: *Yes.*] And I'm asking did they get from Bowser this idea of pro-evangelist and anti-elder? Did they get it from Bowser?

S. Garner: I don't believe so. Maybe so, I'm not going to give too much comment on that because Hogan told me that he never made a promise that he hated he made it so bad as on Brother Bowser's deathbed, he promised him that he'd see that the [V. Boyd: *The Echo*] *Echo* would work. He said that was the onliest promise he's made. And he said, "Sometimes I still think that same way because it has caused me so much trouble." Because of getting somebody to really put themselves into it, you know. I don't believe that they drew too much of that from [*unclear*] white people. I would be tempted to say no.

V. Boyd: Again John Flowers put this seed in my brain and I just keep working with it. I'm just trying to figure out if John was right. John was scarred by the events of Joseph Campau, I know that.

S. Garner: John was a very energetic young man. I would say that the trouble at Joseph Campau helped John R. more than it hurt him. [V. Boyd: *Helped him?*] Yeah. Because he did a lot of studying. He is a self-made Bible man. [V. Boyd: *Yes.*] He did a lot of studying and he come into sessions and biblically he'd quote his Bible knowledge and I mean, but he wasn't before all of that much of a Bible man. That why I say this really [V. Boyd: *Spurred him on.*] because he is very good now, very good in the Bible. [V. Boyd: *Yes.*] But I think this caused him to really, really study.

V. Boyd: Do you hear what I'm saying? John tells me that the trial at Joseph Campau was a very defining event in the black church. That before this all of the key leaders were pro-elder, but once Trone won, they changed their minds. [S. Garner: *Yea.*] So they went home and became pro-evangelist and I'm not hearing that from you.

S. Garner: No, you won't because I couldn't make that statement.

V. Boyd: Even I'm not hearing it from you in the sense that you're telling me that when these key guys came to your house and you entertained them and they were talking in terms of the evangelists [S. Garner: *Sure.*] and they were putting down elders then [S. Garner: *Uh-hum*] and that was not something there were working their way through, they seemed to be settled in their conviction.

S. Garner: Yep, that's true. I think that was a little selfishness, I believe.

V. Boyd: Well, it was protecting their own interest. I can understand that. But you know when people are trying to work their way through an idea they'll say maybe it's this and maybe it's that. They'll kind of

do this kind of thing. [*S. Garner: Uh-huh.*] But that's not what I'm hearing in the conversation you're telling me that they had in your home. [*S. Garner: Yeah.*] They were pro-evangelist if I can put it that way. [*S. Garner: Right.*] And they were supporting Trone during the controversy. [*S. Garner: During the controversy.*] They were not changing their mind.

S. Garner: Yeah. It was already stirring in them.

V. Boyd: So what I'm trying to say is, well, where did they get this? And all of them were students that were formed in their ideas by Bowser.

S. Garner: Well, I don't know. I don't know whether to comment on that or not, but, excuse me [*clears throat*], they probably was advised by Bowser on things. I think this was a problem. He wasn't like Keeble. Like Keeble did, he took these men under his arms and he carried them out into the country preaching. Well, Bowser didn't do that to them. What they got from Bowser was through advice, and I don't know how far that would reach. Levi and [*V. Boyd: Kennedy*] Kennedy. There's is most self-made. They didn't receive from Bowser what John Mayberry received, not John Mayberry, received from, like the Bible School they have down in Texas, like Mayberry and them and that was the place where they got their degree, where? Eastern New Mexico. Bowser was not operating like that. He was not operating like Keeble did in Nashville. Time and time again maybe it was over the telephone or maybe they went personally to see Bowser or they called him on different issues they run into.

V. Boyd: Now Hogan was his adopted son. So he had a very close relationship with him. But Brother Levi told me that he started preaching after Bowser came o Muskogee, Oklahoma, or someplace, maybe, Chicago. Bowser heard him preach and he said, "You're going to go to Hell if you don't spend the rest of your life preaching." In other words, you are that good and the church needs good teachers, good preachers. [*S. and M. Garner: Yeah, yeah.*] But the influence of Bowser was very critical on him and certainly it was on Winston and certainly it was on G.E. Steward because he baptized Steward.

