

MFP-076

Interviewee: Anita Jefferson and Arrack Jefferson

Interviewer: Marna Weston

Date: March 22, 2011

W: We are here in Pearl Mississippi, at the home of Reverend Ira K. Jefferson and his wife Mrs. Anita Jefferson. I want to thank you both very much for letting me speak to you tonight. I've been instructed this will primarily be me speaking to Mrs. Jefferson and Reverend Jefferson will come in—kind of like a wrestler—when he needs to. We just had a marvelous dinner and I've been familiarized with some family heirlooms, a treasured photograph of Mrs. Jefferson's mother and her daughter and a letter—a memento that she writes, written in the past so—

ANJ: Two different years. This is 1919 and this one was done in [19]94. My mother passed in 1984. Just a few days before her birthday. And when we had the funeral, my brother is a minister and he preached the funeral. And he took his text from this passage, Proverbs 31, who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. And his subject was, I thought, very apropos for such a woman. He said, eureka! We have found her! And truly, she was a virtuous woman.

W: Why, as a daughter, do you think it's important to remember your mother in this way?

ANJ: She was a special woman. A woman worth remembering, and of course I included her in that book.

W: Your 1991, *Songs of Unsung Heroes*?

ANJ: Right. It's a collection of forty-two people whom I have found to be very instrumental in my life as I grew up in our church, and not just our church but some elsewhere. My mother is one of them, Matilda Bingham. My father, my brother, oldest brother, those I think are all my relatives but, they are among the forty-two people that I can remember who have been very useful in my life. I sat here as we started to introduce it here a quote that I felt was very meaningful. They gave the pitch, we sang the tune. It has been so long, back in [19]91, I guess it was when I did this, and it meant a lot then, and I had said I was going to do a Volume Two and I would still like to do one. I had not gotten to it yet and my children always wondered, when are you going to do Daddy's story?

W: That would be Volume Two?

ANJ: I am doing one now, the life story of the founder of our church, Bishop Charles Price Jones. Well, that was one I did in 2009, and it was a fallout from what I'm doing, the biography. There was so much to be passed and I thought it was too much to incorporate in the biography cover. I decided to make it under a separate cover and entitled it *Excellence Comes With Great Labor*. That is one of his quotations and I used that as the title of the book.

W: When and where were you born?

ANJ: In Jackson, Mississippi, right here.

W: Was there a midwife or were you born in a hospital?

ANJ: I am sure it was a midwife. Aunt Betty, we called her, that is who I heard about, that she would be the one who would deliver us. There were nine of us in the family. This is another one of those quotes that keep me going, when I get tired in my writing and whatever project I happen to be on.

W: That is quite impressive. Would you like to read this quotation that you shared with me?

ANJ: Yes. The zeal and strength of our endeavors must be superior to the difficulties to be surmounted. Discouragement should have no place where industry, persistency, and ingenuity or faith eternal may at last bring the required results. That is a quotation by Charles Price Jones.

W: What do those words mean to you?

ANJ: Well, the zeal, the inspiration—the fervor behind what I am trying to do must be superior above more than the difficulties that I will face in doing it. And discouragement should have no place where industry, persistency, integrity or faith eternal should bring lasting results. In other words, I am working towards these results that will be lasting, on-going, eternal, and I can't let the difficulties stop me from allowing that to happen. And the other one over there, excellence comes with great labor, and that is one of my ambitions—excellence to do everything with the best that I have or all that I have. It is worth it.

W: You did not mention your day and date of birth, but I think I know why you did not mention the year. For my conversation in car so can you share your day and date?

ANJ: I thank the Lord for the opportunity to say it. I got that, I guess, from my mom as a little girl, she would always tell us how old she was and as children we would think that was old but now we know better. I was born December 6, 1937 and my husband was born—

ARJ: He asked for your age.

W: She just volunteered you, didn't she? When and where were you born, sir?

ARJ: October 18, 1935.

W: And where were you born?

ARJ: In West Mifflin, Pennsylvania.

ANJ: That is near Pittsburgh.

ARJ: Yes, outside of Pittsburgh about seven miles.

W: Were you born in a hospital or was there a midwife?

