



Voices

OF OUR REGION

Interviewee: **Audrey Weaver**

Interviewee Number: **47**

Interviewers: **Athena Aardweg, Judy Barricella**
& Tony Buba

Date of Interview: **June 11, 2008**

Funding provided by the FISA Foundation

Audrey Weaver

We begin by your giving us your name and where you live and tell us a little bit about your family and your life.

All right. My name is Miss Audrey Weaver. I live at 421 East 8th Avenue, Apartment 201, Homestead, PA, which is a highrise. I have nine children. I have five living, four dead, and I have twenty-eight grandchildren and great grandchildren. I'm sixty-nine years old. I'm thankful to be here, you know? I've been in this wheelchair for the last fifteen years. I have osteoarthritis, so the doctor said. And they wanted to operate, but I wouldn't let them. Cause they was going to cut me too many times and I didn't want to be cut that many times, you know. But in the process, I'm doing fine as far as I'm concerned. You know. I'm not in a lot of pain and I stay pretty busy. I'm judge of election here. I'm head of the Welcome Committee, the head of the newsletter, and I give funtonings. For instance, June 13th I'm giving a Father's Day dinner. You know, the Lord brought to me that you always honor my women, but you never honor my men. So I'm giving a dinner to honor the fathers, you know. And the oldest we have a gift for, and the youngest. We have a little program we're putting together. But on the whole here, you know, I love it. Everything's so convenient. This is the only place I've ever lived, praise the Lord, that if you don't want to leave, you can enjoy staying here. Because, if I don't want to go to a show, I can watch a movie theater here. If I don't want to go to Physical Therapy, I got Physical Therapy here. If I don't want to go to the doctor, I have a clinic here. So actually, it's a blessing to live here, you know? And I'm the type of person that I'm just so thankful when things are convenient or a blessing to me. I want the world to know how blessed we are, and God has annointed me to help people. Now this wheelchair, praise the Lord, it limits me, but thank God it don't stop me. I can still do things that I want to, and I have a beautiful family, the girls that work for me are beautiful, you know I'm too blessed to be stressed, and I praise and thank God for that, and most of all it's important to me – I have beautiful friends. To me friends and family are a very important, and if they're true friends, it's not too much difference in them being family, and I thank God for that. I have some grandchildren that are beautiful. They work for me, you know? And to be able to have family to do these things and get along with it, praise the Lord, I thank God for that, and my children, thank God for. They just cater to me. (choked up) Sometimes I'm so thankful, you know, that when you look at me, don't feel sorry. Tears of joy.

Don't feel sorry for me cause I'm like this. Just pray for me. Praise the Lord. Even like this I have a beautiful life. They think, when you're disabled, maybe some people think it's a hardship. Some ways it is. Most of my ways it's not, because I stay active and I'm just so thankful just to be here. In my life, if I can help somebody, I'm a happy person, cause I love helping people. You know, my mother used to tell me, "You're never going

to have nothing, cause you give everything away.” And it doesn’t bother me, as long as I know I’m helping someone and making them happy. Here I give all kind of fares, and no matter where you live, it’s not always going to be the way you want it. You’re going to find some people you get along with, some you don’t, but you know, those that I don’t get along with, I get along with, whether they want me to or not, praise the Lord. So like I said, my life to me is a blessing. If I could have it any other way, I’m not going to say I wouldn’t, cause I’d love to walk, but I can’t, so I adjust. I’m not stressed about it. I just do the best I can with what I got, and some people are in worsen shape. I see some people, praise the Lord, you know I just thank God that I’m like I am because they can’t move, nobody come see a body. I worked in nursing twenty-one years and I’ve seen a lot, you know. So I don’t have no complaints. If I do, you’d never know it, cause I give it to the Lord, praise the Lord. And any time you give something to God, you can bet it’s worked out, cause he’s been good to me, you know. Can I give a little testimony, praise the Lord? You know the people that help me are called TRCIL. I know people have heard of that. And I needed some more hours, and praise the Lord, they kept telling me that the government don’t do this and the government don’t do that. So I said, “I’ll tell you what we’re going to do. You do what the government asks you to do, and I’m going to do what God told me to do. Because I don’t care what the government do, it’s worked out. Because God told me in Psalm 37 in 4th, ‘You delight yourself in me, I’ll give you your heart’s desire.’” So I got the hours.

So they went on and did what they was supposed to do, and of course, if you know anything about serving God, the devil’s busy. They kept telling me, “You’re not going to get it, you’re not going to get it.” And to make a long story short, my caseworker called me up and she said, “You have the hours.”

