

Luvata Bowles

A Verbatim Transcription of an Oral Interview

411 West Maple Street
Champaign, Illinois
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Interviewed by
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Luvata Bowles, Oral Interview

Melinda Roundtree: Mrs. Bowles, we'd like to ask you questions about your birthdate.

Luvata Bowles: My birthdate is May 17, 1896.

Melinda Roundtree: And the place where you were born?

Luvata Bowles: In Henderson, Kentucky. [Comments in the background from Theotto Bowles.]

Melinda Roundtree: Okay. Could you tell about the date that you came to Champaign-Urbana?

Luvata Bowles: I don't think I remember the date

Theotto Bowles: October 28, 1928.

Luvata Bowles: I don't remember the date and I know it was in October.

Melinda Roundtree: Could you tell us a little bit about your experiences here in Champaign-Urbana? When you first got here did you get a job?

Luvata Bowles: Well, when I first got here I didn't like it at all, but I grew to like it because I got a job on campus. First I worked around family homes and I was so short and fat until I got sore all around here stooping and bending cleaning, so I decided . . . And I was working for a family out in the University and I told her that I was tired of, you know, cleaning and working in families going from place to place. So she told me that she would help me get a place on the campus cooking, you know, because I was a good cook. And she helped me to get a place and she said that I needed more money than what she was paying me. And this is Dr. Grim that I worked for, and she went across the street and the lady was quitting, and she got that job for me.

And I started there and I went from place to place from different fraternities and sororities working. And my work proved out real good, and I never had to ... I never was fired from a job because I always tried to do my work well and satisfactorily. So I got along pretty good on the campus, and I stayed on the campus and worked from place to place for 25 years. And we raised our family of eight children and put all of them through school - high school and I think it was two through university.

Theotto Bowles: Two graduated from the university, and we've had five to attend. And I had all five of them attend. So that was that, but I was still working from time to time. You know, I'd get off sometimes in the summer and sometimes in the fall of the year when I'd feel real tired and rest, and then I'd go back to work. And then I did a lot of work in other people's places, you know, filling out their jobs. And in that way I was able to put my eight children through school, and through the University of Illinois. And I had four girls and four boys.

Melinda Roundtree: Okay, do you remember the names of the fraternities and sororities that you worked at?

Luvata Bowles: Well, I'll see if I can think of them. The first one was - what's the one on Second Street? Chi Psi Lodge. I stayed there longer than I did at any place I think.

Melinda Roundtree: And that's the fraternity house?

Luvata Bowles: Yes, that was a fraternity. And then the sorority over in Urbana. What was the name of it on Lincoln Avenue?

Theotto Bowles: Know where it was but don't know the name of it.

Luvata Bowles: I don't know the name of it. Now I've forgotten. And then I came back on First Street, I think. What was that fraternity out on First Street, First and Chalmers?

Harold Hughes: I stay right around there.

Luvata Bowles: I can't think of the name of the different places because I'll tell you what. After I had my stroke my memory left me and sometimes it comes back and sometimes it doesn't, but thank the Lord it's well as it is. So I worked, and then I

worked on Third Street. Was that on Third Street Theotto that I worked just part time?
(Talking to her husband).

Theotto Bowles: You worked too many places. I never did know the name of the
places.

Luvata Bowles: I don't remember the names, but I know it was on Third Street where I
worked part time for a long time. I worked Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Or was that
Fourth Street?

Harold Hughes: I think it is Third Street.

Luvata Bowles: What?

Harold Hughes: I guess it would be Third Street.

Luvata Bowles: Is it?

Harold Hughes: Because there's a lot.

Theotto Bowles: Right up there by the church wasn't it?

Luvata Bowles: I can't remember.

Theotto Bowles: The one by Ms. Clark?

Luvata Bowles: Yes, I can't remember the names of them to save my life. I can tell you all about it, but I can remember just a little bit of it, you know. So since I've had that stroke I can't hardly remember anything. Sometimes people get to talking and I remember things, you know, that's past, but as a rule I don't. (Laughs). So that makes it kind of bad, because sometimes during those times it was very nice times for me because I enjoyed doing what I was doing. I enjoyed cooking, and I enjoyed eating. (Laughter). I still do.

Harold Hughes: Sounds a lot like me.

Melinda Roundtree: Me too.

Luvata Bowles: I had a lady laughing this morning about that. I said now, my son had cancer and he died hungry, and I don't intend to. When I first came from the hospital I didn't have any appetite whatsoever, but the doctor told me if I wanted to live I'd have to eat. (Laughter.) So, I started eating, and I've been eating ever since. I've eating more and more. Now I think I eat too much. But as well as it is. So that's all of that I can remember of.

