

**University of Mississippi
Center for the Study of Southern Culture**

**Black Families of Yalobusha County
Interview with Ethel Morgan**

March 26, 2021

Interviewer: Jaimee' Mitchell

Length: 52:43

Jaimee' Mitchell	[00:00]	Umm, I am Jaimee' Mitchell and I am sitting here with Mrs. Ethel Morgan in her home in Water Valley, MS. Today is March 26, 2021. It is currently 11:13 pm- am, in the afternoon. Um, How are you doing today Mrs. Morgan?
Ethel Morgan	[00:23]	I am doing fine. And thank you so much for coming to my home to interview me
Jaimee' Mitchell	[00:28]	Thank you for allowing me inside of your home
Ethel Morgan	[00:31]	Well you're more than welcome
Jaimee' Mitchell	[00:32]	For the record, could you state your first and last name, along with your date of birth?
Ethel Morgan	[00:38]	Okay. My name is Ethel Morgan. My date of birth is March the 23 rd , 1946. And I just had my 75 th birthday on Tuesday.
Jaimee' Mitchell	[00:52]	That's good. 75 years old.
Ethel Morgan	[00:57]	Yes and I just thank God that I'm a healthy 75 years old.
Jaimee' Mitchell	[01:00]	Yes ma'am.
Ethel Morgan	[01:02]	Yes.
Jaimee' Mitchell	[01:02]	Umm, so could you start off by telling me about-like your childhood?
Ethel Morgan	[01:07]	Ok well, I was born on a farm. My parents were sharecrop-croppers. <i>[Ethel sits up on the couch and pulls her mask down so that she is heard clearly throughout the remainder of the interview]</i> Uhh, my parents were sharecroppers and we moved around a lot. Ha! I didn't know why but you know that was common back then in the 40s because as I stated I was born in 1946 and it was common you know for us to move around. Uhh, and then after share- living on the farm for nine years, well my parents were able to save up enough money and move to Water Valley. That was in 19- December of 1956 when we moved to Water Valley. We bought a house and the house that my parents

bought was in this same spot where I live today. When my dad died in uhh, it was in, 1970- uhh 7. [her father died in 1977] well, uh, after his death, well, uh, some years later my husband and I tore their house down, and we've been living here ever since 1984. So practically from nine years, ha, only about 14 years of my life did I live someplace else. So, I've had the same address basically most of my life. And when I moved to Water Valley, uh it was very hard to adjust because I was still con-I was still a child, ha. And I was used to the people in Coffeerville, and I just loved the people of Coffeerville. Adjusted well and we moved to Water Valley. That was a big change, and I just did not want to go to Water Valley school. But my dad and mother they just believed in education, they just made me go every morning, just had to make me go to school. I just didn't want to go, and I left crying every morning [Ethel laughs]. But anyway, after I got used to it, I grew to love it. And I love Water Valley, and you should know I love Water Valley because I came back after I finished college and I've made my home here. Water Valley is a good place to live. And I'm so glad that we moved here. And I'm just glad that we still live in our ho- my home spot where I grew up. Yeah so, that has been something that I cherish. This is where I grew up. Mmhmm.

Jaimee' Mitchell [03:32]

I think that's a beautiful story.

Ethel Morgan [03:33]

Yes. Yes. And then, um, when I was a child um, segregation was pretty rough then. It was- we had- when we went places, we couldn't get close, you know, to white people.

Jaimee' Mitchell [03:51]

Mmhmm.

Ethel Morgan [03:52]