S. Garner: I think that Levi and [*unclear who he means*] had more influence on Winston than Bowser did because he was with them.

V. Boyd: I'm just trying to understand, you know, the lay of the land. If you'll allow me, just one more time. [*S. Garner: Go right ahead.*] Just one more time. Keeble, as a young man, understood that black people didn't have any money, didn't have any power. All the money and all the power rested with the white church and he shamelessly, shamelessly, went after white people, courted them, stroked their ego, accepted their paternalism, but he got money. [*M. Garner: He did.*] He was an Uncle Tom in the worse degree. [*Garner laughs.*] Well now, Bowser could not do that. Bowser had more sense of self-worth that he could not humiliate himself [*S. Garner: Sure.*] to white people just to get money. [*M. and S. Garner: Uh-huh.*] Bowser was of a totally different spirit. Of that day, he was the black power movement in the church, so to speak [*S. Garner: In the church.*] 'cause he was trying to give dignity not only to himself, but he was trying to raise up some kids [*S. and M. Garner: Sure, sure.*] who would have dignity and not being ashamed of who they were because that's how God made. So he was trying to give dignity to human beings. [*S. Garner: Lead them.*] But he tried to work with whites all the way through the Silver Point and that's in 1920. He left in 1918, but it went on for two years beyond, [*S. Garner: 1920.*] but he left in 1918, shortly after World War I. But when he saw that the white people were not going to support him with enough money to run a school, he gave up on white folks. Not that he didn't believe they couldn't be saved or anything. He just simply was not going to go the route of Keeble in order to get money. He would not humiliate himself as a human being. And so what I'm trying to get at is, he laid the groundwork for a whole different mindset. Keeble went one way; Bowser went another, [*S. Garner: Another*] but these key people that had been the most influential leaders in the church in the next generation. They were called the "Big Four." – [*S. and M. Garner: Uh-huh.*] Keeble, [*He means*

Hogan.] Winston, Kennedy and G.E. Steward. These are the people who have given birth to the idea of the evangelist being the strong figure in the local church and the elders being under. They came from Bowser. They didn't come from Keeble. [*S. Garner: They didn't come from Keeble.*] Keeble was saying more like what the white church was saying. He had to do it to get his money for NCI. But I'm trying to figure out what did the role of the issue in Detroit, this battle here, how did all of this fit together. I know I'm saying the same thing again and again, but what John Flowers planted in my mind is that what happened in Detroit affected the whole brotherhood. I'm not hearing in the conversations with you, I'm not hearing that Detroit had that much of an impact. These guys already had their minds made up about the role of the evangelist [*S. Garner: Oh yeah, right.*] so they were not waffling back and forth. They knew what the Bible says about the qualifications of elders. We're not talking about that, but it's who's the top dog.

S. Garner: [*Laughs.*] Who's top dog.

M. Garner: Power, power.

S. Garner: That was the issue.

V. Boyd: But these guys came to town to say that the evangelist is the key figure in the local church. Keeble, I can't imagine Keeble saying that, but you said he did.

S. Garner: Yes, I know. I don't know why he said it. I'm telling you I was just shocked to hear him say that because I didn't think he'd ever say that.

M. Garner: Did Brother Keeble ever have any established congregation in the South?

S. Garner and V. Boyd: Jackson Street.

M. Garner: Well, did they have elders?

S. Garner: Yeah.

V. Boyd: Yes.

M. Garner: I wonder why he said that here then.

S. Garner: Well, he sure said it. I don't know if he meant it or not, but he was one of the last big guns that came to talk to Trone. Tried to thrash it out. I just knew Brother Keeble, I knew what he was going to set upon, but....

V. Boyd: He never saw a qualified elder.

S. Garner: No, he "never saw a man qualified to be an elder." I don't know why he would say that, but he did.

M. Garner: Well, I just wonder if that meant that the blacks hadn't qualified themselves.

S. Garner: No. If the Bible said you should or will then you can. Paul wouldn't give somebody a role that they couldn't play.