Harold Hughes: When you first arrive here in Champaign-Urbana where did you live at?

Theotto Bowles: 52 East Columbia.

Luvata Bowles: Yes, 52 East Columbia, because I know it was on Columbia but I couldn't remember the number.

Harold Hughes: When you arrived what were the job opportunities like for blacks?

Luvata Bowles: Oh terrible, and blacks could not get very many jobs at all worthwhile. And the reason ... Even when I started working after my children got up some size, if I hadn't known how to cook and was a good cook, I wouldn't have gotten a job. But thoughtfully, you know, and trying to do my best, I was made a very good cook, and I practiced what my mother had taught me. And I went into it, you might say, "blindfolded" because nobody taught me anything outside of what my mother had taught me see, and I wasn't with her. And I just went out there and I read cookbooks and tried one thing and another, and people used to ask me how did you do so and so, but I would multiply you know. If I had 50 or 60 or 70 boys I knew just how much to multiply to make enough for all of them and things of that sort. And I just kept doing that until I was perfect in it, you know. Then I could come down, you know, the same way. And I made my living on the campus cooking like that, and that's the way I worked and helped put my children through school like that. Cause I stayed on the campus 25 years and worked, and put all of my children in school. And I had eight: four boys and four girls.

Harold Hughes: You personally, did you attend college or a university?

Luvata Bowles: No, no I did not. I went to grade school, and that was about as far as I got. And I was taught that if you could read and write that was practically all you needed to know, but I learned better than that after I got up and was out among the public you see, because I knew you were suppose to know better than that. It is the same way I was ... I used to go to church, but I guess I didn't grab a hold of things that was taught in church if it was taught, but I never thought anything about it until later. I never was taught to read the Bible but I learned later that the Bible teaches you how to live, and if you don't read the Bible, you don't know very much about living. You're just breathing, and God is giving you the breath to breathe. That's all there is to it. But to know that early you can take advantage of it. But I couldn't because I didn't know, I wasn't even taught, and I didn't learn it in churches because nobody in church even taught you that, but that was just the way it was.

Harold Hughes: What church do you go to?

Luvata Bowles: Salem Baptist Church.

Harold Hughes: You've been going there since you've been here?

Luvata Bowles: Yes.

Harold Hughes: What type of role has Salem Baptist Church played with as far as your attendance and going there and also in the community?

Luvata Bowles: What type of role? Now you explain just what you mean by "role."

Harold Hughes: Well as far as being active as a voice of the people, of the community?

Luvata Bowles: Well, so far as I'm concerned I don't know of any active role that they are taking - they have taken. Now they have Bible school in the spring about one week or two weeks, something like that, but you never know it's Bible school because they just teach everything like to little children and they soon forget that what they have taught because it just goes on about two weeks or one week. Now this past summer it was just one week, and that was that.

Melinda Roundtree: It's hard to teach something.

Luvata Bowles: It's hard to teach something, and sometimes that's the reason why I thought I never knew more because I worked all the time, and when I went to church I had my little ones. I was always trying to make them do what was right, and had my mind on them, and maybe I just didn't listen to what if it was said, I didn't listen to what was said. So I don't blame them at all, not at all. So it was me, you know,

because I was trying to do my best with my family and trying to raise them up as they should come up, and the way I was raised up and that was that.

Melinda Roundtree: Yes, I was going to say that back then the schools were different because, you know, they went up to a certain grade and then that was like ... Okay, my father was telling me like down South, like the ninth grade was considered high school for those back then, whereas now twelve grade, you know, things like that. So it was I don't know it was you were getting more or getting less, it depended on the individual or whatever, so it was different.

Luvata Bowles: Yes, I see. Yes it varied something like that here I think, something like that. But I don't know whether it was any more or any less. I really don't because I wasn't there. I just stayed on my job and sent my children. And when they would come home they never would express a lot of things that went on that, you know, they knew, that they didn't express. So I just didn't know.

Melinda Roundtree: So most of the women like during, say, twenties, thirties or whatever, you know, around in that time, they were like getting jobs as house - maids, and stuff like that and cooks and stuff. Did you join - they had some kind of cooks club, you know ...

Luvata Bowles: I never did join.

Melinda Roundtree: Do you remember that?

Luvata Bowles: Yes, I remember something being said about it but I never did join the club, never did. I always got my jobs, you know, on my own, and that was that.