We had to stay our distance. Even walking down, the street, you had to walk on one side, they had on the other side. And the water fountains on Main Street, we were not allowed to drink water from them. Uhh, in the courthouse, any building that we went in there were always signs up "Colored Only." For the water fountain, it was a sign, "Colored Only." For-if there was a bath for Blacks, there was a sign up said "Blacks Only." In some of the public buildings there were no bathroom, you know, for Blacks. Umm, we couldn't go in restaurants. Now if we did- now there was a hotel here and I re-my brother worked there because we were working people [Ethel laughs] even after we moved to town. There was a hotel here in Water Valley, it was called Blackma Hotel. And my brother cooked there, but we couldn't eat there. If we ate, we had to go to the back. It was in the back where we could eat. And just about all the rest- I mean, there was a bus station here. In order for us to get a ticket to go somewhere we had to go to the back of the bus station. And if we wanted food, we had to order it from the back, we couldn't go to the front. Now all of the that was in- in the 50s. and the schools were segregated. I graduated in 1965

from a segregated school. Um, and then I went to Alcorn state university which was a predominately Black university. At that time, it was all Black [Ethel laughs] because there was- I think there was one white student, and her husband was a professor there. When I was- but see they didn't live in the dormitories, they had their own housing. So, you might as well say Alcorn in 1965 was all Black. But uh, there was a white staff member and his wife at the time was enrolled in school. So, I graduated from a all-Black high school, graduated from a all-Black college also. Because even though Ole Miss, only about 20 miles from me, it was integrated in 1963. That's when it was integrated. Okay well, seven years later, I entered ole miss. Very few Black students. In Home Economics it was only six Black students. And racism was very high. I mean they- they didn't even – I mean the whites had no dealings with us. Even in the classroom it was high because I remember one of our instructors, um, had a class in we're just two Blacks in this class. Practically all classes that I took at Ole Miss it was either I was the only Black, or there may have been one other Black student in that class. And that was the whole time, when I was working on my master's degree.

Jaimee' Mitchell [06:53]

Mmhmm.

Ethel Morgan [06:54]

Ok but there was one class I was in and it was two Black students and actually- we sat on one side. The teach had the table arranged in a U shape. Okay the- all the whites sat on this side, on that side, in the L at the back of the room. And then the two Blacks we sat non the opposite side. Well, our teacher sat with her back away from, uh huh, to us. Well- [Ethel Chuckles] and then I'd never forget one time uh- I never did say anything in class anyway. But what- uhh, the other Black lady said something in class, and the teacher even made an ugly comment about the way she talked. And after that, she didn't say much in class anymore. And I remember once, uh- when I was going out of the library and one of my teachers- I was in her class at the time, was coming in. and this was a single door, it wasn't a double door, it. Was a single door. I – when I saw her coming in, well I stepped bac for her to get in. and when she got inside that door, it spoke to her and called her by name. she turned her head the other way. [Ethel Chuckles]. No that was inn 19- I enter ole miss in 1970. That was in 1972 when that incident happened, I believe. Because I graduated in 1973. I was taking my classes in the summers only. Okay well when- I – I worked at ole miss. And I- when I was hired, and this same lady, who turned her head and didn't speak to me, was my boss. When I was hire- now I was hired at ole miss in 19- it was 1991. Okay when I was hired there were six people on the interview team. And two of the people I knew because one was one of my former instructors and uh- it was a very long interview. Over an hour. But anyway, I was hired. And this same- it was for the Nat-at that time they called it the National Food Service Management

Institute, that was the name of the program. But the name has changed now, I think it's some like- some to do whit child nutrition. Okay well, uh when- when this lady- when I was hired, she became my boss. The same lady who didn't speak to me, and turn her head away was my boss. And I have- I mean she was so nice. That shows how people can change once they get to know you and get to know your character. But anyway from 1972, 'til 1991, her whole attitude towards Blacks had changed. She was the nicest person. All the people were nice to me in the institute. Every one of them. Um, it was two Blacks working there when I went there. I was-uh, one working as the coordinator site trainer. And the other person was the secretary, they had two secretaries. Okay well, all the people were very nice. And I mean she was so helpful and very friendly, and we actually became friends. We actual- when we would see each other we would always you know- out, off campus we would always speak and sometimes even hug. We went to conferences together, rode in the car together. And so, like say, we-we got know each other well and she became a friend. So, people should judge you not by the color of your skin, but by your character as Dr. Martin Luther King said. [Ethel Chuckles]

Jaimee' Mitchell [10:37]

Mmhmm. Hmm.

