

Oral History

November 26, 2022

Interviewee: Evelyn Wilson

Interviewer: Nichole Douglas

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Transcript by Brad Mayes

Nichole Douglas: We can start over. Okay, how long have you been involved in playing the piano?

Evelyn Wilson: Probably... since I was a teenager, and I'll be fifty eight this month.

ND: And did you play it as you were growing up... or did you just play around with it?

EW: Actually, I didn't have a piano in the home that I grew up in, in my parents' home, but I just knew when I got around somebody's piano – if I went and visited somebody and they had a piano. Everybody else would be in there doing other things and I'd be in there messing with the piano. It was always in my heart to do it. I never took music. I never got any lessons, but it was just in my heart.

ND: So when you were a teenager did you get a piano or did you get around one?

EW: When I was sixteen a piano was given to me. It was an old upright and I loved it. I just liked to drove my mama and daddy nuts.

ND: Well they're proud of you now.

EW: They're proud of me now —

ND: But maybe not then.

EW: Before I got that piano I used to sit, this is so crazy, I used to sit at my dining room table and play the table like my piano.

ND: With your fingers?

EW: Yeah! With my fingers, with my fingers I'd play the table, and that's why I knew in my heart there was something there if I ever could get me a piano –

ND: If you could ever get one.

EW: Cause you've got to have one that you can play whenever you want to play to learn

ND: Did you just start practice playing and did it start coming to you?

EW: Well I would just sit there and I would try to hum a song. I remember the first one I ever tried was *Oh How I Love Jesus* and I'd sit there with my one finger and I'd just be picking it out and I'd finally find something that sounded right you know? It's just a gift the lord gave me and that's all I know. I just didn't lay it aside I just kept using it.

ND: Where did you first start playing it?

EW: I first started at Pine Grove Church. I grew up at Pine Grove Church, a country church. Out there they had more piano players than you could shake a stick at. I mean everybody could play, but they all played by music, they read. Here I was the little girl every now and then on prayer meeting night, maybe the piano player wouldn't show up and it was like mama and daddy would always be there early. And I was hoping the piano player wouldn't show up so I could play and do something. I would mess up and they would keep singing along because they could all sing. It didn't matter if they had music or not. I think that was a blessing within itself that they gave me opportunities.

ND: Did you sing when you played or did you strictly play?

EW: Yeah! I would sing and play.

ND: Did you always sing?

EW: I always sang and played and I still sing and play.

ND: When you was young and didn't have a piano did you sing around the house and stuff like that?

EW: I'd sing around the house

ND: Did anything, well that's what I'm playing by ear a lot of people say they don't remember picking it up and it just coming to them naturally.

EW: You don't do it overnight, but if you have the gift of playing by ear it gradually comes. And the more you try the more you hear and the more you learn.

ND: Now if you just heard a song could you play it or would it take you a few minutes to feel it out?

EW: I could pretty much play it, if it's something I was interested in.

ND: Oh you have to be interested in it?

EW: I have to be interested in that, yeah.

ND: So you didn't really learn, but did anybody help you out any?

EW: I've never had anybody help me out.

ND: Nobody? You didn't have any influences?

EW: There was one special lady that went to church out there at Pine Grove, and you know her, her name is Dorthy Guess. Miss Dorthy and oh boy she used to play for me. I sang in a trio. She used to play for us to sing and I was always, she was always an inspiration to me playing the piano, and she didn't sing, she just played. She tore it up you know? She played all over that piano.

ND: I never had a clue

EW: She was a big influence.

ND: Someone was telling me about Carlene, her daddy, said her grandma taught a lot of people, Miss Susie. They said she taught everybody how to play the piano.

EW: She did, Miss Susie Smith, and Miss [unintelligible]

ND: See I don't know Miss [unintelligible]

EW: They're dead yeah... they've been dead for years.

ND: But they were just talking to me about how many people around here you know all played for them [unintelligible]. Only those select few played [unintelligible]

EW: Have you talked to Carlene?

ND: Well they've gone to the mountains [unintelligible]

EW: Oh they're back.

ND: Are they?

EW: Yeah, they came home yesterday.