Melinda Roundtree: You know any other black women that worked on the campus, I mean, you know, around the campus as cooks that you can remember? If you can remember any?

Luvata Bowles: Those that I remember is gone, they're dead. Gertrude Harris passed, the other Mrs. Harris is gone, and one or two of the other people that I knew that worked on the campus is gone.

Melinda Roundtree: I was wondering do you know Willia Mae Harris?

Luvata Bowles: Willia Mae Harris?

Melinda Roundtree: She - no not Harris, Swinney. Not Harris, Swinney.

Luvata Bowles: I knew of a Swinney but ...

Melinda Roundtree: Because she just retired from campus. She was a cook at a fraternity. I forgot the name of it.

Luvata Bowles: You knew Mr. Swinney didn't you Theotto?

Theotto Bowles: Yes, but the latter years, you was coming off campus.

Melinda Roundtree: Yes because he died, yes, that's probably the same one. She just retired not too long ago.

Luvata Bowles: I knew of her, yes.

Melinda Roundtree: Yes, she said she worked on campus as a cook.

Luvata Bowles: We never worked close together or anything like that.

Melinda Roundtree: Did you get involved in any other organizations or clubs, you know, besides church?

Luvata Bowles: No, I don't remember. What club was it?

Theotto Bowles: Fraternal organization. Fraternal. Calanthians.

Luvata Bowles: Oh, Court of Calanthe, yes.

Melinda Roundtree: What is that?

Theotto Bowles: Fraternal organization.

Luvata Bowles: It's a fraternal organization. Court of Calanthe. Let's see, I can't even express exactly how it was . . .

Theotto Bowles: It was ritualistic and had programs for the community, county.

Melinda Roundtree: Was that connected with the church, or ...?

Luvata Bowles: No, that was separate.

Theotto Bowles: No, the fraternity was separate from the church.

Melinda Roundtree: How about moving on up to the sixties and the Civil Rights Movement? You were working during the time right, the sixties?

Luvata Bowles: Yes, I think so. I was doing part-time work I think in the sixties.

Melinda Roundtree: How did you feel during that time, you know, you were working and ...

Luvata Bowles: Well, I felt a little more freer at that time than I had been because I felt like that I was better able to accomplish what I was about to do with the jobs that I would get and things of that sort.

Melinda Roundtree: Okay. You said you had three children that went to colleges.

Theotto Bowles: Graduated.

Melinda Roundtree: Well, did they graduate like during the sixties or was it Do you remember?

Theotto Bowles: It was after.

Melinda Roundtree: Like in the seventies.

Theotto Bowles: No, ahead of the sixties.

Melinda Roundtree: Oh, okay. And they all went to the U of I?

Luvata Bowles: Yes. My baby boy came out in sixty-five ...

Theotto Bowles: Fifty-five.

Luvata Bowles: Fifty-five.

Harold Hughes: How did the Civil Rights Movement affect the community?

Theotto Bowles: You said how did it affect? It alerted the people to something they didn't know and gathered them together.

Luvata Bowles: I really don't remember about that. I really don't.

Harold Hughes: I mean did things change fast or gradually as far as opportunities opening for black people?

Luvata Bowles: Gradually, I'm sure because for black people nothing works fast.

Melinda Roundtree: That's right, that's right.

Harold Hughes: How was the community when you first got here?

Luvata Bowles: The community?

Harold Hughes: And how did it change as ...

Luvata Bowles: The community was wonderful when we first because we had lovely neighbors and begun to change off to, you know, the lower class people and things of that sort. And all the older people passed on. Theotto and I are the oldest people left in this neighborhood. All the rest are gone. Except one, Mrs. Walker.

Melinda Roundtree: I know we talked to ... Well last summer we talked to Mrs. Britt, you know, and she's a older member of the community also, and she talked about, you know, when she first came here how the community well, the neighbors were so friendly and kind. We talked to Mr. Bowles about that, too, also how children interacted with each other whereas now the young people aren't as close.

Luvata Bowles: Well the people that's moved in now, they aren't really, you know worthwhile to get acquainted with. Or even if I had children, I would keep them away from the class people because I'll tell you the reason why I would do it. My mother did it. My mother didn't allow us to associate with any and everybody, and you know I say so many times if I had've been taught the things that I would've known - I should've known, I would've been far beyond what I am today. It was just because I didn't know. And the Bible teaches you, you are lost with the lack of knowledge, and that's why so many of us are where we are today because we just didn't know.