V. Boyd: In the sense, when Paul would make an elder and sometimes in a very short period of time after he converted them [*S. Garner: Yeah.*] they were obviously not perfect in all ways, but they had something....

S. Garner: Well, maybe that's what I missed.

V. Boyd: Maybe that's what Keeble was saying.

S. Garner: That's probably what he meant.

M. Garner: He didn't leave any room for growth. We're supposed to grow. That means the elders and everyone. They can't come in just perfect, only Christ was perfect, wasn't he?

S. Garner: Yeah, that's probably what he meant. I probably misinterpreted that, but I've always thought of that.

M. Garner: Brother Boyd, may I ask you a question? Do you think that elders should have children?

V. Boyd: The Bible teaches that clearly.

M. Garner: And after they become grown you're not responsible for them, are you?.

V. Boyd: I don't think so.

M. Garner: Uh-huh. You bring them up while they're in the home.

V. Boyd: Pretty hard of us parents to have control over our adult children – what they do, their decisions. Did you ever hear Trone make a big deal out of what Keeble said? In other words, did he try to capitalize on it?

S. Garner: No, no. He didn't capitalize off of that, that particular statement. But Trone he preached that the elders didn't have the hiring and firing thing, but he talked that an elder and a preacher's office was equal. [*V. Boyd: Equal.*] You can't take that away from him.

V. Boyd: And Trone is pretty famous with his majority rule.

S. Garner: Majority rule, oh yeah.

V. Boyd: The congregation, the majority is what controls.

S. Garner: Yeah.

M. Garner: And the courts believe in that too.

V. Boyd: Yes, he got that point across because he could show that the majority of people signed on his side versus signing on the elders' side.

S. Garner: He had to show that.

V. Boyd: The courts treated that as a way of determining who has authority. Well, I don't know what else to ask. You've helped me to at least think through some of these things.

S. Garner: Well I'm glad you came on this issue

M. Garner: You enlightened us on a lot we didn't know.

S. Garner: Brother Keeble preaching there. Maybe I was wrong. Looking at it from the standpoint now, I was wrong.

V. Boyd: Well, it just seemed to be so totally out of character for Keeble to make that kind of a statement.

S. Garner: Or to really come to that understanding, you would have to know what he was saying before in order to work up to that. [*V. Boyd: The context.*] The context, yeah. And the idea was that no man is born an elder that you have to grow to some of these things. [*V. Boyd: Desiring it.*] Desiring, right. Well, I have to be careful about that. But that's one thing about elders I held against Brother Keeble. Well, it is possible that he had never seen an elder qualified before he was ordained.

V. Boyd: John Flowers, I talked with him extensively. He was saying that virtually when Keeble came to town, Keeble saw all that house full of people and he did not address the issue that why they wanted him to come. He saw some people he might get some money for NCI. [*All laugh.*] And so he spent the afternoon really raising money for NCI [*S. Garner: He did. He sure did.*] and he did not want to get mixed up in a local problem. [*All laugh.*]

S. Garner: He was a smart cookie. Wasn't he just come back from [*V. Boyd: Africa.*] Africa. Yeah. But I can understand that point, man is not born an elder. And he could be ordained with a lacking in a lot of qualifications.

V. Boyd: That's the only way anyone can be ordained as an elder, but they have to have certain qualities and they have to be desiring and they have to have been proven through a deaconship or something like that. Well, anyway. Anything else you want to add?

M. Garner: Are you going to write a history?

V. Boyd: My long term goal is to write a history of the church in Michigan. That's what I'd like to put down.

M. Garner: Sister Ashworth may be able to get some material for me. She taught Black History at Wayne State and she compiled a lot of materials and some of it was concerning the churches. And I'll call her and see if she can put something together for me and I'll mail it to you. She's been ill and she doesn't want you to come over to talk with her, she said. She's had a stroke and anything and when she's feels like going upstairs. She may be able to find some things.

V. Boyd: She really doesn't get around very much?

M. Garner: No, She doesn't get around an awful lot.

V. Boyd: I knew I hadn't heard much.....*Tape ends*

End of Side 1. Side 2 is an unidentified meeting unrelated to the interview. Quality too poor and voices too far from microphone to be transcribed.

