

Al Anderson

Where: Al's Shoe Repair

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Interviewer: Emily Hilliard

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Al Anderson is an R&B singer and shoe repairman from Osage, West Virginia. He grew up in the Scotts Run area outside of Morgantown, where Osage is located. He was a member of Billy Ward's group The Dominoes, and says he sings lead on their recording of, "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve." He is featured on the *Songs of Scotts Run* CD and is active with the Scotts Run Museum. In this interview, Al speaks about his life growing up in Osage, his work as a musician, and his role in and history of the Scotts Run community.

AA: Al Anderson
EH: Emily Hilliard

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AA: [speaking of coming back from work as a shoeshine as a kid, and calling up to his dad and asking him what was for dinner] On that table, then the finish of it was... and Velma made pies. So now, if your pockets were here it went down to there, and you may be down to there. You see (laughs) because I mean those pies are so good and daddy's probably got some lemon and some apple and some pumpkin, you know, and I mean and-- he probably had about half a dozen pies so the moral of that story was, don't call dad to ask him what we had for dinner because you're gonna get the whole story of it you know, and when they mention water and butter and salt and pepper, you're in trouble, you know. That means when you come home at night, cause you know when you come home, you know, you're gonna run and go down to the Bunny Hop--that's where we all went down and partied after we get, come home and change clothes and get ready to go to the Bunny Hop. So but wants to let you know, before you go to the Bunny Hop, you know, you drop see... and we would cash that money in at the Warner Theatre, and we'd have all that money and they would cash that in and whatever how many dollars I'd have, so before you went to the Bunny Hop, you had to give some up some of those nickels, well you had bills then, you know. But see if you had 30 dollars, 40 dollars, well you're gonna leave about 15, 20 dollars there. (laughs)

EH: Because you had to pay for the credit?

AA: Yeah, yeah. I mean my dad worked in the mines, he was like 72 when he retired from the mine here, and then in the 1950s, so my dad would be about 136 years old if he was still living today. But he worked in the hard time of the mine, see, a lot of, later on the mines got safer and things but he worked probably in the 20s and 30s and on up to the 50s. I was in Junior High School when he retired from the mine. And at 72, I thought he was about the same age as the guys that he worked with. He was like 30 years older than those guys, and looked in better shape than most of 'em. Cause see, he wasn't a drinker and he wasn't, you know, like a lot of the guys... I was telling you, like the guys would be down here and on Saturday, and everybody dressed. I mean they had nice suits and... but nobody, nobody would not have a shine on their shoes! Nobody! Because see if you wanted to take a girl out, you know what that dad looked at--was your shoes. You see?

EH: Right!

AA: If your shoes were ugly, there's a good chance you might be ugly too! So you were not gonna take that girl out. See dad didn't look at all... you know how your hair was done, nothing like that. But see today, people don't even worry about shoes, you know, they've got, you know you go there, you've got, you don't even have shoes on. You've got those, those old things that just wrap...

EH: Crocs?

AA: Right. And so it's a whole different ball game. But no, no, your shoes was it!

EH: You have some nice shoes on.

AA: Yeah. Well you see I put that, I usually wear my boots, you know, but I put these shoes on because you were coming today and I didn't... but then I was gonna wear another pair. Tomorrow I'll have some other... but I got my work stuff on. But see that was another thing. Like leather shoes-- everybody wore leather shoes. See today they sell this crap and I get so much of it, you know. Like right now-- see I don't have... business hasn't started big yet, getting soles and heels and things like that on shoes, because they

went out and spent that money at Christmas time to buy this junk. Now starting here, probably close around now, I'll start getting all the shoes in there that have already fell apart. "Al, these just kinda pulled apart." Yeah! (laughs) yeah! You ain't telling me nothing, because they're not making 'em worth a nickel because they know, there ain't no where to get 'em fixed at! You know, there ain't no shoe repair shops! From me the next shop here would be outta Pittsburgh, you know, there used to be a shop...

EH: There isn't one in Morgantown?

AA: There's one in Morgantown, Charlie, who's a friend. We both have been in business about the same time. But Charlie sells clothes and you know, dresses and all, and he makes their own handbags and sells 'em everywhere. So shoe repair to them is just kind of side line. Now they'll work on some nice, you know, clean doctor and lawyer shoes that people, but he ain't workin' on nothing like that. He ain't workin' on nothing like that. So about 80% of my business, Charlie don't want... I got an Al's book over there. Al's book. Anything Al wants, you know. I mean I pay-- whatever the wholesale price is but he makes sure, cause they don't want... and I mentioned it to him once time I said Charlie, you kinda want to make sure I stay in business, don't you, because you don't want none of my customers! And they had a smile about it you know, because it was the truth! We don't want none of your customers, man. And anything you want from over here, you can get. If you need soles, you need some glue, whatever you need, you can get it. But see he's in that kind of thing where he'll take in nice shoes, he'll put some soles... I go in that back room you know... I just go in the back, whatever I need, I don't have to stop at the counter or anything. Everybody knows me and I just go back and if he's busy, I'll just get whatever I need if I need a pair of soles, whatever, you know. He just marks it down, and if he's not there, one of the young ladies will mark it down. But we have a good kind of relationship because a lot of times, I'll order not much more than I need when I got to a supply place, so I don't have no big stock of anything, and Charlie has you know, he has big stock of stuff and sometimes like that purse right there, I needed a piece of leather, and see it's matched up there. See because it was tearing at the top, so I wrapped it with leather and I sewed the two pieces down on the bottom and made her... now she's got a nice handle, you see. But he's got a big box over there from all those handbags he makes, and I got another piece before but it didn't match as well, so that was on Wednesday, I went and got me a nice piece of leather.

EH: Is that bag, the rest of it leather?

AA: I...probably not. But see, it's a good looking bag.

EH: Yeah.

AA: But now those straps are leather.

EH: Yeah, that'll last a long time.

AA: But this here not, but that front of it and all. See that's their selling point with that. You got that. But yeah, you know, everything. Like I say, I started in 1948, I got a chance to do, to come down and shine shoes. But I didn't... people ask me, well did the man kinda teach you? See, you see all the nationalities down there you know. It really was like a Hungarian man. Wasn't nobody teaching nobody their trade, not in those days! You see, because they don't want, you know, nobody, you know to do what they do! You brought that trade from the old country, you know, so you don't have no thought of teaching somebody. But when I went to D.C. and California-- I went to California first, that's when I was... did "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve" Billy Ward and the Dominoes. I was gone for 20 years, and I did all kinds of music, you know, everywhere. And wherever Al went, nobody could outdo Al on that microphone either! (laughs)

EH: Oh yeah?

08:20

AA: I would always have different challenges where... here I am with Billy Ward and the Dominoes. I'm one of the 2 people selected out of all the black newspapers in the country, now I'm one of the two selected to come to Hollywood, California. And so I was out there, I didn't go to clubs too much anyway, and so a guy was in school with me and he was-- he had a little band here also, and he went to California and then became a preacher. So he'd go down to a club, or he would go-- we'd go to the club and he'd go, but he wouldn't stay hardly no time. He would go and he would tell somebody there that the guy here from West Virginia wants to sing. And see, anytime you mention West Virginia, you know, oh that's the joke of the night. "Hey we got somebody from West Virginia here who wants to sing!" (laughs) Only took about 10 seconds for them fools to know, hey-- ain't nobody in this place can sing like that guy! So, and then when I was doing, when I came back, I did bar mitzvahs and weddings for 13 years. And there are some pictures, well you didn't... you weren't at the Met Theater were you?

EH: Uh-uh.

AA: So they played some of the things of the pictures that you know, the bat mitzvah girl, the little girl. See, they all, everybody-- the photographer would take all these pictures-- he would send me copies of the ones that the family took. So I would have these pictures of these little kids, you know, like the two little girls, you know, they wanted to dance with Al, you know, see their friends, "Oh, we got Al Anderson gonna be at our..." I mean we did like a hundred jobs a year. We did, you know, every weekend and on-- that's why I had like a strong voice because like during the summer time, we would do all 4-hour gigs. We would do a 4-hour gig Saturday afternoon, a 4-hour gig Saturday evening. Sunday, 4-hour gig Sunday afternoon, 4-hour gig Sunday evening. Hey, that's 16 hours, you know, and I'm the only singer. There's no other... that's why you know, the microphone-- I'm really hard on people when that microphone's not right, you know? I'm gonna dress you up really good if you mess with that.

EH: So what was the band?

AA: This band was called the Collegians (sp?). And they had been in, playing for 10, playing for a long time before... but I came back from California because I didn't get on that first trip because I had to go... a contract in Pittsburgh--there's a whole long story on that. But I didn't get to make the first trip with Billy Ward to go out... Billy Ward was in the far east--when I first went there, when.. before I even got there, I was--they sent me like a card from Japan, Okinawa, the Philippines, Hawaii, and Canada. And when they got to Bakersfield, they sent me a telegram. I was shining shoes over at Perry Brothers and got a telegram that said meet me at the train station on whatever day it was. And so but in the meantime I read on one of these jackets, somebody... all those guys came from a little town like this. You know? They wasn't like... in all the big heavyweights that sang in those groups, most of them started with Billy Ward. So I had to get to Pittsburgh and break that contract, I rode that bus 7 days.

EH: To Bakersfield?

AA: I rode, I rode... no. I rode from Hollywood, California to Pittsburgh to break that contract, got back on that bus 2 hours later, back to California, but it was too late. I had that little contract in Pittsburgh. I shouldn't have said anything, but I read that jacket--they held up his money for some time because someone had a contract. And they saw a picture, you see, of this guy, so I didn't want to take that chance. So I rode up there 7 days. And when I went back it was too late to go on that trip. So I went to D.C.

EH: So wait, I'm confused. So this was to play with... to sing with the Collegians?

AA: No, no, I hadn't got to the Collegians yet. Billy Ward and the Dominoes. That's why I went out there to be with them. So I didn't make that trip. So I went to D.C. for about a year and a half and I was working in the shoe store. I worked at the hotel, like one of the houseman right there, you know, every floor had a houseman, and then I got a job across the street at a shoe store.