Melinda Roundtree: Did you have any relatives here?

Luvata Bowles: No, no.

Melinda Roundtree: Did you have any sisters and brothers?

Luvata Bowles: No.

Melinda Roundtree: You were the only child?

Luvata Bowles: I had sisters and brothers, but not here. They were in Kentucky, but they're all gone now. My sisters are dead, and my brothers are dead so I don't have any relatives living close now at all.

Melinda Roundtree: Okay. When you were cooking at fraternities and sororities, how did the ... They were students, right?

Luvata Bowles: Yes.

Melinda Roundtree: ... Students within each fraternity and sorority receive. Oh, they had already had black cooks before right, so did you fit in all right?

Luvata Bowles: Oh, yes, because ... I'll tell you the reason why. I was in, in some of them I was wholly and solely the boss because I did the hiring, the buying, and the firing. (Laughter). And they all had to look to me. And of course I didn't do that for a long time, you know, after I went on the campus. But when I learned to do that I was really looked up to and was treated royally, you know, and got along fine with the

people that I worked for. When I had somebody else over me they was always trying to overpower me as a housemother and things of that sort, but when you are out by yourself, why then you can kind of do as you want to do and sometimes really stretch it, you know, because you know you're on your own and you want to do what is right and what is your best. So that's the way I did all the time. But when I was working under somebody else I knew that couldn't happen. So when I got out from under these housemothers and what have you, I got along fine, and was treated nicely by all the boys that was there.

Melinda Roundtree: So you got all the supplies, you know, you ordered the supplies and food and everything. While you were working there were you allowed to bring food home, because I know Mrs. Swinney said that she could bring home food all the time and it was very helpful to her and her family.

Luvata Bowles: Yes, oh yes, it was. One time I practically fed my family out of the leftovers out of the kitchen. I only worked for one person that told me I don't allow you to take anything out of this kitchen, and that was Mrs. Price. I remember her very very well, and she told me that ... And evenings I would be so tired from cooking all day, I'd be too tired to eat and I would leave and come home and whatever was here I'd eat it, you know. And sometimes there would be nothing. (Laughs). That's the truth. Because, I didn't want to eat while I was tired, and when I was real tired and ate I'd have indigestion, so I quit that and I'd come home sometimes hungry. And she had told me and she watched me too for a long time, and she found out that I didn't try to

bring anything home and then she came to me and told me that she was sorry, that I could bring something home if I couldn't do anything better. But she didn't want me to go hungry, and I thanked her, and I still didn't eat. When I'd get through those evenings, why I just come on and get in my car and come on home. And so I got along with her okay, but she's gone now bless her heart. But she really was tight.
(Laughter.)

Harold Hughes: Back when you were working in the fraternities and the sororities, how were the youth back then as far as being motivated to go to school?

Luvata Bowles: How was I being motivated?

Harold Hughes: No, how were the youth being motivated to go to school?

Luvata Bowles: Oh, the youth. Now I don't exactly know how to answer that because see I don't know the other person's situation. I know a lot of them - the boys especially, because they would talk about it, you know - they depended upon their parents to see to their schools' tuition being paid and things of that sort. So that was all I knew. Most of them would depend upon their parents or their relatives, somebody to take care of their school situation.

Theotto Bowles: Sometimes they could get a part-time job working for their meals.

Luvata Bowles: Yes, a lot of them got part-time jobs for their meals.

Theotto Bowles: Waiting table.

Luvata Bowles: Waiting table, yes.

Harold Hughes: As far as you motivating your children to continue their education, do you think that's helped them?

Luvata Bowles: I beg your pardon?

Harold Hughes: Do you think that has helped your children as far as you motivating them to continue their education?

Luvata Bowles: Oh Lord, yes, sure, indeed so. Yes indeed.

Harold Hughes: Do you see the youth of today as far as being more motivated to continue?

Luvata Bowles: Not hardly, not hardly. The youth of today seem to be way off for some reason. And you know there's young girls ... I just got a thank-you card from one last week that I sent graduated from the University

Theotto Bowles: No, high school. High school, she could not write. I couldn't read her writing and I said this is really pitiful. You know, it's a lot of them can't read, and why I don't know, because that was the first thing I learned: to read. And seems like to me the parents would start them out reading and writing at home before they start to school, because my children did. And of course now I don't say that everybody's children should do that but I think it'd be a help. I think it helps.

Melinda Roundtree: A lot of people, well they say that the parents work, you know, other circumstances prevent them from helping their children.