I said, “Praise the Lord. I told you, I knew that when I asked for it. Because God don’t tell you to do nothing that he hasn’t already done, praise the Lord. Now, in two weeks’ time, I got 157 hours, more than anybody in the company, so tell me I’m not blessed. So what do I have to complain about? And then to meet nice people like you are, come to put me on camera, praise the Lord. All these things are a blessing to me, and if I’m permitted to, Ray Henderson, I love him dearly. Very good friend of mine. We worked together here. He was with that Center for Victims of Violent Crime, and he used to come out and do little programs, telling people about safety, and bring stuff out for them to read, and we worked together quite awhile, and you know, over the years of knowing him, we’ve come like brother and sister, and when you meet someone like that, you value that. So like I said, I just praise him, thank God that he put these kind of people in my life. And I’m a people person. Because if I meet you I know God ordained that, too. And He has given me, see, people don’t know nothing about that (???). It’s not hard for me to say, “I love you. I love you from my heart and I will do anything for you. Because that’s how God made me, and I thank God for it.” Cause in this world, it’s rough out here. I lost four children, you know, and God brought me through. My one son was in a car accident. A friend of mine was drinking. I told him, “Don’t never put my son in your car.” And he did, and they hit a pole out there by Kennywood. Knocked his brains out. Tore his arm off. Tore his legs off. Burned a hole in his face.

You know, my daughter to this day we don't know what happened. They found her in the river. But I say this, "I'm still here. God brought me through. Do I miss my children? Yes. Wish I had 'em, but that's all right. One day I'll see 'em, praise the Lord. Two other children, my one daughter was born with a puncturated intestine. She died at twelve days old. My other son died, I think he died when he was about a month old, but that was fifty years ago. But in the meantime, I got five other children, four boys and one girl. Thank God for.

Are they all around here?

Yes, thank God, except one. One's in Washington, D.C. But they all love Mother, thank God. I guess that sounds, when I say "love Mother," you know I seen some parents with disable... some children with disabled parents. My heart goes out to them, cause the kids don't care. And it just, you know, I'm just pricked in the heart at some of the things that I see. So I go home and I get on my knees and I ask God, "Help them. Send them somebody," you know, cause we all need somebody. But praise the Lord, that's the only thing you can do is pray, and believe in what you pray for. I don't pray for nothing I don't believe in. Once I pray for it and give it to God, I'm through, cause it's done. He said, "If you'll only believe." And I've been doing this for the last fifty years.

You need to come to my church and preach.

Praise the Lord. I'm just so thankful, I don't know. I guess sometimes I get overly zealous for a lack of words, but that's what I feel. And you have to let it out, praise the Lord. And I want the world to know, I thank God for this day that he has made, praise the Lord. You know, he woke me up this morning, in my right mind. These legs ain't working too well, but I can move them. These arms ain't working too well, but I can move them. And ain't nothing wrong with my head, praise the Lord. Nothing wrong with my head, and that's a blessing. They say osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis messes with your head. Well it ain't got to my head yet, and I don't intend for it to get there. They say at my age, which I don't do old and I don't do sick. You know, you get sixty-nine years old, seventy, and they say that's old. Since when? You're only as old as you feel, and my grandchildren and children are keeping me young. And praise the Lord for it. I'm not running around here acting like I'm a hundred years old. No, no, I'm going to work around here like God want me to, praising Him and thanking Him for being here, praise the Lord.

How long have you lived in this complex?

Since 1990. When I first moved in here I was walking, but three years after I moved in here my legs got so bad I had to get in this wheelchair, but since then, I've just been doing what thus say the Lord, and thankful to God that I can do it, you know. I know you, as a disabled person, can understand me. Cause you're only disabled as much as you let yourself be, praise the Lord. And I'm not going to say I haven't never got discouraged. Because when I walked around I did that too. I got discouraged, too. I did that, too, and I get that way sometimes. But I hit my knees, figure of speech, and I ask

God to help me and he does. And I just keep on going. Just the fact that I woke up this morning is a blessing, praise the Lord. So I thank Him and I bless Him.

So, when you moved in here, you didn't need a wheelchair accessible apartment. But now you do. Were they able to move you into a...

Yes. They didn't until after it was renovated. Before it was renovated, they weren't... accessible. You know, they were wheelchair accessible, but it wasn't like it was if you're disabled. But after they renovated it, they made it so a disabled person could get around much better, you know. I have a two-bedroom, cause I'm entitled to a caretaker. Care, uh, giver, and when you have a caregiver, then you're entitled to two bedroom. So my granddaughter stays with me. And thank God... She was in foster care, and praise the Lord, my son was on drugs. He had her and her brother. I've had them since they was around two, three years old, and most of the time they were with me. He had his own place, but most of the time they were with me. But he got so strung out on those drugs, they took him, and they were in foster care for three years. And I went to court, believe in God, cause you know, they don't want to give no disabled person children. But the judge never questioned it. He just said, "Give that grandmother them children." I never even got a chance to run my mouth. He just gave the kids to me. Well, my granddaughter, my grandson is with my daughter, so both of them is out of foster care. One of my main things was I wanted them to bond with their dad again, and this gives them a chance. They've really gotten close. She's been with me since 2006, and they've really gotten close.