ND: [unintelligible] just told me, I was talking to [unintelligible] his home away from home.

And I was saying to him have fun at the mountains. Does anybody else in your family play?

EW: Nobody plays one thing. My daddy comes from a family of eight children and nobody plays on that side and my mama side nobody. That's why we can't figure out why and I guess I'm the only my grandmother had twenty nine grandchildren and as far as I know I'm the only one that plays by ear, some of them play.

ND: Do they play any other instruments or [unintelligible] by ear?

EW: Not... I don't know, not any of them that I know of.

ND: None of them, what about Tammy? Can she play?

EW: Tammy, Tammy doesn't play. She sings like a bird, but she doesn't play.

ND: Timmy can't?

EW: Timmy? We gave Timmy, we were giving him guitar lessons and he was doing real good. And the guy that was teaching him, Freddy Lamb, his job was moving him away to Atlanta, and that just made me sick because there was nobody around here to teach.

ND: That's what [unintelligible]

EW: Now Timmy did the drums in our group.

ND: I thought I remembered, that's what I remembered. Did anyone else in the group play by ear?

EW: Everybody in my group played by ear. We just had guitars, a bass guitar, and rhythm guitars, and the drums.

ND: [unintelligible] bring it out of you [unintelligible] rehearsal he'd go under the table [unintelligible] cause he was singing for her or singing to her.

EW: He did.

ND: At the rehearsal, and the preacher over there he did the banjo, I think he did great.

EW: They're great.

ND: He can, I never heard the –

EW: The preacher's family, yeah.

ND: Can they all play? I know the girls–

EW: I think they all play—

ND: Erica she sang at [unintelligible] she was really good, but I didn't know he thought I was [unintelligible] he went to picking that thing —

EW: Where was this at?

ND: At their wedding rehearsal at the [unintelligible], but you know[unintelligible]. What kind of music do you play, or have you always played gospel music?

EW: I've always played gospel. Yep, I've always played gospel.

ND: Nothing else?

EW: Well, you know on occasion if you listen—

ND: Like a little country song?

EW: A little country, yeah. Boogie woogies. You know all that kind of stuff, but that would just be picking around having a little fun. The serious side of me is traditional gospel.

ND: [unintelligible] they have different gospels, at different churches. Church of God they really get into it.

EW: We can do that.

ND: What is the typical audience for you?

EW: I think typically it's a traditional [unintelligible] I mean you wouldn't want to do everything traditional. We'd all sound alike. You gotta have some flavor in there. You do some spirituals, some real slow.

ND: I remember going with granny. She always go out there to Shiloh. You know where ever y'all'd go she'd go.

EW: She liked it.

ND: Always [unintelligible] but I mean they mainly you'd get a lot of, I guess you'd say like people clapping and people singing with you, stuff like that. How long did y'all do the— how long was the band – are y'all still together?

EW: No we actually sing because we all go to the same church. We still sing together and play together as far as church, but the traveling we don't we travel with our group anymore. You know I organized that group in 1977, and we went fifteen years full time with it. We'd go on weekends and play concerts.

ND: Because of your eyes?

EW: Yeah that's kind of what did it because of my eye. You know I had to get down and it was hard to come back to it. After we had to come off the road for those few months. I just couldn't do it, and then it was just like it was our mister and then it was like maybe it was just the Lord's timing. We were through with the road, but he still had something for us to do. So then I organized the choir at our church. It is a praise and worship choir and we have been doing that for three years.

ND: Is that older people, or all ages?

EW: No, it's younger people.

ND: Younger people! Getting to hang out with the youngins?

EW: It's the younger people and they love it. As a matter of fact, we're having a choir party this Thursday night, a supper.

ND: So you feel like that was kind of your calling?

EW: It is. It was like one door was shut but then another was opened.

ND: Do you think you've touched a lot of people with your playing?

EW: Well I know that it has, but they've touched us. You know, it's just a two way situation here.

ND: Have you, has anybody, would your piano playing, have you inspired anybody to play the piano? Has anybody ever approached you about trying to teach them?

EW: Many times.