Luvata Bowles: But seems like to me that a parent should know and realize during those times that they would be helping their own children and helping themselves by helping them to go forward. I guess some people just don't do that. I know that I used to think about it when my children were little and anything that they asked me I would try to help them, and if I couldn't help them I'd send them to somebody that could, you know, and that's just the way I did all the time. Or either I would go and ask somebody because I know I used to ask some of the boys at the place where I worked, Chi Psi Lodge, different things, you know, when Wilbur was in music school. Of course, it was a lot of music students there and I would tell him to talk to so and so and so and so, you know, about different things that would help him. So you know, just that type of help to him you see, because if I hadn't done nothing, why he wouldn't have known what he did. And he played in the band here in Champaign until he went away to the Army.

Melinda Roundtree: I know we talked to a counselor last summer from Urbana High School and she said that, you know, a lot of black students from Champaign-Urbana, they don't realize how many people from here that went to the U of I, and you know, they completed studies there, but they didn't stay here to work because there wasn't anything here. They went away. And I said, if the people could just come back and just talk to the people, you know, go to the high school, and they know, well we have people, and then that would motivate them to want to try harder or whatever. Because I know if I would've had that, you know If they don't have it within themselves then, they just stray away and won't try.

Luvata Bowles: That's right. And you know so many times children, if they find out their parents is dilatory about those things, they are, too. But if they find out their parents are interested and try to help them, and then they up and gone. So that's just the way they are. So you've got to help your children and show that you care. You sure have to.

Melinda Roundtree: Because I know a lot of ... The girls you know in high school, you know, it's just, I hate to say it's terrible but it is. You know they ... I don't know. You want to help, but you don't know what to do.

Luvata Bowles: That's right, you don't know what to do. Afraid to do anything, because you're afraid you'll do the wrong thing.

Harold Hughes: I know it does help as far as you know, having your parents' support.

Luvata Bowles: It does.

Melinda Roundtree: It means a lot, because they give you that push, that big push. You need that. If you have a family, you know that feeling of family. That's all you need really.

Harold Hughes: I know when I started to come to school my mom, you know, she was happy that I was in school because high school didn't go so well for me. But it was like she wasn't really happy with my career choice as far as what I wanted to go into. Then it's like after the first semester she saw how my grades were and she was happy because my grades weren't like that in high school and she was finally happy with my career choice. And it helped me a lot to see that she was proud of what I was doing. So it does give you a nice push.

Luvata Bowles: Yes, it does help.

Harold Hughes: As far as crime goes, how was it when you first arrived?

Luvata Bowles: Crime?

Theotto Bowles: Crime was low when we first come to this town.

Luvata Bowles: I don't remember any crimes. Yes, they was very low.

Harold Hughes: Has it increased a lot over the years?

Theotto Bowles: Oh, yes. You can just think of the situation of the last ten years.

Luvata Bowles: Oh, yes, thinking back now it has.

Melinda Roundtree: Back then were the youth more involved in church activities, because now they're going towards music and the fling, and straying away from the church?

Luvata Bowles: Well yes, back there it was more things going on in church and you were more wrapped up in church activities than you are now. Because it seems like to me they are getting away from church activities a lot, and they're not putting in anymore of this. I'd like to see them put in more activities in the church for the younger peoples so that they can learn more, because young people nowadays aren't learning anything. They're coming along about the same way that I was when I was a child and it shouldn't be that way. They're not learning. They're just maybe going to church every Sunday and that's it, and listening to the preacher preach. Well, he's not even explaining the verses that's he talking from. I have been to church and listened and they do not explain like they do on T.V. ...

Now on T.V. they read the Bible and then after they read the Bible they explain the verse, tell you just what it means, and then you understand that. But in our church that doesn't happen. That's the reason why I say I stayed in church for years and years and years and learned nothing. And what I have learned I've learned it all from T.V. Now that's the truth. I didn't learn it in church. I really feel sorry for some of those people in church that's in there. They just think they go to church and be good and live. That's all they're suppose to do, but it isn't. It isn't, and I know that.

Melinda Roundtree: It takes individual effort, too. You have to have a hunger for wisdom and knowledge, you know. If you don't, then just sit back well, take everything they say. That's true, I'll just take it, whatever.

Luvata Bowles: So that's what I have come to the conclusion, you know, because it's so many people that really don't know and they should know. And I suppose that's the reason why they don't do anymore teaching than they do, because they just don't know and they're afraid to venture out and start and try. That's what I feel.