In 2006, it wasn't like the court, because the caseworkers wouldn't give you the kids. Is that right?

Well, the psychiatrist said she didn't believe that I could handle my granddaughter. Well, see, she couldn't understand why she was in foster care, cause she hadn't done nothing. Which is understandable. But I've had the child since she was a little girl. And I told her, "She's more used to me than anybody else," praise the Lord. And she didn't want to go with anybody else. I said, "So actually you all are the ones can't have her." And I'm not saying we don't have our ups and downs, cause we do. That's normal to me, you know, but I'm just glad she's with me. Sometimes I just want to put my hands around her neck and choke her sometimes, but I think we've all went through that with our children. I thank God for her.

How old is she?

She's eighteen. She should have graduated this year, but she'll graduate next year.

Does she go to Steel Valley?

Yeah, they graduated yesterday. Yeah, my other granddaughter graduated. She's seventeen and she graduated, praise the Lord. But every year, I guess for the next five or six years, I have a grandchild graduating. There's so many of them, I think it's one each

years for the next five or six years. And then some more after that. But I tell them that diploma is very, very important. My granddaughter's a little, she's not aggressive when it comes to school, but with me, I try to express this and I keep on her, you know. She has to go to summer school, and I said, winter, summer, whatever, you're going to get a diploma. So next year she'll, as they say, "walk."

You know, I was telling her I graduated. Do you know they lost my diploma? I didn't get it till forty-eight years later. The original one. I got it forty-eight years later. I meant to bring it with me. Praise the Lord. They called me up. What happened was a janitor was cleaning the office, the old school office, and he moved a cabinet and all these diplomas fell out, and I happened to be one of them, and they called me up and asked me did I want it.

I said, "I know you're not serious. Of course, I want it. I earned that." So they said, "Well you have to send someone for it." "No problem," you know? So I got my diploma. You know that diploma's important. That's something you earned – for twelve years. Oh, wow! Those are your beautiful years in life. At that time we don't realize it, do we?

I wish I could convince my son would of that right now.

But those are beautiful years. You have memories that you keep about those years. And that's what I told my granddaughter. These are years that you cherish, so I'm praying that she graduates next year. And I just believe in God. My granddaughter, yesterday, I was so proud of her. I couldn't go to the graduation, but she brought, they all came down. She brought her diploma and her gown and her hat. Had a little graduation in the kitchen. She showed me what happened, you know, and I was just so proud of her. She was a straight A student all through school. Straight A's. And now, her and her sister is going into beauticianing business. Her sister is already, so they're going to get a shop together. So I said, "Well, just praise the Lord." It just, when I look at my family and I just praise God and I thank him for the way they are.

Now I had some kids was on drugs. And I'm telling you, they sent me through something, but I kept on praying, kept on praying. I'm telling the devil, "You didn't give them to me and you can't have them." And God has really worked with my children. I have a son that's with me now. When I look at him, I'm telling you, you talk about praising God. I thank God because they done tried to kill him, and everything behind selling drugs. But I kept on praying, and praise the Lord, he's going to church, working, doing beautiful, and fixing to get married. I said, "Now I know this is God," cause he didn't think he was going to be in this world with just one woman, you know, but God settled him down. And when he said, "Mom, I'm getting married," I said, well that was shouting time.

Praise the Lord, I thank God for -- he works for that company down there that's building that casino. Wycliffe, or... It's called Wycliffe, and he works down there for them, building that casino. And he's recruiting coach for Mississippi State University. He's

been trying for twelve years to become a coach, and God favored him. He leaves here next month, in July. Football. So they've had him working over the summer, but he reports to Mississippi State in July. And the job he got here, it's a worldwide job, so he can work both jobs down there. When God opens doors, Honey, he fixes it so you can do whatever you need to do, praise the Lord. So he can work down there on both jobs, and I praise and thank God. Cause I used to tell him, I used to look at him and say, "You know, I rebuke that devil in you in the name of Jesus. Cause he didn't give you to me and he cannot have you, praise the Lord." Cause all of them gonna become preachers, cause I asked God for that. Praise the Lord, and I'm standing on it. Even my daughter, she was stoned, I guess they call junkie, thank God she's been clean six years now, and that was her daughter that graduated. That's the third one that graduated. She's got six girls. She's got three more to go and she said yesterday, she said, "Mom, this is the third one, we got three more to go."