ND: And you –

EW: I don't teach, uh uh. I can show them a few things if I know that they have an ear for it. I can show them a few helpful thing that it took me years to run across, but theres just a few things that you can show people that really gets them interested in playing the piano that you can show them thatll help them and give them more places to go, more runs they call it. But yes I have had a lot of people and I know two boys and it just thrills my heart. Theyre young men now theyre both married with children, that told me I was the reason they started playing. One boy he's been [unintelligible] mercer and he can tear up a piano. He used to sit for hours listening to our tapes, and he said that he would basically would listen to the music because that's what you do when you've got an ear for it.

ND: is it I mean is it just hard? Like Mama she took cause Granny read. She felt that [unintelligible] She said the man that taught her she said that he played by ear and didn't read music. He was trying to teach me how by reading music, and she said she couldn't because she'd

went to ask him and he would be like I couldn't tell you. It's just something, you know it's just something I do. He couldn't— and she was like well how did you learn this and how do I remember it? And he said you just remember it, it's just something that comes —

EW: And you cannot explain a gift. I mean you know? It's just there, and it's something that nobody can take away from you.

ND: Well she said and then he would sit there and would say my hands just go to the keys. I don't sit there and study. I just know that's this key and this is that key.

EW: That don't come up enough.

ND: How many, did it take you awhile, or just playing and playing? Did it make you nervous when you played?

EW: Not giving up. Not giving up is the main thing.

ND: When you'd play at church were you nervous and stuff?

EW: Oh, yes! [laughter] I sure was. [laughter] uh huh! Yep! Yep! I don't think I ever get. You know our group fronted for a lot of major groups, and it was so amazing that I could play with any of them, but a lot of major groups don't read music.

ND: They don't?

EW: A lot of them play by ear.

ND: I didn't know that. [unintelligible]

EW: It's amazing that the people out there that just have an ear for it. That makes a pretty good group too.

ND: Does it?

EW: Yeah

ND: You can work, just hear it and add something in. I think it needs that or I think it needs this.

EW: Now don't get me wrong, I wish I could read music. It's just a challenge for me to get all the new songs that I've heard on the radio and finally get the music that I can look at. I can't read it, but I can sit down and pick it out, and then I can give it to my client, I love it.

ND: So when they sing do you play for them when they sing, or do you listen to the music first.

EW: Right there at my piano I sit there a lot because I have to learn it myself and know it really good before I can give it to the choir or even give it to the other musicians, but that's the strangest thing. All of our guitar players know that if I know it, I can play it for them one time and the second time they've got it.

ND: Who is that?

EW: Daymond Chancy. You know Daymond? He plays the bass guitar really good. William Strickland, he played with me for years. Gary Smith.

ND: Is that the older Gary that knew [unintelligible]?

EW: Mhmm, yeah he hasn't been playing very long and I've helped him a lot. I've tried. Used to we'd try to get him to come up there with us and play with us. He'd go, im not good enough. I said come on Gary we're gone help you. You know that's how you learn. When you play by ear you learn by having jam sessions and stuff.

ND: but see that's like anybody [unintelligible] probably about once a month they'll have Fred Register playing the trombone and the only one I don't know about – all of them read music. I ain't sure about Mr. Walt if he reads. Does he? I didn't know if he did, but I know all of the rest of them cause most of them are a couple years older than me.

EW: He reads [unintelligible] he was um he would be a good one to interview. When he was young he played in all of them. Bands, big bands, he still plays with big bands. He still plays

with big bands. He's played with like what is it Toby [unintelligible]? Now what was the one that comes [unintelligible] I don't know if he played with them [unintelligible]. Did you go?

ND: No they was talking about it see we were supposed to – ask your mom [unintelligible] his family and I was supposed to go and I got sick or something, but we always had to go [unintelligible] I got sick or something and I can't remember and I didn't get to go. Ive had to sit through all this other boring stuff but I at least want to go somewhere where I can dance and have a good time –

EW: Yeah!

ND: – and have someone that got [unintelligible], but I know that [unintelligible] Mr. Barry and [unintelligible] because they say he can play the organ

EW: He can play anything keys, piano, organ, guitar, mandolin, anything. Barry would be a good one.

ND: See I didn't know. I know they said he used to have a rock band up I couldn't see him so serious.