Melinda Roundtree: It's like Mr. Bowles was saying when we interviewed him, that young people don't take advantage of the opportunities. They don't realize what you all went through, and they say well we got it, you know, we can just do what we want, we don't have to work for anything. That's what it boils down to I think. They can say well hey, my father's paying my way, you know, and I can sleep here, whatever.

Luvata Bowles: It's come, they go, they God send Sunday. (Laughter).

Harold Hughes: That's the classic.

Luvata Bowles: Well that's just what it boils down to.

Harold Hughes: As far as black people in the public's eye, as far as the portrayal of black people in the newspapers and T.V., has it changed since you've been here?

Luvata Bowles: Oh yes.

Harold Hughes: As far as being more negative or more or less positive.

Theotto Bowles: It varies.

Luvata Bowles: Yes, it varies.

Theotto Bowles: It's more positive than it formerly was because they know that you know and then you're part of the system nowadays. Anytime you know as much as a white man and talk to him and look him in the eye, he has a fear of you because when you can talk to him, you and he studied the same books and you got more out of the book than he did, he's amazed.

Luvata Bowles: And he's astonished too because they don't think that we should know as much as they know.

Melinda Roundtree: I know we were talking about younger people aren't motivated or whatever, you know. We talked to Mr. Griggs from Edison Middle School, and he was saying that they have started a program where the younger kids like seventh and eighth grade, they've introduced a career option program where young people are introduced to different opportunities as far as jobs and whatever so they'll know at a younger age because that's where it starts. The learning starts ... So they know like by the eighth grade they'll doing math for ninth grade or whatever. Then they have the foundation, but if they don't they go into high school and they don't know how to read, so it starts at a young age and at some of the elementary schools are not teaching the blacks kids the way they should. You know, they just let them slide on through. And people say that - I guess people don't realize that it's here now. They say well that was back in the old days, you know, when people didn't know how to read or whatever, but it's here now. That's the same thing you know. And because I know last year some guy was in college and he was playing basketball and he didn't know how to read or something, and they just like downplayed that. Nobody knew about it until, you know, he decided to talk about it, you know, tell the young kids, you all better get what you can now, you know, because look what happened to me. And he's now trying to go back to school and learn to read and write and everything. And I said that was really a sad case.

Luvata Bowles: I would wish that a lot of these children would do now that can't read and write, is to go back to school and learn because they're still young yet, and you know they can do it. But if they aren't taught to do it or encouraged to do it they still will be missing of that reading and writing. Now I have a grandson that can't even hardly write his name real good and he's in college, in college. Yes, he's in college and can't write his name real decent, and it's pitiful. And he went to school in Chicago and I'm telling you I get a letter from him sometime. I got a letter from him, I think it was Mother's Day wasn't it Theotto?

Theotto Bowles: I imagine so.

Luvata Bowles: And I couldn't hardly make out what he had written. I said this is pitiful, my grandson. But it just can't be helped a lot of times.

Melinda Roundtree: A lot of younger people they feel I guessed embarrassed by the fact that they don't know how to read or write. Instead of going and saying, 'Well I can't read I'm going to do something to turn this around,' they just sit back. 'Well I can't read I don't want anybody to know.'

Luvata Bowles: Well I thank God that I could always read, but I started too late. When I began to realize what I was suppose to do reading, I had cataracts in my eyes, and I couldn't see. And on up until, that's been a little over three years ago and I've taken sick since that time, and I've been sick practically ever since. And I think a lot of it was

just worry and grief because I couldn't do or get to the place that I wanted to get to because I really wanted to start something in my church with another lady - young girl. What's the Brown girl name? She was getting books and everything, that is when I found out that I couldn't see. She had started this Bible class and she had gotten the books, and I told her that I wanted to get a Bible class started in Salem. And she gave me one of the books and I brought it home and I begun to try to read, and found out that I couldn't see. And from that on, that's been over three years ago, and I just said to myself, I just waited too late. I really did. But all the time that I was working I was able to, you know, see how to do my work. So there you are.

Melinda Roundtree: We don't want to tire you out. I know you just got out of the hospital and everything, and I don't want you to get too tired talking and all.

Luvata Bowles: Well whenever you ... Well was that about all the questions you want to ask?

Melinda Roundtree: (Directed to Harold) You don't have anymore?

Harold Hughes: No.

Melinda Roundtree: Well we thank you for letting us interview you and we thank Mr. Bowles for sitting in and helping us out. (Laughter).

Luvata Bowles: Yes, he helped out a lot.