I said, "Well, just praise the Lord." Her other sister comes out next year. I said "Pam, just keep holding onto God and he opens doors for you to do what you're supposed to do."

My daughter never was married, and she met this fella. And, praise the Lord, he took care of kids all through her drug thing. He kept them kids. You know, and when she got clean they got married. Well, they got married before he got clean, cause I thought something was wrong with him. I said, "Why you gonna marry a drug addict?" But he married her, and now they're doing good. Thank God for that. I tell her every day, "You're blessed because no man wants to marry no drug addict, and then take care of six kids that's not his." And they're all girls. He never got out the way with none of them or nothing. He's dad to them. Praise the Lord, you know. I thank God for that because that is a blessing. That's another reason why I'm so blessed, cause I had to go to court and everything to keep the kids out of the system before she met this man. But God let them stay with me, you know, and I've had children all my life, since I was fifteen. And without children I feel kind of lost, because children are... they keep you vibrant and busy. You know, after sixty-nine years old, your brain gets a little tired. Praise the Lord and they keep it vibrant, you know. And I tell my granddaughter, I said to her, "You know one of my thoughts would bust your brains wide open."

She said, "Okay, Grandma, okay," whatever that means.

My grandfather used to say that to me, he said like "One of my thoughts would bust your brains wide open."

I said, "Well just praise the Lord," you know, and that's the way I am. When I can sit down and talk and laugh with them and have fun with them, and even at being saved, you know, and I pray with them. They say "Come to my grandma's house because she's going to pray for them." Prayer changes things and this is what God commissions us to do. Pray for one another, and if it don't be for prayer, I believe all my kids would have been dead, because my two boys was on drugs, and one night they were with our cousin. And he, I don't know, wanted to go on the hill or somewhere, and he got right to the High

Level Bridge and he put both of my boys out the car. In the meantime, he gets to Squirrel Hill and the police was chasing him, and he hit a pole and some kind of way in that wreck cut his head off. Killed him. Now just think if my two boys had been in this – my oldest son said to me, “Ma, I know you was praying,” and I had said to him before he ever said that to me, I said, “You know God woke me up and I was praying for you and your crazy brother. What you’all doing?”

He said, “Ma, we should have been there.”

I said, “Well just praise the Lord.” And that was my aunt’s grandson that was in the accident, cut his head right off. And you know, that’s what you call a wakeup call. You got to change your life. Now the one is still messing around, but my oldest son, he’s taking care of them kids. He had eight kids, and his wife, she has multiple sclerosis. And he’s taking care of her and working every day. And I thank God that he made that change, and it was only God that can do it. But in my lifetime, Honey, I could tell you some stories, but you know what? I’m still here from childhood, through rape, the whole bit, and I’m still here. And when I look back on my life I thank God that God lets me use it to help somebody, because your life is a testimony for somebody. And most young girls, a lot of young girls I’ve talked to I’ve helped, through the grace of God, and I thank God. “Don’t have no baby at fifteen. Don’t do that, you know. Do something conservative, worthwhile in your life.” I’m not saying that having babies is bad, but there’s a time and a place for everything. Go to school, graduate, go to college, get married, then have children, and your life is fulfilled then. You know, I thought I was Miss It, I knew it all. Couldn’t tell me nothing. And I had a baby. I must have thought it was a babydoll. You just don’t jump up and leave a baby, do your thing, you know. You have to learn how to take care of it.

My grandmother, thank God for her, she taught me a lot. I missed out on a lot cause I couldn’t do a lot of things because the only thing my grandmother made me do was graduate. She didn’t care what I was going to graduate, and that’s one thing I can say now, I accomplished in my life, and I praise and I thank God for that. But like I tell my children, “Do something worthwhile with your life. Make it count.” Are we finished?

So did you raise your children here in Homestead?

Never lived nowhere else.

You were born in Homestead?

At McGee Hospital. I stayed with my grandmother from the time I was three weeks old until I left her. And I never lived nowhere else. I couldn’t live nowhere else, I had too many babies. You know, you have to stay around family and friends, you got a whole bunch of kids and I thank God, cause this down here with all these buildings in it, it used to be called The Ward. And houses and stores, you remember? You could find anything down here, drugs, whiskey, crazy folks, the whole bit, but we were a close knit people. We loved each other. Watched out for our kids. My kids, before they finished it they

used to climb up on these buildings, on the steel beam. By the grace of God they didn't fall off and kill themselves. But God kept them, and they used to worry these old folks over here to death.