EW: Oh I know that was super mmmm.

ND: You know [unintelligible]...

EW: and [unintelligible] big studio upstairs

ND: I didn't know they were [unintelligible]...

EW: He had it out here too yep. Because we had been out there a bunch of times with Jan [unintelligible] out there.

ND: Oh. Do you have any kind of books or the radio have they influenced you a lot?

EW: Just hearing music on the radio, yes.

ND: Hearing songs you like, something you like to sing?

EW: Something I like to sing, yep.

ND: Have you made any recording?

EW: Yes. Yes we did. We – I went, actually myself, I went into the studio twelve, twelve times. Twelve different. On twelve different recordings we did. As far as the joyful sound. I did two by myself, two recordings by myself that my daddy wanted me to do. One of them, and then we just went in as far as musicians and did an instrumental tape and that was fun. Danny Ray said he used to listen to it

ND: Over here?

EW: He'd have it in his car! He said next thing id know id be flying yall in a big plane back to [unintelligible].

ND: ive done seen danny ray drive he don't need no help flying.

EW: Aint that the truth.

ND: He passed me one day he was coming down this road over here [unintelligible].

EW: I think he has slow down some.

ND: Well I hadn't seen him, well ive seen him up there, but I haven't really seen him since he moved. But you know I loved over there because id see him, but [unintelligible].

EW: I don't know how youre going to write an article on this jumbled up mess. [laughter]

ND: Well ill be laughing when I listening to it. When you made your recordings [unintelligible]

EW: Well let me describe that to you that's the nervous ive ever been [unintelligible].

ND: Where'd yall do it at?

EW: Oh gosh we did them at different places. Let's think where did we – We went to Moultrie, there's a studio down in Jacksonville. There was a studio in [unintelligible] and I think its still

there I can't remember. The guy that runs the funeral home also runs the recording studio
[laughter] one night.

ND: You know he ain't [unintelligible] where he is going to take you.

EW: This is the truth. One night of we was there to record, and he had two deaths in the funeral home and it was after hours and he wanted us to go in there and help move. We had to change rooms with the bodies. We moved flowers all around while they changed rooms with the bodies. That was quite the experience. Don't put that in there [laughter].

ND: When you went in you definitely had a good time.

EW: But anyways—

ND: You didn't wake the dead did you?

EW: No his sound room was sound proof I reckon. We didn't wake nobody up. But that is going into a studio is – you're so excited, you've been waiting and you've practiced and you've practiced and you've practiced because you know it's got to be right and you got keep doing it till you do it right. But getting in there and when you see the red light go on and it says on its like every part of you wants to freeze.

ND: Did y'all do pretty good on the first try?

EW: No we did awful [laughter] oh gahlee. Well we thought we did awful, well I think it just takes you a while, but they do give you some time to warm up. But all you thinking about is all the money you've paid. I mean you practice and you practice and now you have to get in here and pay good money to warm up [laughter] because when the light comes on, the dollar marks start running.

ND: They charge you for every time you do one like for every song or?

EW: Minute, you just reserve the studio for this long or this long its you know. We had like a package deal and then we get to go back another time and they do a final mix down and blend all the voices if they would blend [laughter] sometimes they won't blend, but anyway it was fun. It was really fun, we made it fun. That first time being in there it was like what in this world.

ND: Mr: Jimmy over there fanning you

EW: and I was bout and I thought I cant play this piano what in the world am I doing [laughter]

ND: Was it was that what was probably your proudest – I guess the memory the most?

EW: hmm gahlee

ND: You've just been playing so long?