ARJ: Midwife.

W: Let's talk about your parents for just a second. Who were your mom and dad?

ARJ: My dad was Louis L. Jefferson and some point he became Reverend Louis L. Jefferson.

W: And where we he from?

ARJ: He was originally from South Carolina.

W: And your mother?

ARJ: Her name was Jamie C. Jefferson and she was originally from North Carolina.

W: What part of North Carolina? Were they one of these close-to-the-border romances?

ARJ: No, they met in Pittsburgh and both came north. He came north to work and she came north to live with her Aunt. So, they met in Pittsburgh.

W: Do you recall their birth days?

ARJ: My mother's birthday was leap year but I don't remember the date.

ANJ: 21, I think.

ARJ: 29.

W: February 29?

ARJ: Yes, the last day of February. So, she has a birthday every four years.

W: Okay. [Laughter]

ARJ: His birthday was—

ANJ: January.

ARJ: I have no idea. I know he was born a year before his wife, 1899.

W: Do you have any memory of your mother or father's parents? Your grandparents?

ARJ: Nope.

W: On either side?

ARJ: No. Neither one. My mother was raised by her aunts after she left Carolina. As a child she was not raised by her mother, either. I think her mother died when she was around six.

ANJ: She was raised by her grandmother there. Dear, would you grab the quilt with all their pictures on it? Both sides of the family.

W: How about your mom and dad? We talk a little bit about your mother, who were her parents?

ANJ: Her parents lived down on the Spring Ridge Road in Terry, Mississippi, not far from here now. We thought, when we were children, that it was a long way out in the country. They were **McHounds**, **Matilda McHound** was her maiden name.

She was born in 1900, right at the century, and it was always easy to keep up with her age. She was a very devout woman, loved the Lord with all her heart. No hypocrisy. She was genuine. My father was a minister, he loved the Lord. He pastored four churches but he said of himself that he preached at four churches because you couldn't pastor four churches at the same time. He did his best and he was employed with the Illinois Central Railroad. He went to work early in the morning around 4:00 and we liked his working there because, as an employee, he got could get free passes. So, we got the chance to ride the train. We had a trip to Chicago and California and we got to stop at places in between as the train stopped and connected. So, we appreciated those opportunities to travel.

W: What was your dad's name?

ANJ: Willy Bingham Senior. He was a minister.

W: Now, we are looking at a very ornate quilt. This is a tapestry, white with a maroon or burgundy check borders, but there are individuals in each of the squares and there appears to be one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight . . . across on the bottom and one, two, three, four, five, six, seven coming down the sides for forty-six squares.

ANJ: I started out making it for a king size bed but it went beyond a king size.

W: So, this is an actual functional quilt as well, if you choose it to be?

ANJ: Yes. I could use it more as a bedspread.

W: It had seams going from individuals to couples to three and four people, all family.

ANJ: These are our parents, his parents, my parents, his sisters and brothers, my sisters and brother, and our children.

W: Representing both sides of the family.

ANJ: Right.

W: It is beautiful, by the way, this must have taken a lot of work. There is a lot of love in it.

ANJ: It did.

W: You can just see there is a lot of love in it. The photos are excellent because they go from photos taken in the last ten years to photos taken from World War II.

ANJ: This is a drawing of our family home.

W: What would you say would be the oldest photo, how far back would it represent? Because some of them are old but some of them are colorized. That one looks like a World War II photo, but it is in color, and I can tell by the clothes and the color scheme—

ANJ: My sister was younger than I, and she and I were youngest ones at home, and our brother there, with our mother and father, were the last ones to leave home.

W: That is the five of you right there?

ANJ: Right there. Those were our parents in front of our home taken on the steps. Now, what were you going to say, dear?

W: He was pointing out an older picture up top.

ARJ: This was your father's sister.

ANJ: It is my mother, grandmother, that is my father's mother and that is my husband's father and mother right there. Their fiftieth wedding anniversary.

W: Their fiftieth?

ANJ: Uh-huh.

W: I want to know that picture. That was the two of you all, because I see it was remade over here by the African artists. So that is the photo it came from. That is a very good likeness, definitely has the smile down. He transposed you, though, so maybe he was looking at a mirror or something because he switched the sides you were on. That is very interesting. You would have to see both of those to think about it and know it. You both look equally happy in both pictures.