13:02

I worked there for about a year and a half. Now Billy Ward's in touch with me to come back to California. So I go back to California and then pretty soon, we were in a studio doing that song, "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve?" And that song still sells, you know, that's probably sold millions and millions of copies. So after we did that song... and actually I wasn't supposed to be the lead singer of that song, so we did the band played-- it was 2 songs, the band was played, you know a number of hours in the studio, and then the background singers, which I was one of them, we sang our part and then the lead singer who was over there waiting to do the lead on there--he couldn't get the song. And Billy Ward looked at me and said "Man, can you do that song?" And that's how I sang lead on that song.

EH: I didn't know that!

AA: Yeah, that's us, so I'm singing background and then I'm singing lead!

EH: On Billy Ward and the Dominoes, "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve"?

AA: On Billy Ward and the Dominoes, "What Are You Doing New Year's Eve."

EH: Wow.

AA: So after we did that, my brother called, and found out my dad was in the hospital. And all those men died from black lung in that time. And he never did come out of that hospital. So here, I just left and went to D.C. where my brother was, and we was coming back and forth to go to the hospital, we'd go to the hospital on like Friday and we'd leave back on Sunday. And he died the 3rd week. So, and I know Billy Ward and them said, where is that guy? You know, that sang (laughs) the song? And I never heard from them again, I just never heard from them again. And I came, like we came back here and after my dad died, I just stayed in D.C. at that time. And then people know--the owner of the shoe store-- his son was being bar mitzvahed. So all the guys that work at the stores-- they had like 7 stores-- everybody, they have all the... so we was all there at the bar mitzvah and someone knew I sang, so they wanted me to get up and sing a couple songs. Well, I got up and sang a couple songs and then about a half hour, someone came and said, Al the band's looking for you, you know. So those guys came and talked with me, and this guy named Jerome... now Jerome was like ohhh, he was it. In the contracts, "Must include Jerome, must include Jerome," you know? But Jerome did not want to do bar mitzvahs and weddings, see, they did a lot of sweet--they had just started in bar mitzvahs and weddings.

EH: This was in D.C.

AA: This was in D.C., yeah. So I practiced with them, practiced with them, you know, and the first gig that I did... see they didn't know Jerome wasn't gonna be there. So, and there's like about 500 people, you know, they're big, you know, and so we was all sitting up out in the big hall and the lady who was the bar mitzvah lady, she was checking all the tables and all, and all the other folks were on the other side doing hors d'oeuvres and stuff like that and Mike Pollock (sp?), he was the guy who did all the bookings and all, and he went over to the lady, you know, all the way at the end over there, and he was telling her that you know, that Jerome wasn't gonna be with the band and we got this guy, Al Anderson. From the top of her

lungs, "We don't want no Al Anderson!" You know? So you see (laughs). But you have to go through those challenges as well you know. But one thing you always have to know is who you are. See a lot of folks would have been so disrupted. They probably couldn't even sing that night. But after that night, I never heard Jerome's name again, you see. And then the contracts would be, "Must include Al Anderson, must include Al Anderson." And I would see that lady-- if you do a bar mitzvah, you would see that same family 2 or 3 bar mitzvahs later.

17:13

Because that's how that... it all works around there. So I would see that lady at different ones and every time I'd see her, she'd say, "Oh would you ever forgive me." I said... I mean, and then we'd always see each other a lot. But the bottom line with that was, here I am out there in Hollywood, California with Billy Ward and The Dominoes, but not only that, I was with a band here called the Fabians (sp?). These guys were all Morgantown High guys, and how I start singing with them... Sherriff Wiston. And when I do my big... I'm gonna do my 60th--this is my 60th year. I'm gonna do my 60 year show here probably sometime, maybe June, July or whatever time...cause I want it to be BIG. Cause a lot of folks that know me around here, a lot of folks know me almost everywhere. But we did that other one at the Met Theater, but I don't think that's big enough to do what I want to do, but I want a place that's gonna be 1500 people. It would be there, whatever. But this band, the Fabians, they-- I got same on a Friday, I'm getting home, getting ready to go down to the Bunny Hop and my dad said, the Sherriff called. Oh man. You know. I ain't gonna have as much fun knowing that Sherriff called, and I don't know why he called me and dad didn't say I did anything bad, but he said the Sherriff called, and that's all your dad has to say. So I called him on Monday and he said, he said his son Dave, Ed and Keith Collins' cousins, had a band, heard I was a singer. Don't know how they ever... later on I found out in the service this guy that was in the service with me, you know you do a little singing you know, just to keep from work, you know, on the boat coming back from Germany. And Lawrence, and later on, it was like 30 years later, Lawrence was crossing the street over there, and I said Lawrence, did you ever tell... he said yeah, they was asking me 'cause one of the band guys, his dad worked for the state road. And Lawrence got a job on the state road during the summer time, and you know, being like in college you see, he would get a job during the summertime. And that's how I think they found out. And you know, I practiced with them and we sang for like 3 and a half years, and I mean these guys were so good, we could go... but I knew, 1962, they graduated college and I'm graduating out of here, you see, because I knew they were not gonna go on the road. I didn't even think they would play a lot more. So that's when I was reading about Billy Ward and I sent a picture and a tape and that's how I got out of...

EH: And the Fabians, were they Morgantown High guys?

AA: Morgantown High guys.

EH: So were they white guys?

AA: All white guys. All white guys. And all you need to know-- in Collegians-- all white guys. As a matter of fact, when I tell people sometime, like 80% or even more, that all the music I've done, and that's including churches and all, I'm about the only one of my persuasion. When I go around here to sing at all the different places I go, mostly country places anyway, you know, but I'm the only one of my persuasion. When I go to churches, I'm the only one of my persuasion in most cases. You know, well sister Sarah (Sarah Boyd Little) is in the group with us, but most of the places I would go, like when in Farmington, I did a show up there Sunday evening, you know, I did my whole CD up at Mr. Fluharty's church, and every once in a while he'll have his daughter call and say, want Al to come up and want him to sing an hour. You know, so I sang all my songs and... but yeah both was all white bands. And see, and with the Fabians, there's a lot of-- we all traveled in the same car. There never was like 2 cars. We all, we had a

trailer in the back, all the equipment in, we traveled. And all the places we went, everything was segregated in those days, and these guys would be more concerned about the girls, like this... and Al is thinking, am I gonna be able to eat, you know, wherever we stop. And that kinda thing. But see they don't know that. The stories I could tell, you know, these guys would never have a thought that what's on Al's mind. But you see, the whole kinda thing was, inside that club, see, there's nobody like Al. Al was it in the club! Even when I go to clubs up in here-- nobody--they got the country bands that's always playing when I get there and sometimes I feel a little bit kinda... 'cause they have the house band. But I've been going to those places for 25 years, so they all know my songs. So when I get to the place and there, people, some be, "Al man, you gotta get in there, man, you gotta, you gotta liven it up!" You know, you know (laughs).

22:04

They ready, they wanna dance now, you know! And I used to go to this place down at Grafton and the place would be jam-packed and the band's up there playing and somebody is singing and I used to try to kinda slide in there the easiest way I can, but as soon as they was, I mean they all started clapping, you know, and the band's already playing up there and it make me feel like so... but you know, it's like the blessing that you have and the blessing that you give, because people, they recognize what you do and how well you do it. So and that's what it's been like the whole time that I've sang somewhere. And then those bar mitzvahs and weddings-- I had a rendition of "Hava Nagila." I could hit that one note up there-- and I got a picture over there.

EH: Can you still do it?

AA: I still can do it. Well, when we did Met Theatre, this is like, you know I'm in my 60, that was my 60th year, this was 2 years ago, and these guys in the band, we do-- I don't know if you ever heard my CD, you know, but it's on there-- "Georgia," we do, and that was the last song we did at the theater. And everybody was surprised, even the band, "Man how could Al hit that note, man?" You know. Oh yeah, I hit that note, I hit that note. But Hava Nagila, there's a picture over there, Eve [Faulkes] took pictures of all that too. Now "Hava Nagila," they dance, they dance and dance and dance and when it comes down to like the last part of it you know, the band is just still playing a little bit, but when I get to that "Hava Nagila" note, I'm going (sings) "Uru achim, uru achim... Venis mecha!" And I hit that high note and people, they're touching each other going, "watch, watch, watch" you know (laughs). Because even like the cantor and the rabbi, see they wait 'til the 3rd set before they go, but everybody would wait to hear that... I could do "Hava Nagila" and just go home, you know? And they could hire me for just for that." But...

EH: Had you been to synagogues before you started singing...

AA: No, no, no. I had no, no, no, no... but it's mostly regular songs and just a few Jewish songs that you do. But I just perfect that. The same with "Georgia" you know. You just, I just, you know, you put a note in there, you know. And at the theater everybody was like wow man! Man that was... as old as that guy-- he can still hit them notes, you know! (laughs) but that's the blessing also. Because the Met Theater guys, see they know. They fixed that mic, even put my name on the mic, that I'm gonna be using for that evening. And like when I go to these places to play, almost all, like I say, they're all country places, but the country band, they know all my old-time rock 'n' roll songs, but I had a guy up at the Blacksville area, and I told you, I'm the only one of my persuasion in those places and you have about, you have about oh may 6 or 8 people like open mic, they'll come up and do a song. And then the last one that sang, you know, then I'm coming on to sing an hour. And the mic is fine. Well, as soon as I get ready to sing, I mean here's this guy. You would think he's on a racetrack. He was running around and he got about half way around there, I said don't you touch that mic!

25:53

And he stopped you know, like he couldn't even believe what he was hearing. He just kinda froze there. Hey-- he froze for a minute, you know. And I think about the folks that went home and I said, you hear what he told that guy? You see, if somebody in D.C. knew me, especially music-wise, you know, and they say, you know Al Anderson? Don't touch that mic.