EW: Ive just been playing so long but one that really stands out in my mind it was one night before Christmas. We played at the Mathis Auditorium and they was having a benefit for a young girl she was fifteen years old, but she had a real rare disease. I can't remember the name of it, Crones disease? It was really and the name of they had advertised and advertised and different corporations got involved in it. They had big banners in Valdosta and it was called – they called this thing, to Brenda with love. It was so sweet. They went out and got sponsors and did programs. Anyway, we was on that program and they was five groups and we drew numbers to see spots and we drew five, number five. Anyway it was so good, and every little while that passed they was using Kentucky fried chicken canisters they passed that. People had been going out soliciting money and stuff, it was just real needy. To me that was just the sweetest spirit. We sang, when it come our time we got we went on stage and sang and we ended the program with “Because He Lives”. People marched across the audience they marched across while we was singing and kept dropping money in. They had canisters up there on stage, and you know how the steps go and people was just coming it went forever. We sung “Because He Lives” for what

seemed like thirty minutes while all them people just come up there. That was very unplanned and they said it was just the sweetest. It was wonderful. That's one of the highlights, but just to be able to play at church. The main highlight is playing for my family to sing.

ND: Can anybody else sing?

EW: My daughter.

ND: And Timmy.

EW: Timmy, both of my children

ND: He says that he can't but he can.

EW: He can. Both of my children can sing very well, and my husband. My husband can sing, and my son in law.

ND: Who?

EW: Jamal. He was with our group.

ND: I know. I know Timmy said that when he would sung he wasn't going to sing no more.

EW: It was pretty wasn't it?

ND: It was well that's what I told him. I told him well why don't you sing more often. And then that's when he said I told her I was going to sing it her way, now im going to [unintelligible]... well youll sing for me. And he said I'll be right up there. Does anybody else in your family, like your mama?

EW: They all sing, Mama and Daddy sings, but nobody plays.

ND: You didn't have anybody with you when you was [unintelligible] at Church. So how would you describe your style of music? Just southern or gospel or –

EW: Southern gospel

ND: Traditional?

EW: mmmm Southern, and I love to go to singing conventions or concerts. That has really motivated me to want to keep on and keep on, and I still find things on there.

ND: But you learn all the time?

EW: Yeah I run across things all along that'll go together that I didn't realize you know? I'll never learn it all.

ND: Has your style changed over time or is what you begin with –

EW: Definitely, definitely yes ma'am.

ND: Just cause you're more relaxed and experienced?

EW: I'm very relaxed, I love it and I hope it shows.

ND: But mainly just because you're relaxed and experienced –

EW: Yes, it's a combination, time.

ND: Time, time does a lot of things.

EW: Time, I've mellowed out quite a bit.

ND: What do you think is some of the major characteristics of traditional [unintelligible].

EW: Feeling.

ND: Feeling. Just having it in your heart?

EW: I have it in my heart. Yeah, and that makes it come out. It comes out in my hands.

ND: Well I know especially before we knew [unintelligible] so is that you think like that's the only one or do you think gospel needs to have a piano with it?

EW: Gospel definitely needs a piano. The only music that I know that doesn't need a piano is blue grass, and I'm not a blue grass.

ND: I mean but that's what [unintelligible] I mean I consider gospel just like something you sing and play the piano you know one instrument. [unintelligible]

EW: You know anything you add to it makes it pretty as far as music, but the piano can always carry the melody.

ND: Do you think the audience as far as the audience is real receptive when yall play. Does that help it?

EW: Yes

ND: Well that's me when used I go out there and you can sit there and listen to it, but after a while you got to get up and clap your hands. I consider that a characteristic of traditional gospel. Getting up and singing right along even if you can't carry a tune in a bucket you can clap your hands that's me.

EW: I like the kinds that makes you clap your hands.

ND: What is some of your favorites you know favorite songs to sing.

EW: It's hard to say a favorite song. "Because He Lives"-- I like them all and then I'm put on the spot for a favorite song. I just like them all as far as out of the hymnal, "Amazing Grace" you can never go wrong on that. But the old song "Where Can I Go but to the Lord" they use it a lot or used to years ago. But I still like it. There's not many in the book that I don't like.

ND: Have you learned anything new over the years?

EW: Oh yeah I'm still learning.

ND: Have you written your own music?

EW: Oh yeah, I've written a lot of songs, and I have a copy right on quite a few.

ND: Oh, do you?

EW: Yes, I do.

ND: On the ones you've played on the tape were some of them yours?

EW: Some of them are mine

ND: And some are some y'all have picked up. Has Mr. Strickland wrote any?