ANJ: This is our eldest son.

W: That is his graduation picture?

ANJ: When he graduated from college, with his Dad. Here is his youngest son when he graduated from college.

W: Okay.

ANJ: And these are the three children. The eldest son is not on here. Well, no, that is me and my daughter and my son.

ARJ: At his graduation.

ANJ: Yeah. And this is his daughter at her graduation.

W: Now, how many brothers and sisters did you say you had?

ANJ: There were nine of us.

W: Can you list them from oldest to youngest please?

ANJ: The oldest was Alma. Just the first names?

W: Yes.

ANJ: Alma, Willie Junior, Cleophus—by the way, she passed about three months ago.

W: I am very sorry for your loss.

ANJ: And Agnes, this is her picture right here, she passed. Mary, Samuel. This is Mary and her husband. Samuel was on there somewhere. Maurice, and then it is I and my youngest sister, Martha.

W: So, you are next to the baby? You are number eight?

ANJ: Right. Knee baby, as they call them.

W: Do you have a legend of this somewhere? A map out, so if somebody else were to look at it, they would be able to tell who was on each square?

ANJ: No, I have not done that yet. That would be something to do.

W: Make that a little Christmas project. I did not buy you anything this Christmas and instead I got you a legend of the quilt so you know who is in each picture. Merry Christmas! Love you, Merry Christmas! Keeping it inexpensive this year. So, growing up with either brothers and sisters, did you have chores that you had to do at home?

ANJ: Well, that is interesting. Our ages range in such a way that all of us were never home at the same time, because our eldest sister had a daughter who is older than I am. Our eldest brother has a son who is just a bit younger than I am. So, they were away from home before I was born.

W: What year was the first child born?

ANJ: In our family?

W: Yes.

ANJ: 1923. Wait a minute. I just do not remember what her birth year was.

W: How about the birth year of the last child?

ANJ: She was two years than I, which is [19]39.

W: So, probably somewhere over a fifteen, sixteen-year time frame to separate the children?

ANJ: Let me see. I am not sure just how that works out, I just know that they were gone before I was there. I remember that her oldest daughter and the others' older son, we were all growing up together in separate homes.

W: So, the original question is, what kind of chores did you have?

ANJ: Well, one thing I could remember was my last whipping that I got was hanging up the wash on the clothes line. Mother always liked for it to be done on a certain way—hung up nice and special.

W: So it would not catch the dirt and—

ANJ: —and I must have just thrown them on the line and that was unacceptable.

W: Did you have to go get the switches yourself and twist them together? [Laughter]

ANJ: We did. We did.

W: Everybody had the same parents. [Laughter]

ANJ: We could not just get it any kind of way.

W: Don't get something that will break real quick. You get double if they had to go get it.

ANJ: Mother had a practice of when we were promised a whipping, you could be sure you were going to get it but you did not know when.

W: Oh yeah, you might take a nap. Might go to the store and come back.

ANJ: You'd go to bed at night and go to sleep and she would wake you up to the tune of your whippin' in the morning. She wouldn't just give it to you right away. So that was one thing that we could remember about the whippings. We could prefer that daddy would whip us if we would to get a whippin'. But daddy seldom whipped.

W: So you couldn't get that swift immediate punishment, you got the lingering—you don't know when it's coming, think about it.

ANJ: Oh, yes, indeed.

W: Well, that's an effective method. Did you have to cook or clean?

ANJ: Oh, yeah, you asking about that. I had to do some of—all of it, at different times, but I ended up doing a lot of cooking at home, and I enjoyed cooking. One of the first things I cooked was, I believe, a pound cake. Mother called it a 1, 2, 3, 4

cake and they still have that recipe today on the back of Swan's Down cake flour: 1,2,3,4 cake. Very simple to make and we always looked forward to having that. It was our Sunday dessert. We had pound cake and Jell-O. We did not have electric refrigeration, so in the wintertime to get our Jell-O, we would beat it up and set the dish outside. Of course, overnight, it would gel. During the summertime we had an icebox. We had a man who would come through the community and his name was Mr. King and he would provide ice for us. We would get a block of ice, twenty-five pounds or fifty pounds and he would have the tongs that he would either bring it in the house with his tongs or they would have these ice strings to tie on them and we could pick it up ourselves. If we didn't have a refrigerator, sometimes we could put it in a croker sack with sawdust or some way to keep it. We would set our Jell-O in the icebox on top of the ice. Those were interesting days.