Ethel Morgan [10:42]

And I enjoyed my time at Ole Miss but see I had been used to working to people— students in a classroom, taking them on trips, going places with them. And I enjoyed mixing. Office work was just not for me. [Ethel laughs] and I was there from 1991 to 1993 which is just two years. What- the type of work I was doing, I was developing school food service material. Um, and, like I say, I was developing curriculum guides for school food service personnel. And uh, sitting at a computer, workin- and, and that just wasn't me. I was so bored sometimes I just wanted to fall [Ethel Laughs] and go to sleep. And so I- I always believed that, whatever you do in life, you should enjoy.

Jaimee' Mitchell [11:31]

I agree

Ethel Morgan [11:32]

If you don't enjoy it. you need to get out of it. I- I enjoyed the people, I enjoyed working with the people. But I did not enjoy the work. And so that was why I got out of it [Ethel laughs]

Jaimee' Mitchell [11:45]

I definitely agree with you, I definitely agree with you.

Ethel Morgan [11:48]

Yes, yes and that was when I was hired by Mississippi State as the Extension Home Economist.

Jaimee' Mitchell [11:53]

Okay, okay um, I kinda- I wanna go back to something you said earlier. Um, you said that you were born on a farm.

Ethel Morgan [12:05] Right

Jaimee' Mitchell [12:06] And um, you all moved to Water Valley at the age- When you were 9.

Ethel Morgan [12:10] Right.

Jaimee' Mitchell [12:10] Um, and you said you parents were sharecroppers, right?

Ethel Morgan [12:14] Mmhmm.

Jaimee' Mitchell [12:14] Um, I- a little birdy told me something about the north end? I think? Does that relate to you? The north end?

Ethel Morgan [12:25] The north end?

Jaimee' Mitchell [12:25] Miss Dottie told me something about that.

Ethel Morgan [12:28] Oh probably where I live. We live-this is north end of town.

Jaimee' Mitchell [12:31] This is the north end of town?

Ethel Morgan [12:33] This is the north end of town, uh huh. And the name for it- now why it has this name I don't know, and people don't use this much now. But we ne- when we moved here it was called "Possum Holler." [Ethel Laughs] Why it was called "Possum Holler?" I don't know. Yes, but were in the north end of town.

Jaimee' Mitchell [12:47] Okay, I just wanted to clear that up.

Ethel Morgan [12:49] Yeah!

Jaimee' Mitchell [12:49] Um, I want you to talk a little bit about, Um, your relationship with your family.

Ethel Morgan [12:56] Oh, I came from a big family. You can't help but have a good relationship. We shared everything because we slept in the same bed. It was always at least three in a bed. Because...Like... Now...Um...It was ten of us but I, ten children. I never lived in the house with all ten children because I'm the ninth child, and my older sister was married, already had two children, and she had a third child the same day I was born. So my oldest sister's third child and myself, we were born the same day and we actually call ourselves twins and I was so hurt. She passed, ahh, in January of 2020. Yea...so like I said, we were, we graduated from high school as classmates. Now can you imagine having a niece in the same classroom with you. Yes, but now, um, we didn't go all the way through high school in the same room. Umm, they were living in Tennessee, and then they

moved back to Water Valley when I was in high school after they moved back to Water Valley, I had two nieces in the grade ahead of me and one niece in the classroom with me and several nieces below me because my sister had eleven children and it was...at. All of them were in school except for one who had grad.... who was out. So, she came back. She moved back to Water Valley with ten children and all ten of these children were in school. So I had two nieces, like I said, above me, one in the classroom with me, and Ah, nieces in, several nieces and nephews below me [Ethel Chuckles] Yes.

Jaimee' Mitchell [14:45]

That's a big family.

Ethel Morgan [14:45]

Yes

Jaimee' Mitchell [14:46]

So do you-what-what do remember about your day, like your daily routine? Like what did you all spend most of your time doing?