I had to beat em and beat em. "Leave them old folks alone." But kids will be mischievous. And look where I ended up at. Thanking Jesus for it. They call this the Old Folks Home, the "Thank You, Jesus, For the the Old Folks Home," cause it's a blessing to me. A lot of people say, "I ain't moving in there." Never say what you're never going to do because before I moved in here I was staying in a town house and a spirit told me, "You're going to move to the highrise."

I said, "No, I'm not. I'm not going down there with all them old folks."

God said, "It ain't what you want, it's what I want." I'm telling you, honey, I prayed and I begged God, "Please don't send me down there. Please."

And I ended up down here anyways and I'm here for a reason, praise the Lord. And I've been here every since, and I told the Lord, "You done healed everybody but me. Now what's the problem here?" I know the problems is me, but "Why can't you heal me?" But He does things in His style. I'm willing to wait on Him, if I'm willing to wait on anybody, it's Him. I don't mind waiting on Him, but anybody else, I might get a little short patient with. But God, I ain't short patient with God. Praise the Lord. I'm willing to wait on him, cause I know it's going to be right. You can't put all your dependence on man, but you can put all your dependence in God. Cause there's no failure in Him. And He's been good to, they say at church, "Mother Audrey," cause that's what they call me, Mother Audrey. that don't mean I'm old, but that's what, when you're sixty and older in church, they call you Mother, so they been calling me Mother quite awhile, you know, but that's all right, I love the respect. Nothing wrong with respect, and that's the way they do around here. They give me the utmost respect because I give it. I've been working with housing for years, helping people get in here.

In fact, a lady's waiting on me today, I have to go down to the office and talk about getting her in here. What I love about housing, they work with me in getting these people in here. A lot of these people in Homestead, it's a lot of new people here and the older people are afraid of being around them. But in this community they feel kind of safe, you know? And a lot of older people I'm helping to get in here, a lot of people from the Ward. Some people from the Ward. I tell them, "We're the original." And I'm telling you, we have really enjoyed it here.

I'm having a Community Day in September. I want all the community inside and out the community to come down, get together, and just enjoy ourselves. I'm trying to do a little thing on Homestead, about Homestead, and different people in Homestead, just make a program, you know? I used to be, when I was tenant council president, I used to bring the senators and all in. And we'd get in there and have a good time. And it's good to know about the place where you live.

I do a welcome package for new people that move in, and I got some of everything, even down to bus schedules. So they can find out something about the community. And I do a newsletter, so people can know what's happening in the community. They call me, "Busybody," but that's all right. I love being busy, and a lot of people that move in here thank me for that welcome package. Cause wouldn't a knew nothing. Even down to the cable. They wouldn't a knew that, and I had that in there and community life, all the churches in Homestead, and different places, about the Waterfront, and most of all the bus schedules. Cause they didn't know, and I just thank God for that. But being busy keeps your mind together. You know, that helps keep you together. Because at night when I go to sleep, I say, "Well Lord, what you want me to do tomorrow?" And I'm not crazy. God tells me what to do, praise the Lord. And that's what I get up and do. Sometimes, He be speaking to me and I say, you know, make you think somebody's in there with you, you know. But I say "Praise the Lord, there's nothing wrong with me."

I'm so happy that God uses me. It makes me feel that God use someone like me, cause, who am I that He would use somebody like me?

(question)

He don't have no respect for persons. I just say, "Praise the Lord." I just feel like I'm so important that God uses me. That makes me feel important, praise the Lord.

Did you always know God? Did your grandmother introduce you to Him?

I got saved when I was thirteen years old. There's a little street here called Heisel Street, and two of neighbors was evangelists. And they had a little church there, and they used to get us in there, and we'd have church. And that's how I got saved. But in the process, I backslid, but the Bible says once saved, always saved. But we used to go to church. I been going to church all my life. Devil and all, you know. Even when I was out there in the world, I went to church. I was secretary of the Baptist Training Union, but in a way of saying, I was raised up in church. I was always a headstrong person. I had to do it my way. And praise the Lord, that wasn't always the right way. The majority of the time, it was the wrong way, until I started listening. And now I do a lot of listening, cause you can learn a lot by listening.

At what age do the children start listening? I'm still waiting for mine to listen.

Oh I said me. Not my children. I have to talk about me. The kids – my daughter, she'll listen to what I say, but she's gonna do it her way, praise the Lord. Now some of things she pays attention to. Now raising her kids, she raises them the way I raised them. And I think that's the only thing she paid attention to. Otherwise, everything else, she does it her way. Cause my daughter's a controlling person. She's very controlling. She has to be in control of everything. She tries it with me, too.