W: Did you family ever sit and listen to shows on the radio together?

ANJ: Shows on the radio . . .

W: Radio programs?

ANJ: No, I can't remember that we actually sat down to listen, but we listened while we worked, and while it was always something going on, on the radio. Most of what we listened to on the radio was gospel programming, and as I said, my mother was a devout Christian woman. They chose what we listened too. They did not think it was proper for us to listen to worldly music. As we went to church, it

wasn't a matter of singing one thing at church and going home and everything playing on the radio. We didn't have all kinds of songs and music coming in over the airways.

W: Did you listen to radio programs or sporting events? Like Joe Louis was fighting or something like that?

ANJ: Yes, we would, but our programming was selective, also—during those times, there were very few blacks in entertainment. It was supposed to be something very special, to have a black person come on and do something. The normal thing that most people did was, oh—so and so and so is going to be a black person on the radio when TV came. Everybody wanted to hear it, but there wasn't so in our house. If the song, for instance, was a musical program, and if the song was not appropriate for us as a Christian home, it didn't play just because it was a black person. It didn't matter who it was. It did not come through our home if they did not approve of the song, for instance. So that is the kind of living that we had in our home. I don't know if you have heard of these because you weren't there—from that time—this was before your time. The old-fashioned revival hour was a program that came on every Sunday. What was the preacher's name—Charles E. Fowler was that program's preacher, I believe. He came in at 3:00 or 4:00 on Sundays. We had on during the week a Bible study—a preacher that came on everyday at 9:00. We had—and, of course, when Billy Graham started coming, he would come in on 2:30 on Sunday afternoons. Some of the prominent preachers who were fixtures on our radio and TVs, those things

we listened to and we heard from morning till night. And if a program came on, and it seems like most everyone that came on every fifteen to thirty minutes came on a different one, and the leader would say, let's pray. My mother wouldn't just keep washing dishes or ironing or whatever she was doing, she stopped while they prayed. That was just the way she lived her life. Now, we didn't have to do it, as children, but that's the way she did it, and she believed that prayer was something that should have been revered and that's why she stopped and prayed. She believed in a certain position for prayer. She believed that prayer ought to be either—should either stand for prayer, or bow on your knees for prayer. No such thing as sitting on a seat if you were an able-bodied person. She, as I told you, was not a hypocrite. She thought that you should get on your knees or stand when you pray, or when it was being offered. She didn't care if she was in the city auditorium with thousands of people around. And they asked to have prayer—let us pray. If they didn't ask you to stand for the prayer, she would slip to her knees wherever she was sitting. That is just what she believed in. So, it wasn't a matter of everybody else doing it or not doing it. She stuck to her convictions wherever she was. That is the kind of person my momma was. You don't have time for me to tell you about her.

W: It goes without saying that the church was a big part of your life growing up, you and your family.

ANJ: Oh, yes. We went to Tuesday night prayer meeting, Friday teachers' meeting, even though we weren't Sunday school teachers. But that's where we went.

W: Teachers get their lessons together on Friday, to be organized for Sunday school on Sunday.

ANJ: Right.

W: So you always knew the lesson before you got the Sunday school.

ANJ: Oh, yes. I was a Sunday school teacher early. As a girl, I would help my teacher teach her class, and we would go to choir rehearsals. I can't quite remember the night that we would go to choir rehearsal and I'd learn the songs. That is one reason that, besides having sung them in church, I learned them well. I could sing most any one by memory because that was our life.

W: So, you are one of those people that, if you were to go out by the river for the baptism, you know all the songs?

ANJ: Well, we didn't go to the river. I was baptized one cold Sunday morning in the winter. I guess it was at our big church—our denominational church. We called it the temple, the first temple. We used their facilities indoors, the baptistery they had in the church there. So, I think that was around five o' clock one Sunday morning when they would have baptism service.