EH: (laughs)

AA: You see, because the only way... and I told them at the theater, I said now, there's 3 things about being able to keep your voice, even before I sing "Georgia," I think. I said the first thing is, a friend of mine, we worked in the shoe store together, named Chili Rafor (sp?) and he said Al, don't take those drinks, because every 45 minutes on the break, and I worked the clubs every night. Don't take those drinks. So, I didn't take those drinks and I never smoked cigarettes. And the other thing is, the microphone. See, I never played an instrument, I never wrote a song. I only thing I knew, me and that microphone, see, we are one. Me and that microphone, see. When that microphone is right, we good, everything's good. But leave it alone. Once it gets... you get people especially in the churches and like you know, we were talking about how we raised all that money for those kids in Uganda-- you probably heard some about it you know, and sometime, you get these, I don't know what they think they're doing, you get these so-called mechanics, they want to be turning up and down, turning... no. You're not gonna do that. And at a church see, I haven't been, that kinda, now the other night up there, the microphone was perfect. Didn't have to worry about nothing. But just me. But sometimes when the whole group sings, you have a little bit of a, and then some churches, they think that you don't hardly turn it up at all. And so I want the microphone right. So I haven't been like as boisterous as I would be ordinarily, but I'm not gonna let that go on too much, you know, even at the church. I'll let you know in the beginning, look man, when I tell you the microphone's good, leave it alone. Go sit down.

28:18

EH: (laughs)

AA: You don't have to touch it anymore. 'Cause they think when you get a little higher, they'll turn it down some. No. You ruin-- and a lot of kids that be singing in choirs and things like that, you ruin their voice if you keep messing with that mic. The microphone speaks for itself. It don't need you to speak for it, you know. So that's the one thing, that's the third thing is the microphone has to be right. And you couldn't sing because one time I got hoarse. Now if I'm singing at a bar mitzvah for 4 hours, if I get hoarse in you know, say in about 2 hours into it, then what are you gonna do? You ain't got no other singers! You know? So no, the microphone has to be right and I make sure of that and if I have to chew you out, that's what I'm gonna do! And I don't care where I'm at. I'm gonna let you know, because people wanna hear you, and they ain't got no business messing with the microphones so that was a thing that I had to deal with.

EH: Can I ask you about your family-- your parents?

AA: Yeah well my, let's see, my dad was like 55 when I was born. And... we had a mom also and we... she... I was about 10 years old when she died up on the hill. And then my dad, my mom, my natural mom, she... my dad and her was when I was born--that's why, my dad was like 55 when I was born. And my brother, he's a year and 11 months older than me. And in those days, you know, young women you know, that the... well actually even before my mom. So pretty much my dad, my brother and myself... she, my mom as a young woman, probably maybe 20 years old at that time, she went to Dayton, Ohio and she lived there for all the rest of her life. But she would come and see you know me and my brother and we

would like go to Pittsburgh, we would like go someplace, we would have a whole kinda weekend together and then she would go back to Dayton, Ohio. But there was a lot of things like that, you know, in those days, where a younger woman that... but my dad took like real good care of us. We were really blessed to have a dad that... he wouldn't... many of the families, you know, their dad drank real bad or doing that kind of thing. My dad wasn't like that. He stayed up on that hill and he wasn't... he wasn't someone that came out, so we were blessed that way. And then myself, I have 7 youngsters.

31:31

5 from here, the lady I was married to here, and then the lady I was married to here and then a young lady in D.C. that we had a daughter. But then I was leaving D.C., going back to California, but I didn't know that the daughter was gonna be born. So when I got to California I kinda found that out and when I left D.C. to come here, to come back to D.C. to... the lady friend that I was with, as a matter of fact, she was about 8-months pregnant when I first came back from there and I stayed with the one where the young lady from D.C. for a long time, but the daughter in California I never stayed with, but they got in touch with me, but she was I guess around 37, at that time, around there, but the sister called and she was questioning me about if I was in a certain place at a certain time. I asked her was that Deborah, you know, she says no, you know, 'cause I knew what she was questioning me, you know. But and then-- I never, we never met yet, but she was so excited and her husband, 'cause they had had a couple kids also, and but... I had a big, water in my bedroom back then. All my documents and things--this knucklehead that lived upstairs, he went and took all the tar all off the-- you could see outside. But he didn't put no cover on it or anything. So here that morning, I mean it was like it was rain falling. And the big, one of the big things came down on my bed. It must... that you know, just a big piece. It would have killed me. And you know, hit right on the bed. And I lost all my, a lot of my document things, you know. So me and that daughter, and they were so excited about getting in touch with me. And I would think through all the programs that I do, through Facebook and all, I would be back in touch with them. And all the other ones now, most all my kids are in Atlanta.

EH: Okay.

AA: So I do see them from time to time but I don't see 'em enough. I was supposed to go there-- I had those coons in the house and I couldn't go the time I was supposed to go, but I need to, I need to go. 'Cause my oldest son is, he's 61. He just turned, May the 31st. And 3, 3 birthdays in March and I missed-- one's on the 6th, one's on the 12th, and 30, and then my oldest daughter, she's well... May 18th is my 2nd son and July the 24th is my oldest daughter. So we keep in touch, you know, but we don't see each other very much, you know, but we keep in touch like all the time so... And I told them when I have, cause a lot of folks around here don't know Al has any family or anything like that you know, and when I do my big performance, I'm gonna have all of my kids, I'm gonna have all of 'em in that place.

EH: Cool.

AA: In different places. And I'm gonna have all of 'em stand up, you know.

EH: Do they sing?

AA: That's another thing. (laughs)

EH: (laughs)

AA: I think the one granddaughter this year-- the oldest son, he has the youngest girl, about 13 years old. Now my second son, all his kids are in their 30s. And my daughter, she--oldest daughter, all her kids are

in the kinda in their sorta 30s, 20s and 30s, and my youngest daughter, she has a son that's here and he's in his 30s also. But no, none of 'em. Two things they don't do too much is the music part and the shoe part. Cause I said if anything happens to me, my kids will come here to get me. But they won't look in here, and they won't look in over there because they'll have no thought, they don't want nothing that dad has, you know? Just come and get dad and that's the crux of it.

EH: Where was your dad from?

AA: He originally was from like in the North Carolina area. And I think he came at about 14 years old, you know. See many of those men back in those days, you had to leave those towns in a hurry. For one reason or another. Because you know, you can be, and a lot of times, there's a lot of people, you didn't take no mess. You know? And things might have got up on you where you're leaving town tonight, you're not waiting until in the morning. And I think that's how his situation was. I think he came here and he went into the Pennsylvania area first 'cause that's when he married who was my mom and then brought her here to... 'cause everything was coal. You worked in a coal mine somewhere, so I think that's where he came from and other family that... there was my mom's family in Pittsburgh, we used to go there all the time, but see, it's a lose... you lose all you're... after so long, you don't even know where that family's at anymore. So you just go to visit and... but not very... around here, not a whole ton of family at all. Not much family.

EH: What was it like growing up here in Osage?

37:30

AA: Well it was probably the best growing up because we talk about people you know, that you don't even realize, when they talk about Eleanor Roosevelt, you know, that came here, and nobody probably thought they was as poor as it was portrayed to be until she was here to find out we not only were poor (laughs) we were like dirt poor! You know? But you know everybody had a little bit. You had enough money to raise your family. And if... anyone killed a hog up on that hill, people would share, you know, share meat and share homes. And it was like, nobody had any more than each other. So all those nationalities got together and I was thinking the other day, you know, about how a family down there, a Saturday family, they would have like, whatever their nationality was, they would have like their big, you know they didn't invite like, you know, people from around... they invited all of THEIR folks that may live in other places around, you know, but oh, they'll be dancing and things and they'll have all their different, they'd have their different situations with people.

EH: Is she coming in here?

AA: Yeah, she'll just be here for a minute, yeah.

EH: I'll pause it.

38:59

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AA: [After customer came in store to get a child's broom] We sold those brooms, we had the bigger brooms that we sold at the street fair, but we had all these left and I'm gonna say before I give away 15 of 'em and just like she was saying, 2 little kids was in there, said both of those kids wanted one. And I have a buddy up the road that, he has 3 little girls and he saw those brooms and he said man, how much was... I

said no, no charge on those brooms, man, you know. He said well, you can't just take one, you know, you got 3 girls, so he had to take 3 brooms. Another guy came and he had 2 little kids you know, 2 brooms, so each kid want their own broom, I guess, so...

EH: Then they can sweep your house.

AA: Yeah, right. (laughs) I'm amazed, she comes-- she's with the Latter-Day Saints and she comes every month and you give 'em like 3 or 4, 5 dollars, you know. And they bring you that Watchtower book. So I kinda do that you know. So what was your last, what was your last question?

EH: Oh yeah, I was asking about growing up in Osage.

AA: Yeah. It was a good kinda time in that Osage was kinda independent from almost any place else, because there was no kinda segregation type thing. Wouldn't even know how to be segregated anyway, you know, because everybody was with everybody. So you did only had problems when like somebody would come in town, you know, one place-- Osage was not the place where you were gonna come and straighten anybody out. You know? When you come to Osage, no, you're gonna get straightened out!

EH: (laughs)

AA: And when you leave here, you're gonna say, well, I don't think I wanna go back down there and mess nobody in Osage! And it got a stigma, you know, like don't go to Osage. I was telling some people there yesterday at the museum, they bought a bus-load, well like a van-load of I think students from Fairmont State or something, and Eve was, it was more about museums. And we were talking about kinda like growing up here as well and when it came up about different nationalities and things like that, we kinda stuck together. But no, I was gonna tell 'em also, for a long time even at the university over there. So many people, you know, when people call me from Morgantown about getting their shoes fixed, because they say someone told me about you, and, but where's your shop? Where's Osage? I say, well, where did you grow up? I said, "In Morgantown." Girl, I'm about to give you some demerits, you know? You grew up in Morgantown and you don't know where Osage is at! You know? So that's the kinda thing also where there are so many people that don't know even where Osage is at and your family grew up over there, and for the longest of time, people would say, it had the blue bridge then, you know. "Don't cross the blue bridge." Which means, you're gonna be in trouble if you cross that blue bridge. You stay on this side of the blue bridge, because Osage is so bad. And even today, people still think that Osage is this bad place, and when I go and speak to people-- I spoke at that university over there I don't know how many times, and first thing I would ask any of them, I said, how many of y'all ever been to Osage? Not very many hands would go up. But a lot of them don't live in... a lot of them live in all different states, you know. So I wouldn't say too much about that, how many in Osage. As a matter of fact, was the lady here that brought her shoes in, and I didn't know her name-- she was a, like a professor or something, Bedaddasman (sp?) was her name. And I didn't recognize her until I got her last name, and I said, oh, she used to have me come over and speak. And I mean I've spoke I don't know how many times for all different understandings over there. But I would, and then I'd let them know, you know. I said, well guys, if it wasn't for Osage and Scotts Run, you know, you wouldn't be sitting in these nice seats you just sat over here at the university, you see? Because if it wasn't for there, you would not have... I said, you got about 6,000 students here, you probably wouldn't have many more than that if it wasn't for the coal mine that came outta here to help build that university that you have here. And I always relate that to them to let them understand, you see, that, if it wasn't for Osage and Scotts Run you know, that really paved the way.