EW: No, no, no. He's never. I think one time he thought he'd write a song or two because I found the papers where he started and I'd pick it up and read it and I'd do is this a prayer or is this a song? [laughter], but he never finished anything. But ive written a few songs but maybe id always keep a book of new material that maybe id be working on. Sometimes it might just be a line or two that comes to mind and ill jot it down. I'll try to keep the, what do you call it?

ND: Microphone.

EW: Microphone. I have a little type player that if a tune comes to me I might just jot it down, try to keep it.

ND: I write poetry [unintelligible] that's who I am. Oh that's good right there every so often I will throw it all together. It takes one [unintelligible] that sounded good [unintelligible] and then I'm racking my brain trying to think of words.

EW: But uh I wrote a song when Daymond and Theresa had their little girl. I wrote a song and sang it at the Christening about grace.

ND: About grace, is that the name of the song?

EW: [unintelligible] yeah, that was just special. I think it was special for them and it was for me. I know the Lord just gave to me because I could not have done that on my own. I wrote a song recently and it kind of all come to me at one time and I haven't had that experience often.

Usually –

ND: It comes–

EW: Yeah. This one it was like I couldn't write it down fast enough. The tune, the tune comes before the words usually for me.

ND: You hear it in your head?

EW: I hear it in my head.

ND: And the words just kind of come along with it? You ever have a hard time hunting for the right words or not really?

EW: Not really. I think minds just must be inspired. I'm not trying to write a song it would just come to me.

ND: I know people that [unintelligible] have songs come [unintelligible] rather they're upset or they're happy. It's just whenever they get that inspiration.

EW: When I'm playing I've always— and everybody knows that knows me knows this, my piano has probably kept me from taking up [unintelligible]. Because I play when I'm happy, I play when I'm sad, I play when I'm excited [laughter] I just play.

ND: We need to [unintelligible]

EW: Yeah!

ND: [unintelligible] nerves [unintelligible] good.

EW: He does. He gives y'all the nerves to do it.

ND: Well [unintelligible].

EW: Does Danny take [unintelligible]

ND: No he says if he stays around him long enough he want to have to [unintelligible].

EW: Oh [laughter] oh. Where, I mean, where all do you, I mean I know at Church and [unintelligible]

ND: Well I used to do [unintelligible]

EW: We well we used to do Georgia and Florida.

ND: Where's the [unintelligible]?

EW: We toured Georgia, the farthest south we went was good gracious... Fort Pierce, Florida was the farthest and I think that was a six-hour drive that way. Anyways, the fartherest in Georgia we went was up around Atlanta, Stone Mountain we did some, some churches up there. We had the opportunity to go to the Alabama, well different South Carolina, North Carolina we was invited, but with our weekends—

ND: Hard work.

EW: Because everybody worked we, we was pretty limited as far as where we could go, but it was wonderful, and I kept a book of everywhere we had been —

ND: Pictures?

EW: And people we've met. Yeah I got uh a big scrapbook, yeah, and I just a dresser drawer full of —

ND: All kinds of programs and stuff?

EW: memories, yeah—

ND: I mean I don't know what imma do with them, but I can't bare to part with them.

[unintelligible] Like when y'all went to other places and heard other people sing [unintelligible] conventions. Did they, I mean, did y'all hear any other kind besides traditional like maybe a little bit of blue grass—

EW: a little —

ND: A little bit of country. Did you get any of that in there?

EW: I can hear it, but I just never—

ND: Y'all don't play it?

EW: No, because we — now at one time when we had our group, we had a mandolin player and we did a little blue grass, and it was fun.

ND: Was it? –

EW: Yeah it was –

ND: A little more up beat?

EW: Blue grass is played totally different than southern, you know, but I could do it. If I worked on it a little I can do it. We had one of the well the mandolin player that we had, he is deceased now, but he used to play with the [unintelligible] brothers.

ND: I think, I remember, I remember going and I don't remember who, I'm trying to think.

EW: He probably was with them.

ND: That's what I was thinking because it's been a while–

EW: He died at the [unintelligible] went up.

ND: He, he had on [unintelligible] cause I remember. You know, just like when people come in and help granny. You know I didn't know who Calvin's daddy was but you know.

EW: Yeah.