W: What is your earliest memory of formal education? Where did you first go to school?

ANJ: I was blessed to be able to walk to all of my schools, from elementary school through college. We lived a few blocks from the school and I went to. What they

call—it is not there anymore, they have taken all those things down. I got to ride through there the other night and it is entirely a new town; a college town now. But Sally Reynolds was my elementary school.

W: Sally Reynolds Elementary? Who was it named after? Who was Sally Reynolds?

ANJ: She was a member of our church and a teacher in the public school system. Of course they named one of the schools after her. Then I went to—in the same complex, a different building—Jim Hill High School. Well, Jim Hill Junior High went up to ninth grade, then, and Jim Hill was one of the senators in the time of Reconstruction. The school was named after him. By the time that I got to go to high school, generally we would have had to go across town to the only other high school we had publicly. By the time I became in the high school department, they made a high school there in that area—that location. So, I just had to change buildings, and then when I got to college—

W: What was the name of the high school?

ANJ: Jim Hill High School

W: Okay, so it wasn't somewhere else, it was just where you were.

ANJ: Right.

ARJ: Same block.

ANJ: Then a few blocks over there was Jackson College, where I went to college.

W: Just down in Jackson State?

ANJ: Yes, and in the meantime, during that college time, I broke away and I went to Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, and when I graduated there, I came back to Jackson College, and I got a diploma at Moody, and got a degree at Jackson College.

W: What moved you to attempt seminary between your bachelors degree?

ANJ: Well, as I grew up early in life, I gave my life to the Lord. It was a matter of dedicating my whole self to God. To be what he wanted me to be. To go where he wanted me to go. I was interested in becoming a missionary if the Lord so chose. It was interesting, there were several things I was interested in. I wanted to be a mother or a housewife, if that is what God wanted me to be. But I also wanted to go to Africa as a missionary, and during my growing up, as a part of our youth ministry, this was extra church activities. We had missionaries to come to visit, and mostly they were from Africa, and they would show slides and we would have film and those pictures were so vivid and beautiful. Of course, the ministry there was presented—and I would think, I would like to go. As it were, I didn't get to go. I went to Moody Bible Institute, as I was telling you, and while I was there, I found out that Mary McLeod Bethune went to Moody Bible Institute, and she was the only black student there, and graduated in 1885. I was the only black student in the dorm my first year, and I found that we had similar experiences when we were there, when she was there in the 1890's, and I came along in 1956-1957, along in there. Anyway, I found out later that I had an

opportunity to go to Africa in 1986-1989, and I found that the road rides, the forest, the jungles, look just like the pictures that I had seen as a girl. Very vivid. It seemed as if I had been there but I knew I hadn't. It was just something to see, the plants growing, the plants that we had as house plants here, growing wild in the jungle and on the roadsides. So, it was just a magnificent thing.

W: How long did you stay in Africa and where did you go when you were there?

ANJ: I went to visit our church mission. I was president of our Women's Work at the time and I went to visit our missionaries from our church. We stayed about two to three weeks.

W: Where were you in Africa?

ANJ: Liberia, West Africa. Then we were blessed. After going to Liberia, we went to Kenya, and Kenya was more or less a triangle. From here to Liberia was the distance as from Liberia to Kenya. It was quite a trip, to be able to visit the missionary works there, and we got to visit in Kenya. We got to visit the Bible translation ministry there in Kenya, East Africa. Liberia, West Africa was the other place. And, of course, I got a plus on that trip. I had the opportunity of going on a safari, and we lived in a tree house. That was quite an experience.

W: Somewhere along the way from Moody to Jackson College and your graduation, you got married. Where is that in all of this?

ANJ: Well, since he hasn't said much, let's let him tell about that. That is where I met him, at Moody.

W: And how did you end up at Moody Bible College?