I just got a thing from... to show... Hi, Whiskers [to cat]. See, they want, see, everybody wants to annex about the town of Granville. See, at one time a couple years ago they wanted to not only annex, they

wanted to annex and then they gonna you know, to all the buildings and things like that, and I went over and a few other people also went over, and I kinda chewed the county commission people out a little bit about what these folks are trying to do. Well, they didn't pass it at that time, but today see Granville, they always bring me down these things, you know, 'cause first of all they don't want me to come over there, you know. They said we don't want Al coming over there so we take it down to him, and let me know that we're not bothering with Osage, so this is just, now it's just a roadway, which you can't do anything about anyway. But I'm going over there you know, on Wednesday just to observe. But they'll see...

EH: Are they trying to annex this part?

AA: Well it's a road, see it's not like, see this blue section there [points at highlighted part on map].

EH: Okay.

AA: See, come from the mall up there down and it'll hit, you know, Ladybug Drive up there by the Settlement House and then they got the, that's their fire department area where that big building is. So this is a way that... but I, I'm not gonna have anything. I know they'll think that I'm gonna say something, I'm not gonna say anything that day because I got some bigger issues with... I just did a documentary thing about the, about the closing at public service down there, you know, and I was, you know, chairperson for 15 years. And we did 16 million dollars' worth of... all the sewer! See, they never had sewer here forever! For 100 years! All the sewer came right down in that little, in that little creek there! Right past everybody's home!

06:56

EH: Wow.

AA: They had septic tanks. You know after a while, septic tank ain't no septic tank! You know what I mean? After a while they go bad and if you don't clean 'em out on a regular basis, well you know, everything's gonna overflow, it's gonna come right in that creek basically. And so after the 15 years me and Bob Martin was on that board, they take me and Bob Martin off the board and we still got other projects to do. And about a month after we were off the board, they closed it down! You know? They closed it down and all the employees down there, they fired. Right on the spur of the moment! Young lady come up here and I say, well what's going on? She was mad, she said, they told me I had 20 minutes to get my stuff and get out. It's been about 4 years ago. And we went to court and all. It was a whole big court thing, because they called me up here and they said Al, they said man, they got 2 police cars sitting side by side, and they're taking all that stuff out of that building! You know what I mean? the newspaper called me and said we're gonna send a reporter up here and I went down with the reporter and then from then on we had meetings and meetings and meetings and meetings, but they ended up... the website got so heavy on them that it was supposed to be a requisition, but it turned out to be a merger because that website was killing 'em. So about a month ago I sent in-- I did the documentary, I did the documentary over at the other museum in Morgantown, oh, about 4 months ago now, but this one I did to tell them about themselves. And all the dirty work they did. They even wanted to file charges against Bob Martin and myself and we were considered actually the best public service district in the state of West Virginia! You know? When I would go, I would go to Charleston, you know, now, see... we got 16-million-dollar project going. So they, they...when now if I would go, every couple years you go and get updated on things. Well say for the 150 people in there, and I know I probably wouldn't be hard to find 'cause sometimes they'll be one or 2 blacks would be there for public service districts, but everybody would come out of that door, you know, as soon as they see me-- "We work with Mr. Anderson! We work with Mr. Anderson!" You know, which means, you know, Mr. Anderson got the project! And got the money!

You see? So everybody, when you would take that break, you know, who do you think everybody would want to talk to?

EH: (laughs)

AA: 'Cause see, they're there to either get certified, or they're there to get some money. Well Mr. Anderson already got the money. So everybody wants to know what the process is for getting that money. You see? So we didn't have a place to meet. We met up at the Shack for about 45 minutes 'til guys came to play ball. And they were paying like 25 dollars to play a couple hours of ball up there. So but the engineers, you know, Thrasher, they were like big engineering firms. We hired them and they work with us, they work with us for about a month. Now there's a 1.5-million-dollar grant that comes from the governor that, that you get to start your project. Or that's the beginning of it, you see, to get all your right-aways and everything you got to do to pay for that, that's what that's for. So the county commission, you know they told me they said, Al, they said the county commission's dragging their feet about getting that grant! So here I go to the county commission. You see if I sit back there for, until... they're not gonna even call me 'til the end of the meeting, you see, cause nobody's gonna figure out what Al's doing here, you see, so finally at the end, they say, "Oh Al, did you have anything?" (laughs) I said yeah. I said the engineer said you're dragging your feet about getting that grant. So oh, it was about oh 50 people in here, there was a lot of people in here that day and so the big joke of the day was, well Al, why don't you have the governor bring the money in?

11:32

You see? Well, 2 weeks later, there was the governor, there was that check, and there was all of the... I'm gonna show you the picture of it. I got a picture of it, I'm gonna show you that. But you see, now see, they would have bet their houses that ain't no governor gonna bring no check to Osage, West Virginia to this black dude out there!

EH: (laughs)

AA: You know what I mean? (laughs) you know, not a chance! So see, and they ain't never had, they never was gonna do it anyway. And that kinda fooled them a little bit because see, they were gonna get that-- see they were just starting to do the Mylan Park up there too. So that was gonna be their money for up at Mylan Park. Not for, not for Scotts Run. But see we got that, and got that project going, and then we went to, when you go... that's what I say about those folks knowing how to get the money and a lot of time it's the engineers that are the fat cats. They know as a chairperson, see, they have you come to their, they have a big get-together up at Snowshoe, you know? They have the big party up there and they invite all the folks that are somebody at those public service districts, that's who they invite. So I went up and this lady-- it was about oh, 5 or 6 people around this table with this lady, the money lady. And then the dude from Thrasher-- he, and I was sitting over there at one of the tables, and he said Al, he said, I want you to meet somebody. So Ken Moran--he was a big shot, so he went over to the table and he kinda had everybody move away from the table and just me and that lady there and then we talked and then we told her what we're doing down here and all. See next thing you know, see we got that other 8.3 million dollars for the... but that wasn't a grant, that's a loan thing you have to do there. So we got 10 million on the project. And we did another 6 million on the project after that, 'cause see after you get the first money, see you're gonna get you know, the other money as well. So once you get going on your project and then after we get that and all, then these guys that were just nasty to us about doing that-- I mean, they were... all...they would come down, they would be boisterous about, you know the meetings and all and so we went all through there and we got to about the 13th year, the... you see, one of the big things was MUB was getting all the money, see. MUB

EH: Morgantown...

AA: Utility Board.

14:32

They was getting the money, see now, and so we would--but they would do like our...we had like 13, 13 pumps. And they was supposed to check those 13 pumps 3 times a week, but now somebody called me on Saturday. Now one pump, like I said, it was up on the hill and that pump is pumpin' only to maybe a couple houses. You didn't have like the regular flow-through. But if that pump wasn't working on that, if he called me on Saturday, that means you wasn't up there on Friday. So many of those things would happen, people call me and they gotta back-up in their basement or something like that. So their contract ended June the 12th. Well they called me over there like on the Friday like they called me on Friday to come over and meet with them, cause see they thought they was gonna renew that contract. I didn't even understand that part of it. I went over there about them not doing their job. And they had about 15 guys over there you know, they're all sweating, you know, guys making 8, 10, 12 dollars an hour and this guy sitting next to me and making 250,000 dollars a year, you know. So the, Jim Green at the time. So you know, and as soon as I get there, it's like "Well Al, we don't want you to think we ganging up on ya." Well by the end of that day, there's only one gang that left there. And it surely wasn't any of those 15 guys. (laughs) so as we talked, you know, we talked and we talked a while and the county commissioner was over there too, see, and I don't know what he was even doing there. But at the end of it, see, we were borrowing their reading for how you, the reading for the water reading, which was supposed to be 2 dollars. It came to 6 dollars and 27 cents. And I said Jim, see he isn't very happy now you see. Jim, I said, we can't figure out how 2 dollars comes to 6 dollars and 27 cents. And now he said, "Well Al! I'm gonna explain it to you one more time!" I said Jim, you're not gonna explain it one more time. And he looked over at Asil (sp?). Said "Asil, you know what's gonna happen when they take over?" Yeah, when we took over. We already had a lady was showing our lady how to do all the billing, you see, so we started doing our own billing and everything. Well we went from nothing--that building you come down--that green building-- we built that brand new building, plus we rebuilt Mary, where the museum is, we was there for about 4... we built that place! It was a garage! And my apartment was the first place we had a meeting place. Well we get up to probably about oh 20-25 million dollars of assets and stuff, you see. That was way too much.

EH: Wow. Yeah, they're jealous.

AA: Yeah, so now, they got to duff us you see.

EH: Uh-huh. Got it.

AA: So they found a way to get us off the board, put those 2 guys on the board, and the 2 guys they put on the board couldn't even be on the board! They didn't live here! They used to live here, but they didn't live here. They put them on the board and needless to say after that--and that's what I sent that thing over to them about. How they did what they did and how you wanted to trash my name, and which is hard to do around here because all the projects I've been involved in, all the, you know, they don't look down on Al, it's like, like this right here, see. He has to take his time to come from Granville down here to bring me these papers you see, but they make sure they drop a copy down here you know, to let me know what they're doing and probably feeling what Al may not say. Because I was really, you know, I talked really heavy on it the last time, but I'm not gonna say anything over there, but they think I will.

EH: Yeah.