ND: You know when people come in and help granny [unintelligible]. They all [unintelligible] They all come from there you know Maynard and all that. It seems like cause you know you get to looking at things. You know we'd be at the guitars and the piano and you see something unusual and you'd be like you know: what is that? I mean did you could you get to [unintelligible] with the blue grass.

EW: Oh yes, yeah, yeah. Ordinary blue grass groups don't have to be [unintelligible]. You know they're not amplified, but we brought him into our group, which he fit great.

ND: Could he play the [unintelligible]?

EW: Oh yes. He could play anything, and we just used him at like special effects and stuff. He could sing too, he had a good voice.

ND: I mean do you play different tunes for different audiences, or do you pretty much stay the same all the time?

EW: Yeah, I play the same, and I play for a lot of funerals and sing for a lot of funerals. I've never played for weddings and I get calls still. Just recently people called me wanting to play for a wedding. I've never played for a wedding. I've never wanted to.

ND: [unintelligible] but she going to get you maybe she was going to.

EW: She probably did, but I don't play for them, I never have.

ND: You just don't want to? Afraid you'll mess up? [laughter]

EW: Don't want to mess up any wedding. No you know like I said, I've just been in southern gospel and that's my heart. I could learn the wedding songs, but im just not interested in doing that. That would take up my time, and I just don't want to waste my time trying to learn something I'm not interested in.

ND: I mean how much do you think you play [unintelligible]? I mean all the time? Do you just come in like right now?

EW: A lot of times I play before I go to work. Sometimes I come in in the evening. I play every day.

ND: Every day.

EW: Every day. Something

ND: Is it just habit or is it just something to kind of –

EW: A good habit

ND; Just to brighten up your day or something?

EW: Yeah, oh let me tell you something my [unintelligible] husband [unintelligible]. Anyways Uncle [unintelligible] and she lived in West Virginia. Anyways, just a couple of months ago my

Aunt Anne from Miami called me and she said, I need you to do me a favor. I said what is it. She says, Orland's sister, Sue Carol, they've got a common [unintelligible] and she says all the time she was with her she just went around singing that song [unintelligible] where you are. And Sue Carol, that's her name, used to be a professional singer, and now she lost her eye sight she has her [unintelligible]. Anyways, Anne ask me I want you to do me a favor and play and sing that sone [unintelligible] and put it on tape for me and I want to send it to her. Me and Jimmy [unintelligible] Wednesday night, he hooked it up, he at night for [unintelligible] we'd sing [unintelligible] not just one time [unintelligible] you know we made it a little bit lengthy, but it was just that song the whole time. [laughter] Anyways [unintelligible] we had fun doing it. I mailed it down to Anne, and she called me when she got it. Well about a week or so after she got it she called me. She was very sweet [unintelligible] we haven't sent this tape to Sue Carol yet. [laughter] Me and Harland will get in the car, our tape player is messed up at the house, she said we get in the car and we like teenagers, we sitting in the car and listening to [unintelligible] where you are. I said, when you get to the red light do you turn it up real loud? [laughter]

ND: Ride around town and blow the horn.

EW: Yeah, she was laughing she said but I've got it ready to mail.

ND: I got it out of the tape player that's the first step.

EW: She says, but I wish you had made us a copy [laughter].

ND: Course they could just take that one. How many, y'all stoled a bunch of tapes though didn't you?

EW: Yeah we stole a bunch. See like I said –

ND: How many different tapes did y'all steal?

EW: We had told twelve, we had told [unintelligible].

ND: Y'all probably should have people after y'all now.

EW: And what you would do as you would make, we would add like five at one time, five different ones. But as we went along, making new ones we would need the others so it sorted out. But we kept, because see it took us fifteen years to do that, we'd average like one a year. One new one a year because it's pretty expensive. And the thing we sung all the time and we sung in basically churches. You know? And we did a lot of benefits, you know that, and that was so special, that's helping somebody. We had our little tapes and people would buy the tapes and that would like give us gas money to go.

ND: I figured you still had people after you—

EW: We done real good. You know, just to be an amateur group.

ND: Did y'all have a lot of opportunities down here you think?