ARJ: Moody Bible Institute. I was in the military service, in the Air Force. And that is where I came to know the Lord. Those who lived in the Lord mentioned Moody and that it would be something I would be interested in when I got out. So when I got out, I went to the V.A. told them I had a mission to go to Moody. I didn't know anything about school except that they had used the name to say that that was where I may be interested in going. They gave me a battery of tests, to see digital tests and background and stuff. It came back like I knew it would, he said, you have to be a machinist. I said, no, I want to go to Bible school. They were going to be able to pay for it. So, he finally conceded that that's what I wanted to do, and he had a Moody catalogue in his desk.

W: How long were you in the Air Force?

ARJ: Four years, and at the end of that time—five months earlier—they were cutting the size of the service. They said, anybody who was not going to re-enlist can get out. So, I got out about five months early. Just a little less than four years.

W: Where were you stationed?

ARJ: My last two years were in England, near London.

W: What was the name of the base?

ARJ: Well, the first base I went in England was Bird Drop Park, that's a name you can't forget.

W: Bird drop? That'll stick with you. [Laughter]

ARJ: That was the first base I've ever went to when I was there, and from there, I moved closer to London. It was a hospital base, but I can't remember the name of it.

W: Where did you do your training for the Air Force?

ARJ: In Great Lakes, Illinois.

W: And do you remember the name of the base?

ARJ: Great Lakes Naval Base, something like that, but it was a Naval base and they had the area of training that I was going to get there. So, they sent us there. I was in the dental field, technician. What do they call it? Like a nurse would be to a doctor.

W: So, how did you end up choosing the Air Force?

ARJ: Well, do you want to make a long story long or short? [Laughter]

W: The tape is running. [Laughter]

ARJ: I grew up outside of Pittsburgh. That was steel city, so they had all kinds of related industry. So, I wanted to be a machinist.

W: Even in high school?

ARJ: I was in junior high when I first got interested in it, because they offered industrial arts in junior high.

W: Which junior high school did you attend?

ARJ: Homeville. Now if you were to ask where I was born then, I would say Homeville, which is now West Mifflin.

W: Was there a particular teacher that taught at Homeville that got you interested in machinery?

ARJ: No. The area at that time is surrounded by industry and I always did things with my hands—fixed my bicycle, stuff like that, and just got interested. When I finished junior high, which was ninth grade, I went to a vocational school.

W: What was the name of that school?

ARJ: McKey Sport Vocational High School.

W: Who was the principal?

ARJ: I don't know. I remember him, but I don't know his name. Homeville didn't have a high school, so they had an arrangement with the senators around who had a high school, and we could go to whichever one we chose and they would pay our transportation. So, I had to catch a street car and transfer to another street car and then to a bus to get to school. Or I could get two street cars and walk the last

mile; it was shorter to walk the last mile than it was to take the other bus and go all the way around. That was, if you hurry, you could make it quicker walking. So I went to vocation school, where I took up machine shop. They told me when I signed up that I wouldn't get a job as a machinist around Pittsburgh, they just didn't hire us at the time. So I said I still wanted to do it. I took that and then graduated. I did well in class. The last year I was there, they had an arrangement with General Electric. We could do our work at the General Electric company and do the academics at school—two weeks at a time. I was good enough to do that but they just wouldn't let me do it, because I was black and they didn't hire any blacks in that area. And that is how I got to the Air Force.

W: Because you had the training to be a machinist but couldn't get the job?

ARJ: There was no way to get one around that area. So I said, if I go to the Air Force—and, at that time, they were offering if you join, you can chose what field you want. So I joined and chose machinist. That is how I got into that. Of course, joining the service wasn't unusual, because all the men in my family were all military folks in the Second World War. That was natural anyhow.

W: So, back to the original question, how did you all meet?

ARJ: Well, okay. It was how I got to a machinist to a general assistant. So, what happened was, when I got to the base the first night, I'd just gotten paid on a little job I had at a department store. The first night, the guy who was supposed to watch the barracks stole the money from the new folks who came in.

W: Oh my gosh.

ARJ: So, that held me up when it was time for me to finish my basic training and go to my other training.

W: You were getting giggled for what was happening.

ARJ: I was having to wait until his trial as evidence, you know, he stole my money. He did this to about ten or fifteen guys. We got there late, so I didn't get to take what I signed up for. When they signed us loose, they said, look, we got some space up here in Great Lakes Illinois for some dental assistants.