AA: But I won't. But you do things, that's a good thing to do. And it's probably a good chance if they knew that they were gonna close that place down, see, I'd probably have one of those county commission seats. And even this last time that Tom Bloom ran for the western end, I would have beat him that time too. But I just didn't have the fodder to fill to do it. Because nobody gonna-- I don't care what office, even if I run for the house of delegates or whatever, I'm gonna get a seat.

EH: So you find people still sort of look down on Scotts Run?

AA: Yeah. Yeah, yeah. People... well, you can tell here where you would think that people would be, you know, fought for, to think, "Well what about Osage?" Osage fed all of us! You know, Granville didn't have no money or Westover or Star City, Morgantown. If it wasn't for the mines here, you know, all the money went, well you see what's happening here. And I think it started when all the homes that was on those hills (points) I'm thinking at least 400 homes on those hills, you know? From that hill over there to the middle hill, to this hill. It was homes on all of it. And especially on that hill over there, where Mary Jane [Coulter] and them grew up, there was rows, rows of homes over there. And on our hill there, we made, probably had maybe 50, 60 over there and same over there, but on that hill there, that had to have been a couple hundred homes. And they all, and up Chaplin, which you could walk right through the... Chaplin's only 2 minutes away, so Chaplin was just like... but yeah, still that stigma that you can do anything you know, even like closing a town. You know, you got the Goldenseal Magazine down there and the whole story you know, is about how they did not close it, see? And if it wasn't for this place being closed, then Granville actually wouldn't be. You know, you had to close this incorporated town down and it never was closed. But still Granville gets the mall up there and Osage gets the shaft and now Westover's coming around, they're annexing it all up there where Chaplin area is and all. But all that territory would have been Osage, you know? So this is what we... and then you see... I was gone for 20 years. You know, and a lot of times, I look at it too, you know, it wasn't so, so much that the town couldn't have thrived, but I think you had too many people who were very selfish, even some of the mayors that you had in the town here, you know. And the people you know, trashed kind of themselves. You know, it could have been like the greatest, one of the greatest towns, 'cause a lot of success came through you know, like the first black mayor in the state of West Virginia and many of those kind of things that was a lot of respect in how all those things happened. But still the stigma never left. Never left. Even today, when I tell people when I go someplace and everybody wants to talk about how bad Osage is, I says well, you know, they're dying in Morgantown and Westover and Star City and they're dying in all those places, but ain't nobody dying in Osage!

22:06

The safest place you can be, your behind is in Osage!

EH: (laughs)

AA: Ain't nobody dying in Osage. But still the stigma is--never left here-- if you go to Osage, you're gonna die.

EH: Is that from partially the Eleanor Roosevelt's attention or WPA or what is that--where do you think that all started?

AA: Well I think during the days of like here, like right now with that train came down through here all day long, buses every 15 minutes, horses and buggies and people and a few cars. And then one time I think it was believe it or not, they had in the town of Osage, you drove on the sidewalk and walked in the street because it was so congested-- you had to walk wherever, you know? (laughs) And I would think sometime about cars like cause you see if you're playing a football game, you come from Pittsburgh, you

gotta come through Osage! See, there wasn't no Star City Bridge up until like the 50s so if you're coming, and I think the stigma started there, you know, that you see all these people you know, and a large black population as well, but a lot of times people thought it was mostly all black people in Osage. But it was quite the contrary to that. And there was every mixture of person was in Osage, but when you see a lot of you know, a lot of black folks, it's like a black town, you know?

EH: I see.

AA: So I was thinking about when people would come from Pittsburgh, going to the ball game, they'd go to AAA, and AAA's map would show them that they-- on this map they have a big red dot. Now see, when you get to that red dot, you lock up your doors, lock your doors, roll up your windows, and go slow through the town of Osage. And probably if you hit somebody don't even stop, just keep going until you... but the bottom line is, see that's where...

EH: Because they were mostly white people to come through.

AA: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah. When people come to the ballgame, yeah in those days, yeah, mostly white people. You didn't see very many... 'cause even in those days you didn't even have a black team over here until like probably oh early 60s when you first got. Cause I was one of the first guys that was gonna play football up here and I was really kind of a respected kinda person, like they wanted me like to sponsor. I went to D.C. before football started. I mean I went to California. 1962.

EH: When did you graduate from high school?

AA: Well my graduating year was 1955.

EH: Okay.

AA: But I... I went to the steel mill in 1953. See I was 15 years old and they wanted, they would take anybody. They didn't ask your age or nothing but people would come through here like a bus ticket and me and 2 other buddies, we went to... as a matter of fact, it was kind of a funny thing that how we went, you know. We went to, see we were leaving on a Sunday night, the next day was school. It was like during school break. Like Christmas break, school was starting the next day. Well we didn't want our dads to know, so we had these grocery bags and we went to the Warner Theater about 1 o'clock. We stayed there all day long, that bus was leaving at 10 o'clock at night. Cause we didn't want nobody to see us! (laughs) So we go down to the Greyhound station at 10 o'clock. Now we know ain't nobody gonna see us now! We had one teacher that was from Cleveland that taught at our black school over there, at Monongalia High, so we're getting on the bus, she's getting off the bus and we're getting on. (laughs)

EH: (laughs) You were headed to Pittsburgh?

AA: We were headed to Lorraine, Ohio, to the steel mill.

EH: Okay.

AA: And she was getting off the bus from Ohio from Cleveland. So and she gets off the bus, she said, "Where are you boys going?" And I'm the spokesperson. "Oh, we're going to visit our grandmother." I said I bet she had the post crack-ups the next day. You know knucklehead boys, you know! (laughs) They're supposed to be in school tomorrow, here they're going to the steel mill to work and we worked, I worked 'til about school started next year.

EH: Wow.

AA: And then I went to school for one more year and I went to the service in 1954.

EH: The Army?

AA: I went into the Army for 2 years. And I actually, I wasn't old... I was 17 you know, so I put my age up to go for 2 years, you know, I put my age up, had to be 18, actually I put it up even longer. They chewed me out at the selective service why I didn't... 'cause I'm close to 19, but I'm still only 17. You know? And they're telling me, where you been? So and they say, they didn't check nothing either, so you know. So no one checked anything 'til I got out of the service when the guy came here at the Veteran's place over there and he was signing me up to go to you know, if I had any problem to go to the Veteran's Hospital, and they were trying to figure, (phone rings) he kept looking at me and looking at me and they couldn't figure out because I put my age up! (laughs) And then finally

27:43

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AA: Yeah, when that guy, he kept looking at me and looking at me to check my size and everything, you see, that's him, that's all. But couldn't figure out that, you know my real age and that age and then I think, man I remember now. I put my age up to get in there but everything kinda got straightened out, you know, so I had to restraighten things after I you know, did that. And I was in the service for 2 years, and then I didn't graduate. I graduated from Veteran's High School at a high school in D.C. And I worked, I worked the shoe store, you know, every evening after, and you know, in those days, you got a check, you know, you got a 250 dollar check so every month. So I went about 2 years to that school and I graduated in what was called Veteran's High School.

00:57

In those days that's what you had. So that's where I graduated.

EH: And you were gone 20 years.

AA: Yeah, I was gone 20 years, yet.

EH: And what brought you back here?

AA: Well, I was in kinda transition. Actually, the Collegian (sp?) band, see those guys had--they were retiring so I just took over to do the bookings, 'cause we still had... even I came back here. I still had about, oh about 50 gigs that I went back every week, went back and actually I came here to help this guy open a shoe repair shop. See? So then D.C., when you ask me about, you know, learning, see, the shoe store that I worked at, the owner-- I knew it wasn't gonna work though, you know. He wanted to put a shoe repair shop in one of the stores. We had 7 stores. And people brought back shoes, somebody would work on 'em, something like that. But it wasn't a working thing too much. So the guys that I hired...see in D.C. you had what you call, I think a lot of spin darn (?) high school, you had like trades, more or less than As Bs and Cs, you learned a trade. And you had many of those guys that worked there. And I saw that he hired somebody from there to work in that shop. So I learned a lot from those guys watching them. I was all watching anyway. I never did anything but watch and learn and just taught myself pretty much. But the owner, about 6 months into it, he didn't want to have anything more to do with it, so he... I end up

taking over the machines that was in the one... 'cause see, we had the first place we had the store and the shoe repair shop right beside the place. But then they opened up a brand new store and I was still the manager of the store, but my shoe repair shop was, the first part of it, you know, it was still like a building that had some old shoes and everything, and things like that. But right across the street was my--the shop that I own now and but the owner didn't, you know, I just got those machines from him. And then later on, you know, I just kinda took over my own business sorta. And then I was, kinda in transition a little bit with not doing shoe repair, just still doing some music. So a guy came here, I came here and helped him open up a shop. And then I worked, I worked and I'd go back every weekend to do my gigs and then I kinda finished that out and then after that I came and went in business with a guy... his wife--they managed the Warner Theater--went in business with him but it didn't work that well. She was a Korean lady and boy she was tough. She was tough, you know. So we kinda parted and then I kind of got in business for myself and here where I shine shoes at, for all those years, I was in town at Westover for a while and then I came and... I came and I was helping really anyway, you know, I'd just see whatever he needed done and I would do that and then make sure he was okay up on the hill there... he got food and things and so when I come one day on Saturday, with his niece-- he had a niece and 2 nephews. Never had a family other than that, and the niece came and they put him in a hospital and from the hospital to the rest home and from there. And I'd go see him a few times at the rest home, but he... and he ain't never used the telephone. You know, never used the telephone. He'd walk off that hill and walk down here and so I bought the machines off of the niece and that's when I started in here. But Willie, he was trying, he thought he would get out of there, he wasn't gonna call nobody but Albert, you know. Had the folks over there call me. But you know, needless to say, he wasn't coming back out there. When I would go over to see him, he'd be way back in like the 50s, you know. He hadn't seen his dad-- his dad in the 50s and he didn't get his paper today and didn't get his meal you know, he was just going way back, you know. And after that I didn't hardly go anymore. And he passed. But he was a nice man, you know. And that's the same thing here. Everybody looked out for each other and people would come in here, sit down and wait for him to fix their shoes, because you didn't have but 2 pairs of shoes in those days. A pair of clodhoppers and a pair of church and school shoes. So everybody got their shoes fixed and today they leave shoes at a shoe repair shop forever because they got more than one pair of shoes, you know. So that's the kinda difference. That's why you don't see any shoe repair shops because people don't pick up shoes.