EW: We did, and like we got to open a lot of concerts for major groups. Hey, we stepped uh, it was in Nashville, Georgia when we opened for two major groups. Anyway, they got seventeen hundred dollars a piece, you know, those groups, and we got fifty dollars. I mean, for opening, but listen, the people loved us. I mean cause they knew us. A lot of those people knew us from going to their churches and things. We got, we got as much of better reception as the major groups did.

ND: It's cause the home [unintelligible].

EW: Yeah, cause they knew us. And you could tell because the oh Singing Echos was one of the groups, oh the [unintelligible] Quartet. Yeah, you can't beat them now they're great.

ND: But they didn't get as good a reception as y'all did?

EW: It just seem like it. Everybody, I think they did it because they just all knew us.

ND: Yeah.

EW: You know, and was making us just feel real good.

ND: I don't know though. It's like when I go to [unintelligible] over there in Valdosta, I mean they're all my friends as far as church you know?

EW: Yeah.

ND: We're all friends, and I go see them, but yeah I listen to them all the time, you know. So I know, you know, I know all the music. I mean I like that you know better than other people. But you know, just because I'm familiar with it.

EW: Right.

ND: People I know.

EW: Yes. Well, it makes a difference. Now I go to [unintelligible] every chance I get.

ND: Do you?

EW: Yes, and I love it. The number one group, right now, going there is called The [unintelligible] Family. I'm going to hear them this weekend. They'll be in Waycross.

ND: Waycross.

EW: At the new High School.

ND: [unintelligible] Can you think of anything [unintelligible] about the audience?

EW: Hey, without the audience, there would be no place for us. I mean, really. You know I always try to sing. I stood up front. Yeah, I played the keyboard, but I stood up and I faced the audience because I was such a part of the group. It was just as fun, I tried to sing to the people on the back row. [laughter]

ND: You wanted to be heard!

EW: No, I just wanted, I mean I always felt so confident just looking around, you know.

ND: Are you familiar, could you look people in the eye when you were singing?

EW: Yes.

ND: Really, I get messed up. If I get up on stage doing something I can look, but if I look people in the eye imma mess up.

EW: You panic?

ND: Mhmm that's me but [unintelligible] but that comes with experience too. Do you and Mr. Jimmy [unintelligible]?

EW: Every now and then. Every now and then. He'll come in here and we may sing a couple songs.

ND: Did he sing before y'all met?

EW: No, no. I taught him how to sing.

ND: Did you?

EW: When we first started singing, he couldn't carry a tune. [laughter]

ND: Couldn't carry one in a bucket if it had a lid?

EW: I kept saying you can do it, you can do it now.

ND: He's got a good singing voice.

EW: He has, he's good.

ND: He's got a strong voice.

EW: He has. He would have made a good radio announcer because he's got that –

ND: He's got that deep [unintelligible] he can carry himself real well. I mean as far as [unintelligible] you could tell.

EW: Yeah he was.

ND: He really was. He kept all the little old ladies standing up there. [laughter]

EW: They, they liked him didn't they.

ND: [unintelligible] you could hear them, he was one nice looking young man.

EW: [laughter]

ND: You'd probably embarrass him if you tell him that tonight. [laughter]

EW: [laughter] oh gahlee and he don't think he is.

ND: That's a big change for him from working mechanic then –

EW: So he teaches the adult Sunday school class, and I was watching him up there yesterday morning and I thought, now just a look at him you wouldn't ever dream he was a mechanic because he cleans up pretty good. [laughter]

ND: [unintelligible] cause he always got his work clothes on [unintelligible]. Well I guess that's it, I'll let you sign this form and all–

EW: Thank you

HOURS:

November 7: First listen - 7:15 pm – 8:06 pm: ~ 51 minutes

November 10: Begin transcription – 2:12 pm – 3:22 pm: ~ one hour ten minutes

November 20: 9:13 pm – 12:20 am: ~ three hours and seven minutes

November 24: 7:30 pm – 10:00 pm: ~ two hours and thirty minutes

November 25: 5:20 pm – 8:45 pm: ~ three hours and twenty five minutes

November 27: 4:23: pm – 7:14 pm: ~ two hours and fifty one minutes