W: Take it or leave it. [Laughter]

ARJ: Yeah, so that's how I got into that. Then, of course, we were all working it out so I got to say I was going to be in England. And that's when the guy mentioned Moody. I came back and said that I wanted to go. I still didn't know anything about the school. I thought more in terms of a place where middle-aged older folks went to study the Bible. I got there and I was among the older people there because I had gone to service. Most men went straight from high school. That was a total surprise, that there was young people there. The other surprise, that you wanted to know how we met, I didn't know that girls went to Bible school. So I didn't go there for that reason, but when I got there, what are you going to do? [Laughter] So, when I got there, I met Anita and we got engaged after our first year. We married after I graduated—she was two years ahead of me. They had a rule that, if you married, you had to drop out a year and then come back.

Rather than do that, we waited two years, then got married. That's how I got in touch with what is going on here in Jackson.

W: Marvelous. Well, thank you for sharing that. I personally think that's a good place to take the break on this one. On behalf of the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program, I'd like to thank both of you for taking the time to let me ask you these questions about your life. I know it is going to richly help people and entertain and inform them and let them know you have had such great experiences. And I'd like to conclude my interview with that thanks and also to give you the opportunity to say anything that you would like to say something about the interview, something that was touched on, something that wasn't, something you want to carry on further. And these will be my last remarks by the end of your comments between each other. That will conclude the interview. And again thank you very much.

ANJ: Well, you don't have the rest of the night, so we can sign off. [Laughter]

ARJ: That was an interesting experience and we thank you for coming. Actually, Anita has a poem that you might be interested in that describes what she is doing now. This biography project.

ANJ: Okay, let's see. Where is it? I am doing the biography of the founder of our church, and it's been a long time coming, but I think I'm about to the place where I'm almost ready to publish my book. I am using this sort of as a forward introduction along with other stuff. I call it *The Biography Writer* and I have made

a take on the poem, *The Bridge Builder*. It goes like this, An old man going alone on a highway/ came at the evening cold and gray/ To a chasm vast and deep and wide/ through which was following a sullen tide/ The old man crossed in the twilight dim/ that sullen stream had no fears for him/ But he turned when he reached the other side/ and built a bridge to span the tide/ Old man, said a fellow pilgrim near/ you're wasting strength in building here/ Your journey will end with the ending day/ You never again must pass this way/ You've crossed the chasm deep and wide/ Why build you a bridge at the eventide?/ The builder lifted his old gray head/ Good friend, in the path I have come, he said/ there followeth after me today/ a youth whose feet must pass this way/ This chasm that has been naught to me/ to that fair head youth may be a pitfall/ He too must cross in the twilight dim/ Good friend, I'm building the bridge for him. So I named my poem, *The Biography Writer*. An aging pedagogue observing the times/ saw a name missing from its annals sublime/ A man from history stood out like an alpine peak/ towering over his fellows in thought and in feet/ A reformer, rhetorician, musician, theologian, minister, prophet/ A fearless champion of truth/ A valiant warrior for righteousness/ The tutor observing the chronicles void/ accepted the challenge to research and record/ She responded with inquiring mind/ to pen the biography of the bishop so kind/ The life of this hero with experiences great/ developed through obedience for his master's sake/ Madame teacher, asked the observers as they rushed by/ why spend your labor with history gone by?/ Folk have too much stories to tell/ what was with Jones we should know so well/ To be wisdom's true son/ to prove faithful to God, not to pile up success, was his deep

quest/ His faithful service brought power from on high/ Radiance it gave him, and
grace to die/ Great life experiences fighting the good fight/ of faith gave him
power with the spirit and a courageous race/ The tutor carefully weighed the
vestment of time/ and mulled over the real reason for her sacrifice sublime/ Dear
observer, said she, behind me there follows today/ some youngsters yea oldsters
who attention will pay/ This legacy valiant to me/ new generations significance
may see/ They too may read and acquire/ a rich character of excellence, a spirit
filled life of holy beauty and righteousness. Anita Bingham Jefferson. That is my
raison d'être. My reason for being.

[End of interview]

Final edited by: Diana Dombrowski, July 19, 2013