EH: I always take mine!

AA: ...like they should. Huh?

EH: I always take mine to a shoe repair.

AA: Yeah! yeah, a lot of folks in you know, but sometimes people want... just like many things that I'm doing a job for the young lady that's getting married and she's got a nice pair of almost white, whitish looking boots, but her thigh is big in the back but let me show you what this looks like (walks behind counter) What's up Whiskers, you listening over here? (to cat).

EH: Yeah! He is listening!

AA: (laughs)

EH: Hey Whiskers! Come over here! Come over here!

AA: See?

EH: Yeah, those are cool.

AA: See I put a little gusset in the back there. And then I'm gonna do a... after I told her dad to have her come and try them on, see, to make sure that that gusset's okay. And then I'm gonna put this...

EH: Some lace?

AA: On the back.

EH: Nice.

AA: You know, and that'll. See all kinda jobs. I got people bring to me and all they have to do is tell me that they're getting married or they love those boots, or you know.

EH: Right.

AA: So they got me... when you say those things, you know, you put me on, you know, that Al's gonna fix 'em you know, whatever kinda way. But yeah, that's you know, and we talked about Osage, you know. Probably a good place to grow up as a person. And you go to places like D.C. and California, you know, you can hang out anywhere. You know how to treat people and how you're treated and all the places I've been, you know, I've been treated like royalty. You know there's no place but there's one thing that's always-- that even in all the places, back in the old days, you got all the Fonzie guys outside that would make sure that Al, if anybody says anything to you, you know, cause I'm the only...all the places I play, I'm the only black actually in the place. But if the music was good, everything's good and that's the way it always was. If the band's bad, they're gonna be fights all night. But if the music is good, everything's good. And we were good. That band, see this was in 1962 when I left. If this band could have did traveled or anything like that, in D.C. or California-- there was no Beatles and no Motown and all that at that time. It was more bluesy type things. these guys could outplay anybody in D.C> or California.

EH: And was it like a 4-piece?

AA: Well actually, Dave Wiston, who was like the Sherriff's son, he played keyboards and then we had Ed and Keith Collins. Ed was the horn player, Keith was the bass player. Roger Britton was the drummer and Ronnie Kimper was the guitar player. And that band was so, so good.

EH: It was R 'n' B?

09:13

AA: Yeah, yeah, we did all, we did all the old... and then what we did also... See, and the reason I could like gauge myself on my abilities-- you had all these groups that come in to Pittsburgh in those days-- all the million sellers. See Pittsburgh was one of the BIG places. So this man in Latrobe, PA, he would have groups like the Isley Brothers, Marvelettes, Jan and Dean, Conway Twitty, Bo Diddley, who we had here, we had here right here in Morgantown. We had Bo Diddley in here.

EH: Oh really?

AA: Yeah, yeah! And Ray Person, Johnny Chellitson (sp?), Dion-- the last job I did here in West Virginia was a Dion. Used to be Dion and the Belmonts, but he was Dion by himself at that time. That was my last job in Parkersburg. And they would hire us to come and back those performers, because they didn't bring a band, they just brought the performers, you see. So we didn't have to practice with those guys, because when I would go to practice with these guys over at home in Westover, when I'd go to practice with 'em,

they'd have all the songs written out in the key of the performer. They ain't never-- they never had a key for Al. All the keys were the same in the performer's keys, so I had to hit-- it was a woman's song or a man's song. See, I had to hit all-- and I didn't know any different, see here I am, I don't know nothing about music at all, so I'm just singing all the songs in the keys of whatever.

10:50

And I probably sang for 25, 30 years before I even knew that there was a key that I sang in. A natural key. So we would, I would do like maybe 20 minutes or something like that of before the main group would come on, guys would come on.

EH: Okay.

AA: So I do my songs.

EH: So you opened for all those guys?

AA: Opened for all those guys, yeah.

EH: From Conway Twitty to Bo Diddley?

AA: From Bo Diddley, actually Conway Twitty, I don't think we backed him. I think... but he was there. But see, in those days, Conway Twitty was a rock and roller!

EH: Yeah.

AA: You know, he wasn't a country singer in those days. (laughs) But he would be there in Latrobe, and he and the guy called this one guy would always be there with him. But I don't recollect backing him, but he was always there. And but all the others, we backed. And so you know, the Isley Brothers, Vibrations, I mean some of these groups-- people, the Isley Brothers was a big, big name, but the Vibrations was much better than the Vibrations. The Marvelettes, you know, they were like-- see all of those are women. Women's group and you know, but all the songs, we... so we didn't have to have no... they would always want us to come about 6 o'clock to have a practice with the groups. But the groups are gonna be the main show. If they're supposed to be there at 9 o'clock, they'd be there at a quarter 'til 9, you see. So we did (laughs) and they didn't need to anyway, 'cause all the songs we did was in their key.

EH: Yeah.

AA: See? So... and I think that's how my voice got strong and not knowing a key that you sing in.

EH: So you have to be able to be flexible and sing it all.

AA: That's it, that's it. Hit those notes. You know? And we're all riding together, you know, and I'm from Osage. All these boys are from Morgantown High. And I'm kinda slangy and... but Ed Collins, he used to make me MAD for a while. I would say... we'd talk and I'd say 50 cent. "Cents, Anderson, cents!" I mean, he would correct me! (laughs) I'd be so mad, but then later on, that was a lesson. See? I was getting a lesson! Because he would correct me every time I would have one of those slang... but I'm from Osage, you know. And actually it was like-- even if it was a white guy from Osage, and those guys from Morgantown, it would have been like a little bit of a slant. But when the black guy from Osage and... but I was treated really good and it was a great lesson for me and when I went... (Whiskers meows) Okay, you want...

EH: Do you want to get interviewed?

AA: Whiskers wanna get on my lap!

EH: That's okay.

AA: Whiskers... because see Whiskers... that's the way the craft work, see I was sitting over in the chair, when I sit in the chair to sew or something, Whiskers say okay man, I can get a little lap time now. But no, it's been a good, good, good situation of being able to do all the things that you do and being... hardly nobody, you know, from this area here is like the citizen of the year for the whole county. Riding and... I almost kinda thought it was a set-up. I said, I didn't even want to ride downtown in that... on the convertible car, cause I'm thinking like, I'm somebody gonna take a shot at me or something, you know? (laughs) Cause I had to sing after I got down to after where everybody sings down at Hazel McQueens (sp?) and I'm telling, well I gotta sing as soon as I get down there. "Oh no, oh no, don't worry about it," you know. And so there I am in a car with "Citizen of the Year" on the side and I was, one year as Martin Luther King or a recipient of that award. And you know, things that you do that you're recognized in certain areas. But you just do, you know. I was on the board of the United Way for about 8 years and Settlement House board for about 8 years and still today I'm the president of the Lions Club in Westover, mainly because nobody's able. Every year, because we're trying to get more members. But right now it used to be loads of members that was in... but now most of those folks have passed. Like the older members and being on the board here and I think what we have done, especially... I don't know when that documentary's coming out, but it's way overdue, I think. Because many people-- that will be seen all over. I mean this was a show that was unbelievable. Everybody did music, everybody did... told stories and Eve did a great job of putting all that together. And they wanted to put musicians from here that I work with. I said no, I brought my buddy in from Philadelphia, Jeff, another guy from Pittsburgh and Jeff played with me 30 some years ago. He was a young, young guy. But we tore that theater up over there, I'm telling ya. It was really something special. And then they played at... 'cause nobody got to see it after that, and when Liza brought it down through the museum and played it, you know, and I tell you. I was sweating! I mean, I was wore out just watching it! Because you never get to watch yourself and boy, I tell you! All that, I said, oh man! (laughs)

EH: (laughs) It's hard to watch yourself.

AA: Yeah, I was wore out. (laughs) Because I sang with a gospel group before I sang with the... with my rock and roll group, you know, but that's been a blessing also. Going and doing... I did gospel like forever. We did gospel with Sarah and Sarah's sister and sister Patty and the lady trombone player, Christine Bilanic (sp?). Oh man, we played all...everywhere!

EH: Was that Flying Colors?

AA: That was the Flying Colors, yeah. And we did that theater for about 12 years. And we just-- it's only been 2 years, we did it with the, with the new group that we have. But oh the Flying Colors, we played everywhere, all over. And every place we would go, people would, people knew that group, and especially that trombone player and we would... and I'd kinda stand next to her and if I would hit... the higher I hit that note, that horn would go straight up in the air. And boy, boy she could play that horn! I'm telling you. We had some times. And her husband died. He had worked in the mines for about 40 some years and he kinda fell and never came back from that. And he passed. And she come from like the Wisconsin area. And her and sister Sarah was like mother and daughter. And they were like together like all the time. But that group... and, and sister Patty played keyboards, but with a group called now, what'd you say... yeah the Flying Colors, but the Mighty Tones was the Sal (sp?) family and myself. Oh, we was an all a cappella group. And we sang at those churches and oh, everybody, we sometimes, we would think

that they wasn't gonna call us on, we'd think, oh we were the last one to go on. Everybody was waiting for the Flying Colors to come on there! And we sang... but it was just a whole lot of great things once you... and not even knowing your abilities of being a singer. See? Evidently God blessed me with just a voice. Didn't bless me any other way, no instruments or no nothing and never... I never listened to music. If you went to my place, you would never know I'd ever did any music or anything cause I don't, I don't listen to any music or anything. I just practice, you know, like I'm gonna do a performance, again I might practice the songs and make sure the endings are okay and all that. So, but it's been a good life of... only thing is... I missed by not, not getting back in touch with Billy Ward and them to be part of that, cause see I never performed with them. I never performed after I did "What are You Doing New Year's Eve." And once you do that, you see, when you... See Billy Ward was in the far east about 6 months out of the year. So when you're the lead singer of the song that you've then... then you're the front guy, see? And if you could imagine all those places... and I always looked at it as, you know, Billy Ward had that article in the paper like all the time. Because if you got 5 singers, and see... Billy Ward wasn't a singer, he was a piano player. And he was kinda like Liberace. See, he had this big white piano and rings all on his fingers, and... that's why it was Billy Ward and the Dominoes, because everybody else was the Dominoes! But Billy Ward... but then you had lead singers, like I would have been if I had went on the road with them. So and the reason he had that article in the paper like all the time, because if you went for 6 months, you know, out in the far east and Japan and Okinawa and the Philippines-- now you know there's an awful lot of pretty gals, you know, in all those places. (laughs) And 9 times out of 10, I would say 2 to 3 of those guys wasn't gonna be on the show the next time. You know?