Ethel Morgan [14:56]

Oh we got up early in the morning, when we lived on the farm. We got up early in the morning, and we always had f-we ate all of our meals together. We had breakfast, lunch, and dinner together because there-and- we all worked in the field. But now-uhh-you know not in the wintertime but in the summertime we'd get up early in the morning and my mother or somebody cook breakfast. We had breakfast every morning. At lunch time we stopped, and we went home for lunch to eat and then we would- now usually my mother or somebody else stayed at the house to cook. When we went home, we had a full dinner meal. It wasn't just snacks cause- it. We raised our food. We had meat and vegetables and always a desert because when my dad worked, he wanted his desert. And then, ah, she cooked, whoever cooked, whether it was my mother or an older sister, they cooked enough for supper. And at supper time we left, we ate our dinner left over. Umm, and then, um, we...you know at night, we were all together. We did every, there was so much togetherness then because we didn't have a TV, we didn't. I can remember we didn't even have a 'frigerator. We had an icebox. Um, on Saturday my dad would go to town get this great big block of ice and it kept, he put it in the ice box. That's what kept our food cool until the ice melted. And usually, now on Saturday, my mother always, we cooked a big dinner on Saturday and that was because, we're Christians, and my parents, we didn't work on Sunday. We were not allowed to do anything but enjoy each other on Sunday. We went to church on Sunday, and when we came back, we had our family meal together and so many times, people from the church came home with us. Umm, most of the time on Sundays after church a lot of times, we went home with other people or somebody came home with us. That's why my, uhh, mother always made sure we had

plenty food to eat because we never knew if somebody was gonna come home from church with us or not.

Ethel Morgan [17:04]

Okay, now that's you, and as far as our chores being, now it was nine children in the house with me. You know during my time. Okay, we all had chores, and we knew what our chores were. My parents didn't say Ethel it's your turn to wash dishes. I knew if it was my time to wash dishes it was a whole week. She had our chores set up and rotated everything. On Saturday we always did our washing and ironing. And we ironed everything. There was somebody who was assigned to the washing and my mother always...she was the main person who did the washing. Okay, my, uhh, so the washing, and we had a rubboard. Yes, we washed with the rubboard in a tub. We had to go to the spring to get the water to bring to the house to wash the clothes here. This is in one place where we lived because we had no running water. We had to go to the spring, which was about, I'd say a fourth of a mile from the house. And we had to bring the water to the house, heated it on a pot, on the outside of the house. And we washed our clothes, and we usually washed the clothes, most of the time we did that on Friday, so they would-on Friday afternoon. So they would be dry for Saturday, where we could iron them Saturday. And if we didn't get a chance to wash on Friday, we'd wash on Saturday morning, place em on the line to dry and with heat from the sun, they were dry by that afternoon. So whoever had to iron, that person did all the ironing for everything. It wasn't like with my children, once the reached ninth grade, I wanted them to learn how, you know, to do everything. they- I had them start just ironing they own clothes. And then after but-now when I was at home, whoever job was to iron, ironed everybody, all the clothes that needed ironing. Whoever job was to wash the dishes did the dishes for a whole week. Everything was assigned for a week. Um, the person who clean was for a whole week. But then we didn't clean house now every day, no. But on Saturday, we all worked together as far as house cleaning. My parents were very neat. [Ethel Chuckles] We cleaned the house. And we- we not only cleaned the house, but we cleaned the yard too. we had to get there because see it was so many of us, we played so much we didn't have grass. The grass couldn't go, but we had to get out there and sweep the dust [Ethel Chuckles]. You know, sweep the yard. We had to sweep the yard on Saturday. So we ha-we had chores and with being nine children, and two parents that 11 people in one house. And we never felt crowded or congested because- mi mean we had good, loving parents. And I'm just so thankful I came from a good, loving home. My parents loved us, and they oved other people too. Mmhmm.

Jaimee' Mitchell [19:55]

What would you say your family's standing in the community was?