I say, "You need to know it ain't going to work. You might control them six and your husband, but not your mama. You know, I'm my boss." But she'll control you if you let

her. She will win, you know, but I thank God for her cause she's good to me. She comes down and helps me. She was working for me for awhile, but that didn't work out. But she comes down and does things for me and with me. I'll be sitting out there, it will be real hot, she'll come down with some Dairy Queen, or something, and I like those Subway sandwiches. She'll bring me one or she'll walk up and say, "Here, Ma," and slip some money in my hand. She does that all the time. And that just makes you feel so good that they care about you like that. Because they don't have to, they have their own life to live.

When I got like this, she said, "Ma, I want you to move with me."

I said, "No, baby, thank you, but I got to stay in my own." Those kids, now I'd have been down there in Western Psych at that particular time, praise the Lord, cause I couldn't stand all that all the time. Sometimes, but not all. Sometimes, when I'm hurting I can go in my room and it's nice and quiet and I talk to the Lord, going to sleep or whatever. When you got six kids, "Oh, praise the Lord." There ain't no peace. And not only that, she got a granddaughter with her, and I said, "Oh, no, Jesus no. I can't stay."

And my son in D.C., he wanted me to come with him, and I said, "No, Honey." I said, "I'll tell you what we'll do. I promise you this – if I get to the point and I can't stay in my home, I'll come in yours. But in the meantime, I'm staying in my own." I love being in my own. I have a Hoyer lift in my bedroom, in the ceiling. It's electric. And everybody comes in here, "How'd you get that?" I say, "Look at it one more time, praise the Lord. A man called Jesus gave me this. Because housing said I couldn't have it," and I said, "y'all lying, cause God said I could." And I waited and I waited and housing said, "Yes, you can have it, praise the Lord." And, you know, I'm so thankful that I have it, cause I get up every day. I can't stay in the bed. And getting in that Hoyer Lift, you know, it's much easier for the girls and me. So every day I'm up from noon. I'm going to the store or wherever I'm going, and I thank God for that. You'll find some people out there that are compassionate towards you and some aren't. But I understand, because sometimes I'm feeling compassionate and sometimes I'm not.

(???) brothers is some bad brothers. They don't play. Them's some bad brothers. They don't play, honey. And sometimes I be wanting to... I told my daughter, I said, "If I could get hold to just one of them, that other one would lighten up." I said "Them is some bad brothers. They really mess with you, but that's all right." I told them, I said, "You might hinder me, but you ain't going to stop me. I won't let you."

So does Homestead have the, like the curb cuts and everything? You can get around pretty good here?

Yeah, they need to improve them, but I work with what I got. Praise the Lord, I just keep bouncing and going, you know.

You're able to go to church? There's a church you can get into?

Mm, hmm, Second Baptist. It's wheelchair accessible. That's about the only one around here that's wheelchair accessible. And then we have service, I have service down here. Have evangelists coming in. I just thank God, I'm trying to get my license, you know. I, uh, that's another thing I need to complete. I start and stop. Start and stop. I tell the Lord next time I'm not stopping. I'm not starting until I can complete it, because I really want my Evangelist license. I really love to talk about the Lord. Could talk about Him all day and all night. I probably get on somebody's nerves, but that suits me. I thank God I can talk about Him. Some people don't even know Him. But I've had the opportunity to serve Him and know Him. Praise the Lord, and I thank God for that. That's why I say, "Don't look at me and feel sorry. Just pray for me, that God keep me going." Like I said, "Look at me." I bet you seen worse, much worse. Praise the Lord. These old hands try to mess up on me, see they all crooked. And I tell them, "You might as well get right," cause I'm going to use them anyway." You know, this one here tried to stop me from feeding. Well, I rest you and use this one. You just can't give in to it, you got to fight it, praise the Lord. Knees and feet go to hurting, my feet are crooked, but I tell Him, "That's all right. They still there." You know what I'm saying. When my knees get stiff, I just exercise them and keep on going. So there's a remedy to everything, isn't there?

Besides the Lord, because I know that would be your answer. Is there anybody else who has had a big influence on you?

My mother. My mother, bless her heart, she said, "You can do anything you want to do." She just would not let me give in to this. And I thank God for her because she's a very strong person.

Is she still alive?

Mm hmm. Yeah. She lives in Pittsburgh. She's eighty-five. And she stay by herself in a four-bedroom house. She's just determined to stay in that house.

Why doesn't she come here?