EH: (laughs)

21:06

AA: And some of 'em may have been sent back home even because... there's a lot of story on Billy Ward. You can always read at some point in time, but he was a hard guy. He was not a... and I didn't really know, you see, to me like my idol was Jackie Wilson. See. Our voice was like almost the same. We had the same kinda style. But you couldn't mention Jackie Wilson's name out there. Because Jackie Wilson left Billy Ward in Las Vegas. One of the shows. He left Billy Ward and Jackie Wilson was not a name who you could-- say who's your favorite singer? Surely couldn't be Jackie Wilson! And Clyde McPhatter who sang on... I mean he had some of the best singers in the world that was Billy Ward's Dominoes! And that's the way I always thought about it, you know, that you're gonna act up, somehow, being out there in Japan and Okinawa, you know. (laughs) So that was... but see, to me I would have been just like Jackie Wilson. See I wasn't a more... I was more of like a single singer. All the time I sang, and then being... that was like a stepping stone in a way. Like Clyde McPhatter went out on his own and... but I guess Jackie Wilson did and in a way that while they were doing a show or something like that.

EH: I see.

AA: But I've been very fortunate to been all the places I've been and been... only thing today is, some of the places I went, after I even came back here, oh I wouldn't be caught any of those places today. Because if you're way down there in Century, West Virginia, or you're down in all those other places outside Buckhannon and all down there in the Elkins area and all up there, you know, now... as long as you ain't gonna have no problem on the road or something like that, you might be okay, but if your car break down, you better not knock on no door!

EH: Ah. Do you think it's worse today than it used to be?

AA: Much worse.

EH: Really?

AA: Much worse.

EH: Why do you think that is?

AA: Because... you know, there's people that always had hate in their hearts. But sometimes wasn't able to exercise it like there is today. See people are exercising hate that they've always had, but today it's almost like it's legal to let that hate come out more. You see.

EH: Uh-huh. Do you see that with the new president or...

AA: Yeah, yeah. The new president is you know... that's his mindset, you see. Just what he's doing now, even with the immigration thing. That he's called... it don't have to be all that kinda trouble that he has, but you see... anybody that likes Putin and likes North Korean guy and any of those places like that, see, they're actually only one color face pretty much in Russia. And then notice, he don't like those other countries that are our friends. He don't like none of them! (laughs) But he likes all these other folks who are... and like guys in (Saudi Arabia?) he's a killer! And all of 'em are basically killers!

EH: Dictators.

AA: Dictators, you know! (laughs) but he... cause that's his mentality because see, he's a dictator. See all of his life, that's what he grew up as! And getting away with all... but I tell you one thing, he ran up against something that, even this Mueller thing, see, oh they're playing it up like, "oh there ain't nothing wrong." You just wait. And it's already coming out now. But he ain't got no clean bill of health! You know. Matter of fact there's gonna be a lot of dirt that comes out, but it starts right there. It starts right there. And if you turn off, like all the hate groups. You see, they're all coming out and many of them are thanking him, that they're able to show their bigotry. But yeah, it's much worse.

EH: That's scary.

AA: So you know, I mean we have... we should be a country of just people that... and see he hated Obama so bad that everything that Obama-- he had to turn... even if it was a bad thing to do! (laughs) And like, one thing, they couldn't get away from that Affordable Care Act! They didn't want to call it Obamacare, but they can't get away from it! Because all of them have it! (laughs) And all of them years, the Republican had the Congress and the Senate and the presidency, you still can't get rid of it! So now they... he backed off of that, you know. And...

EH: Maybe not.

AA: Huh?

EH: Maybe not-- he's trying again.

AA: No... no... they had told him, no... and McConnell and all those guys, see 'cause actually they back him 100%. But when they put that in his ear, even with closing down that border, see, he would have did that! You know. Even if you lose billions and billions. Don't care! Billions! Don't care. All those folks that lost, lost... they're closing the country down. That was just a crazy thing to do, but then when you have people that are million and billionaires, what do they care about the smaller people? Like the lady that want to cut off the Special Olympics. Gonna take 18 million, gonna take all that money away from there and think.. but 'cause see, they don't even think about it! You know? Because they don't have a

thought of MONEY. So they don't... and people still working for \$7.75. Who can live? You can't live very good on no \$7.75. So it's a sad way of life of what people are having to do. And they're talking about, "Oh they have this... everybody has got all these jobs, and look how he brought jobs. And black folks, they're jobs." Yeah! They have to work 4 jobs! (laughs) You know? If you're gonna make... you ain't gonna have no one job! (laughs) So if you got say 3 jobs, yeah!

EH: (laughs)

AA: Unemployment is gonna be better because you are going to have to go from this job to that job to that job. You know. So yeah! So it makes him look good because... and but the wages have not went anywhere. You see?

EH: Yeah.

AA: The wages haven't gone anywhere. But the jobs have. Yeah, yeah. You got the... and then they're cutting off so much stuff from people, that you wouldn't... you ain't got no other choice, you know. Even people get food stamps now. I think they're gonna have to work. They're gonna have to do some work. I mean there are some things that should be... you know people that are able to work that should be working. I got a couple friends that they stayed in my place over there for a long time and the young lady is still... you know with the little dog, because see, I'm an animal guy. See all you have to do... have an animal. And...

EH: You're a softie.

AA: Yeah! And I won't kick you to the curb with the animal! (laughs) And I got 6 cats in there, and they're like--they have to rearrange their understandings because the little dog. And I love the little dog, but see both of them are... they're on drugs. And both of them stayed there for a while, and that boy, he can't stand... and you know, everything I had back there. I'm over here working and he's stealing about everything I had back there. My son had a lot of stuff that he brought from Atlanta, 'cause he had all them clothes and things, other things too that, yeah that boy stole everything. And he got upset and I told him to take the dog out and he cursed me out! Man, he raved... so they come down every day from up the road, about 10, oh 10 miles up the road and then even they stayed over at that hotel over there for about a year. Somewhere like that, and you see, the cigarette smoke. I wanna tell you about cigarette, and you know, they both smoke cigarettes like... and I even buy cigarettes from time to time and here... reason I help them over there so they would never come back over here, and then when they got kicked out over there, they was at a couple places that they stayed, but then they done wore out all their... even at his dad's house. His dad don't want him if he's not home. And his sister. But things like that that it's like... and that cigarette does bother me, you know. And they don't smoke inside but just the residue that you smell. But it's kind of a sad kind thing and sometimes your heart's bigger than your knowledge.

EH: Well when people have substance abuse issues too, it's a very difficult situation.

AA: It is a difficult situation and always, and I hope that they're gonna do something for themselves and they act like they are because you get on certain, you get sick and then you get on those hard drugs that you--they're bigger than you. You can't conquer them. They're gonna conquer you. I tell them, you guys, you... just kinda sad. When the weather gets better, then you know, I said no, you all gonna be down there on the river like the rest of the folks, get you a little tent or something, you be down there with all your other buddies, you know that are in the same predicament that you're in.

EH: Yeah. I don't want to take up too much more of your time, but could you talk a little bit about what the museum, just having that, has done for the community? How it changed it?

AA: Well you know, what it changed was people are understanding history of Scotts Run. History that people never knew. Well you know when people come there sometimes, 'cause you're there a lot, that people come there and they're there for hours. Young man that came, he lived here, well he couldn't... he was there for... when I went down there, he was there, he was, he was there-- Tony. He grew up, up the road up here. He probably went to school with Mary Jane [Coulter] and them all, you know. And but he was amazed, and he grew up right here! (laughs) But he was amazed at all... you read the books even though things that you LIVED, but he's still younger than myself and some of the others, but you LIVED some of it, but you didn't live all of it. There's a lot of it that was before you were born that a lot of it was happening, but it's such a... People, especially people that come here that lived here before. They are so proud of this place because they know that--they know the history. When they left here, they know. They all worked here, they all grew up here, and they left here 50 years ago. But they... and I've even got calls, even that Goldenseal Magazine, I got a call from people that you know, they say man, that was a nice story you wrote about Osage and Scotts Run. And in the documentary that I did, they're playing that on PBS now too, I think--the one I did over at the other museum [in Morgantown] but more stories you tell about you know, and Lou [Birurakis] has been a blessing and John [Propst] has been a blessing coming there. And all the others. And sister Sarah [Boyd Little], they have stories and they're 15 years older than me. They're 12-15 years older than me--that can tell the stories. And the more that this happens. And when that documentary comes out... and I don't know--there's some kinda thing with that university over there, that they do not... they're dragging their feet about putting that documentary out. Because this is gonna be so special and so big that I don't even know if they even want to do that because the one professor-- he left right after, before we even did the theater I think. But he came out here because Ron Justice was... (friend comes in) What do you need?

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AA: Yeah, Ron Justice came-- he was working with [Eli] Manette drums and he came over and we did that, we did that CD [Scotts Run]. All the groups that did that CD and then he got excited about it and he went and told the professor over there at the CAC and I met with him a couple times and they were so excited about doing that, but then this one professor, he got another job and he went someplace and... but they were all gung-ho! You know, they could all raise this money, but if everybody had a grant, they could do with the people from... it was about 12 people around that table, you know, different departments and things. And then once we did it, it's like, you keep doing the interviews, interviews, but it needs to be out there, and for some reason it's not, because you know, there's some kind of stigma. And it goes back... it goes back a long ways even with, even with the state road coming. I'm sure they could have found the road without taking down all these houses in Osage. And I think it started right there. Okay. "We gotta get rid of Osage." What do you do? Come through, take all the houses away. I mean everybody has to leave. And this was I think the start of it.