Not my mother. She likes to be in her own, do her own thing. This is too open for her. She's a very private person. See, anybody here gets into her business, they would get a rude awakening, cause she don't bother in your business and I know she'd give you her heart if she can, but don't get into her business and stuff.

I tried to get her to move, and they don't have a bathtub in here. No bathtub. And she said, "That's out." She said, "I got to have a bathtub."

But that, to me, is an excuse, cause she could put up with what's in here. But eventually, I believe she will, because she's starting to get more ailments and she's starting to need help. One of her arms she had that rotary, you know, and they messed it up, and she can't really use that arm. So eventually she's going to have to come where my grandkids and all can help her, but right now, she's so stubborn, you know that saying,.....I'd rather

do it myself. She'd rather do it herself. Cause the kids would try to go over, get her and take her shopping, she'd be away and come back. But it's good to be independent, but it's good also to accept help. I tell her, "Sometimes it's good to accept help." She gets on the buses and go here, go there, where they want to take her in a car. She used to having her own car. And with that bad arm she can't drive like she would want to. She's very, very independent. She don't want no ask for nobody to take her nowhere. If you take her she want give you a thousand dollars for taking her somewhere. Life is not always about that.

I'm going to keep on praying that God softens her heart and say, "Come on down with your daughter, and you know." So we can all be here together. My daughter goes over there to see about her.

Do you have brothers or sisters?

My oldest brother is dead, three or four years now. I have a brother on my father's side that lives here. He's pretty ill, and I have another brother in Florida. He's an engineer. And I have a sister on my father's side that stays here in Homestead, and a step-sister in North Braddock. But on the whole, we have a big family.

I was counting the generations and there's, what, five?

We have five generations, and I thank God. I just had a five generation picture taken, at my daughter's birthday party. Yeh, I'm going to have it enlarged, so that they can remember five generations. It's not a rarity now, though, five generations.

In our family there's only three.

Really?

Yeah. I think five is kind of rare. You don't run into too many of them.

Not too long ago we had six generations, before my grandmother died, and now we have – we've had five generations forever. A lot of people here in Homestead have five generations, the older people, here in Homestead, they have five generations, you know. So was just used to seeing people with five generations. I told my children, "We're never going to be without five generations, because it's always Weavers, Weavers, Weavers, Weavers." My children have children. Their children have children. Eventually, they're going to have children, but I won't be around for that. You can't tell my great grandchildren, "I'm not going to be around forever."

They say, "Grandma, you're ain't going nowhere."

I say, "Okay." I have a four-year-old granddaughter. She's four going on forty. Yesterday, she says to me after the graduation, she says, "Huh, I'm so glad to be away from them." She said, "They got on my nerves so bad."

I said, "What happened?"

She said, "Just all those people just got on my nerves."

I said, "What nerves did they get on?"

She said, "I'm just ready to lay down and take a nap."

I said, "Well, go in there and get in my bed."

She said, "No, no, we'll be leaving in a minute." My daughter was going up to her house, and my granddaughter and them was going out, so she went up there. My daughter said she got in her bed and went to sleep. But she is something to be four years. Me and her sit down and talk like she's forty.

She said to me, "Is you ever going to walk?"

I said, "One day I'm going to walk, little girl."

She said, "Well, I hope it's soon."

I said, "Well, everything gets on your nerves."

She told her mother -- her mother told her to come home. She said, "No, ma, I want to stay with the kids."

Her mother said, "I'm lonely."

She said, "Well, come down here. If you come down here, Ma, you will not be lonely." Her mother always want her to come home. She don't never want to come home. If her mother makes her, she says, "Let's go down to Grandma's." She's an only child and she don't want to be up there all by herself. So she tells her mother, "Come on down here." My daughter, someone's always at her house. When you have a lot of kids they draw kids, and she loves being there. This morning she called me. She said, "Hi, Grandma, how you doing?"

I said, "I'm fine, I'm fixing to get up."

She said, "You're walking?"

I said, "No, not yet, but if I keep on with you, I think I'll be walking."

But I really enjoy them. I think I've got about ten great grandchildren, and they are a mess. I'm telling you, I have a granddaughter, no two granddaughters and four great grands in Florida, and I'm telling you, I have a little granddaughter, she looks like she's

from India. Beautiful little girl, and oh, is she smart! She's an A plus student in school. She's about seven years old, and she says, "Grandma, I wish I could stay with you, cause there's too much going on in my house." She likes quiet mostly. She's a computer whiz. She says, "You have a computer and it's nice and quiet."

And I said, "I got another seven-year-old going on seventy." My daughter says, "They got your ways."

Well, that's a good thing.

But her, she got two brothers that, uh, when you turn them loose, I'm telling you, they are wild, but they're little boys, you know. And then my other granddaughter got two boys and bless their little hearts. I love them dearly, but I'm glad they're not mine, cause I know couldn't take it. One boy, he came and had the handle on my Frigidaire. He clammed up my Frigidaire. I said, "Take him home. Now. Take him home now." I said, "because he's a little too much for me." I said, "Take him home, cause he is wild, praise the Lord." But he's just a little boy, you know.

(question) I sort of lost track of time.

I have it. Two-thirty.

You lost weight since last time. You said you were going to.

I lost some more. Yeah, I lost maybe 150. I was four-twenty. What happened was, I had to go to the hospital, praise the Lord, and when I got there, they didn't have a bed to fit me. And I had to lay out in the hall until I got one. And I cried and I cried, and I promised God, I said, "If you let me out of this, I will not come back here this big," praise the Lord. And when I was let out of there I went home and I threw all that doctor's medicine away, cause it was blowing me up. I don't take no doctor's medicine. I threw all the heart medicine, the blood pressure, the whole thing in the garbage, and I said, "Lord, these supplements, if you don't take care of me, I'm dead." So I take supplements for my heart, my blood pressure, everything. And that's how I started losing. I started going to Dr. Weiner in South Side and he showed me how to detox. I detoxed my body for about a year-and-a-half, and I started losing weight. But I thank God I threw all that medicine away. All the side effects was killing me. People think they can't stop taking it, but they can. They can stop taking them.

Because they're afraid.

Yeah. I wasn't afraid, I was tired, and every time I get another pill, I get another ailment or something else, praise the Lord. I said, "Oh, no, no, no, no." I said, "I might die, but it ain't going to be from weight and medicine. No, no." So my doctor said, "Whatever you're doing, don't stop. Keep it up."

So when did this start? When did you throw all that medicine away?

About three years ago. And I haven't taken none since.

That why I was surprised, you mentioned Subway sandwiches. You weren't touching anything.

I cheats a little bit. Most of the time I eat organic food, you know. It's a little more expensive, but it does the world for me, and I'm not about to change. I eat a lot of fish, chicken and turkey, or either just vegetables. I thank God for it. And I'm telling you, they were killing me with their medicine. The side effects was terrible. I look at them on television now. You take, for instance, Celebrex. It leads to bleeding in your stomach. I said, "Please, why would you give me something..." And I got all kinds of books I read on homeopathic medicine and stuff, and I know what to take for this and that, but I had to read and study it. Everything I buy in the store, I read what's in it. Some of the stuff I buy and some of the stuff I don't, depends what's in it, but you know, I've been doing well. So, and some of the women around here, they have cancer. And I told them, I said, "If you detox your body, start taking flaxseed oil, blood pressure pills. Not blood pressure pills, garlic, I take a lot of supplements, but the main ones, you know... If they would clean their body out, all them toxins couldn't lay and develop into something. That's all it is. You are what you eat, and if you clean them out, there's nothing there to develop into nothing. So I detox two or three times a year, and get my colon an all cleaned out. But they're scared and I can understand it to a certain extent. I was scared, too. The doctor told me I was going to die if I didn't lose that weight. 420 pounds on a heart is a lot, and I wasn't a real big person. And I said, "Oh, no, no, no, no. Weight and medicine is not going to kill me," so thank God that I can get away from it.

What do you use to detox?

I took, it was a detox kit that I get. Or either I take Colon Cleanse to clean out my, but I usually get the kit and it's a three phasething that you take, and I think it's two weeks that you take that medicine to clean your body. If you look and see some of the stuff that come out your body, I say "Jesus Christ alive, what is up there in my body?" I'm telling you, and you feel like a brand new person. I need to detox now, but I'm getting around to it eventually.

You're too busy right now.

I starts feeling tired and sleepy. Time for detoxing. It'll let you know. I told my daughter, "I don't want to do the kit. I'm going to get the Colon Cleanse because I don't want to do the three phase." The Colon Cleanse takes a little longer, but that's all right. I ain't going to have to take all them pills for two weeks. The Colon Cleanse I take three times a day for about a month, and then you get off of it, and I'll probably lose some more weight. I'm trying to get to 150. And then I'll stop.

How do you get weighed?

They have a thing in the hospital they lay me on and it's connected to a scale. The last time they weighed me I think I was 288. And I think I'm, I think Dr. Itzkowitz said I was 256. So I'm trying to get to that 180, or 150. Whatever one. Whatever one I... If I feel good at 180, I'll stay there for awhile, but it's been a little journey. But I praise the Lord.

I want to thank you so much.

I really enjoyed this. It was a pleasure. When I call Ray up, I'll tell Ray, "I talked them to death."