EH: And when was that?

AA: That was, well, in... my dad died in about '66, they were starting that then in the early 60s. About yeah. Yeah, 'cause they was taking them homes. Cause our home was yeah, in the 60s it started.

EH: So they took where your dad was?

AA: Yeah.

EH: Where your dad was living?

AA: Yeah. The whole, you know, that's the other dude (points out window) And that dog is the middle partner of them. And yeah, all the homes. And me and my brother-- it was really a funny thing, about... see no one lived at our house. I don't... we left up there, matter of fact when dad died, we went to the funeral home and they had fixed food up there at our house and people like around the community. Me and my brother we went up into the parking lot and we never did go in the house. We turned around and went back to D.C. We never went in there. And then there was--they were buying the houses and an offer for ours was like 4500 dollars. And of course, a lot of folks they moved down here in different places, but they offered us 4500 dollars and then we were thinking that wasn't acceptab....we came back from D.C. about oh maybe 20 other families was here also. So the State Road, we was supposed to meet with these folks but they never showed up anyway. So it was like, well they know all these people come from all these different states, so they gotta go back to work. So they didn't bother with it. So we went back to D.C. and then they sent us a check for like 35, 3600 dollars, something like that. So they knocked off like 900 dollars. And so that was it. So 40 years go by. When I came back here, 40 years from the time--that was in the 60s, well I came back in the... I came back in the 80s, but this didn't happen even until after that. They left like a little quarter of an acre there on the side of the hill. Probably wouldn't have been worth hardly anything, but people was asking us you know, about selling that property. They were gonna do a big, that would be the first big development they were gonna do. They came and offered you know, like \$10,000 for that property, that little land. So I made a deal with them, you know. My brother was in D.C. so I got the thousand-dollar check. Now if they don't do anything for 6 months, they give you another \$1,000 check. So Bob Martin up there... here I'm thinking my brother wasn't gonna kinda accept that... Bob said, "Man, man, man, cash that check!" And I called my brother-- my brother needs that money so bad it wasn't funny! (laughs) So he got his \$500 and then those 6 months, we got another 1,000 dollars. We split that. And then the...needless to say now, we never paid no taxes or nothing on that. For all those years. And but stayed on the books for all those years. So then that fell through. So now, it still was back to our property, so they didn't, they didn't finalize that. Then another... so they still did another project later but another man up there asked about buying that piece of land up there. So we made a deal with him to sell the rest of that for the rest of that money. So I looked at it, it was that 900 dollars they beat us out of, you know. That was the interest, you know. So if you can get close to \$10,000 a little less than that, for something that was up there, for all... you paid not a nickel tax, but it stayed on the books all those years! But we didn't live here or anything, so we didn't... but people would ask about... cause I never went over there and looked at no deed or anything. And but... we got that sold for that. So we did... we did make a little money off of it. But I think that's how it started of getting rid of Osage and then we had a situation here where it was a lot of police officers here in Osage and they were over there. I mean they were there, they were just like... you didn't even know who they were. And they had their own, they ran everything over there. You had a council, but the council didn't mean anything, you see. So me and... so Stanley Solomon before he passed, he owned the grocery-- a lot of these buildings also.

06:38

He owned a lot of buildings. This building here and several other. The big store down there. He had the big, big business in that grocery store and the furniture. So we started working on those cops. So his wife and 2 daughters and another guy who was a bad guy who helped close the town and close the other place down there too, we started going to the meetings. And they had a situation where if we came over there, he had like the phone would ring at exactly 7 o'clock, and the guy that was there at the meeting, he was one of them also, you know. And you could see, when the phone would ring, he'd look over at us and he'd tell the guy "yeah." Which means, we're there. So he would cancel the meeting for that night, you see. So we got a Freedom of Information Act--they didn't know anything kind of about it, but oh boy, oh, they

was huffy and puffy when I went over there and so... so needless to say the state police came in and took that computer and it was a whole big story about it. That's how those cops left here. But it was really a funny one night, when they was there, this guy, I guess he figured, well, "We gonna talk no cop/police business" because he had everybody naming streets. The whole county's supposed to be renaming streets, so he put his foot up on the desk, you know, said "I'm gonna have an easy night tonight because all the council people you know, they're naming seats." Or naming streets, so they named this over there Clock Street up there where that man used to live, and street over here name it for a person over there. And one of the council people Evelyn Brown, she said, "Jimbo, how many police officers do we have?" And Jimbo said 5. And the lady that was the... she was the you know the lady that takes care of all the business, whatever the name of that person is, you know. She had all the... she said 6,7,8,9,10,11,12. In the town of about 100... about 100 people. And but see many of 'em still may have not been there, but a lot of them, even some of them are still around here that went to school through the town of Osage. And then Jimbo, he come to me and said, "Al, you got 2 undercover here. 2 undercover police officers here." And they're trying to do, kinda explained it, you know. But the bottom line was it was... and see the town, they wrote about \$300,000 some of tickets. And they owed about \$70,000 of fees that should have been sent in. So when the town was gonna close, if you have a debt in your town, you can't close the town anyway. But they all, oh they worked and worked and they had a, what do you call it, when you're selling stuff off...selling old...

EH: An auction?

AA: Auction, you know. They called it like a Batman car. They had it all green and black striped car. I don't even think I read half of the time. And they auctioned everything over there they could auction off. And I think they said they got about \$16,000 and that's anybody that paid that much of anything, just before, because the town of Osage was on it, or something like that. But they did that and then the one dude went around and had the people vote to close the town or the cops are coming back if you don't do that, you see.

10:54

And that's what the story was about in the Goldenseal Magazine. But he didn't do nothing right. They don't ever have to do anything right to close a town. And then right now, and all through, we had folks down the other day, him and...you had to have a petition before you could even have a vote and he didn't do that, and the lady, all the documentation, she's asking, you didn't have this. You didn't do that, you didn't do that. And the town was closed down in 1995 or around there, but 2006, it was still on the books. And I got a letter through a friend of mine who was in touch with the Governor's Office and all, and the Council for the Governor, you know. I had a list of all the towns in the state of West Virginia that was incorporated, and a whole copy, that thick, of all the towns, and Osage-- it had a ring around Osage...was one of them. So you see, you know, we did a lot of work in trying to make sure that you do things right, but when it come to Osage, you never had to do anything right! But you know, then when you're challenged on it, and I thought about that magazine, I said, you know, cause we did a lot of work on it. We had people go here and go there, I mean they would go check everything out. One young man used to come to my house, come to the apartment and I'd run things down to him, you know. Run things down to him and then there was a big article in the paper that he was talking about all these things (laughs). And he just, you know, it was almost verbatim of what I told him! And I think I looked and I said, now that boy is not that smart! You know? (laughs) So he came and told me said look, "They told me over there. Don't even go near you."

EH: Wow.

AA: "Don't even go near you." So, but the bottom line is, everybody was working to challenge, check all these things out. And when you check them all out, they're all bogus. Everything. All that's in that magazine as well. So, you know, you do things and you do things wrong and you just, you gotta stand up cause sometimes, a lot of folks would be worried, like I should probably worry sometimes about my wellbeing. But you get to the age I am and I'm a long ways from some, like 15 years old or 15 or 16 when the principal over at the school we were at, you know. Something happened down at the gym and this principal kinda gave me a backhand or whatever. And then he called me and my brother to the office and he told us, we would not live to see 21.

EH: Wow.

AA: And even showed us a gun in that desk he had. But see it was a tough place over there. 'Cause you had some bad, I mean I wasn't one of the... See 'cause you had people come from all different areas to that school, see? When you went to school here, it was everybody from Scotts Run. But when you went to Monongalia High, you went with people from all different areas. But... and it worried me too for those years and I went a lot of places. Like going to the steel mill and being a year there. On your own. And going to the service for those couple years. And me and my brother kinda laugh about it now. See, we called each other religiously. We may not talk until May and June. He'll call me about 7:30 on my birthday. In June I'll call him about 7:30 on his birthday. We know... 'cause one time I even called him... somehow his number got mixed up or something and I didn't call him and my mother called and said what's wrong with you and Louis? I said nothing wrong. She said, "You didn't call him!" And that stuck with me forever. So we will never miss calling each other. And we, even our kids--his kids don't even know my kids. And we always talk about. Everybody... all these reunions, I sing at things like that. But we've never had a... we always talk about it but he's 2 years older than me. But we talk about how blessed we are to be in pretty good shape and our ages and all of our kids are in pretty healthy and all, so that's the blessing that you could have, that your kids are doing good and you're...

EH: What year were you born? What's your birthday?

AA: May the 5th, 1937. And he was born June the 14th, so he was born in 1935. Yeah, he'll be 84 this year and I'll be 82 this year. So we kinda laugh about that principal telling us we wouldn't make it to 21. (laughs) But life has been good and this place here, which when you talk about the museum... but we could do more, you see? See when I come back here.

EH: You always could.

AA: Huh?

EH: You always could.

AA: Yeah, you know. And sometimes, we still have a lot of folks have these animosities towards one another. We would be even a stronger town if all these animosities-- see I'm gone for 20 years. I come back, I love everybody! (laughs) But it's not that way with everybody! Even down within the museum area. You know, there are different situations where that... but I'm a hang-in-er there.

17:25

So you know, if you're blessed to bless, then that's the good part. I know that I send many, many people down there to that museum all the time. Even people come here. I send them there. I say, well, like that new couple just came there. They came up here and I told them they had to go there. And they were so... and now they're regulars! But it's just how you want to treat people and how people treat you that is the

blessing. You know, I'll tell you another blessing, now you have been blessed in here today to not have a customer come in here!

EH: Hey, yeah, right!

AA: (laughs) We had 2 people come in here-- one for a broom and one for a phone! You know? Nobody else has been in here, which is unusual because people are pulling in here all the time about this, that, or the other.

EH: We got lucky.

AA: And especially on Friday, see? If people are gonna pick up stuff, usually it's the one on Friday, you know.

EH: Yeah, this was a nice talk. Well let me put this away and I'll take a few photos if that's okay.

AA: Okay, yeah, yeah. And I'm gonna go and...

18:41

END OF TAPE

END OF INTERVIEW