- Ethel Morgan** [20:03] Oh everybody respected my parents. At- when we lived in Coffeerville, everybody respected them there. We moved to Water Valley, everybody respected them here. Now my daddy worked for the city, and his job was sweeping the street. He swept the street with a broom. And he had to get up early in the morning before day because there was one street he had to sweep before cars start traveling on it, and that was Main Street. He had to get Main Street swept by six 'o'clock every morning. So, that whole long street [Ethel Chuckles] main street, he had to get it swept by-by six o'clock. And then there were other- now for some reason, he did not sweep streets in the Black neighborhoods. But he had to sweep all the streets in the white neighborhoods. But as far as sweeping the streets in the Black neighborhood, he didn't have to do it. That was the city requirements. So here's a Black man, wasn't paid to sweep streets I'm the Black neighborhood.
- Jaimee' Mitchell** [21:04] So you would say that your family an impact on the community?
- Ethel Morgan** [21:14] Right, yes. Everybody knew-knew my dad. And um, he had a- he had a real impact. When I say everybody cared a lot for him and my mother too. Um when we first moved to town, well back then, women just didn't work, and my dad did not want my mom working outside the home. That was- I mean that's what we were brought- the mothe- the wife suppose to work in the home. And he did not want her working outside the home. But then she got a job ad he didn't know it [ethel laugh]. but just right across the street. We could see the place where it was a laundry. Uh. Over on Central Street. And she could walk to and from the laundry, it wasn't far. But when he heard- when he found out she had a job he was highly upset [Ethel Chuckles], but they worked it out. Because you know, at that time when we moved to town, it wasn't nine children because I had some other sister and brothers who had married away from home. When we moved to town it was, let me see, Alice, [Ethel mumbles as she recounts the number of siblings she had at home], it was six of us. When we moved to Water Valley off the farm, it was six of us still at home. And my dad's salary was very low. And it wasn't enough for us to live off. And so that was why my mother went to work. And you know, my mother wasn't making that much either and I- I- and I- it was such a little they both were making. I really don't see how we made it. But I can say, I have never been hungry a day in my life. My parents always provide food for us even when we lived on the farm because we raised everything. We raised all of our vegetables, we had our own hogs, chickens [Ethel Chuckles], and my daddy was a hunter and her would hunt wild animals. [ethel laughs] and I love wild meat today. And so, um, they were always- they were always good providers. They were always loving parents, they always made sure we had what we needed. Now we did, um, you know we-as

we, uh became teenagers and so, we did work. All of us worked, um when we were in high school. I won't say- it really wasn't a requirement. My parents didn't just make us work, but we wanted extra one. And then we wanted to go to college too. And we wanted extra money in college. So, in high school, all of us worked. Now when we moved to Water Valley, I was third grade. And then when I was seventh grade that was when I got my first job. Um, and this was- uh, I was working for this lady right on the conner. It- It's not far from the house, but I had to pass by her house on the way to school. And you know I men- I think I mentioned that to you. I had passed by this white lady's house on the way to school, and on the way back to school- from school. And I would prepare her breakfast in the morning on the way to school. And she ate her breakfast, but I didn't wait until she finished. She would e-eat her breakfast and then I- soon as I prepared it, I left. On my way home from school, I went and I prepared her super. But for lunch, I would prepare her lunch in the morning time on my way to school and put it in the 'frigerator and she could get it out. She was an elderly lady but she- she really didn't need to be cooking out a Stove. And um, and I didn't do it in the morning I did do a lot of cooking. It was just costly, uh fix it-you know, for something simple. But then in the evening time that was when I would cook her a hot meal on my way home from school. So, I gave her her breakfast in the morning, left her lunch of her to get in the 'frigerator, and di her supper on the way home from school. Uhh, that happened when I was eighth and ninth grade. And, when I was in the ninth grade, they had to put her in a nursing home. They wanted me to live with her because she trusted me. And she didn't want anybody. Everybody they got to live with her, she always-they couldn't get along with her. And so, they finally place her in a nursing home when I was ninth grade. But they- they wanted me- if I had lived with her, but I could- at my age, I knew I was too young to live in the- in the house with an elderly lady because I was afraid she might pass on me. And-ad that would have been very traumatic for me. So, being a ninth grade student I could not assume that responsibility.

- Jaimee' Mitchell** [25:42] Mmhmm.
- Ethel Morgan** [25:43] Mmhmm.
- Jaimee' Mitchell** [25:43] That's definitely understandable.
- Ethel Morgan** [25:46] Mhmmm, yes.
- Jaimee' Mitchell** [25:48] Hmm, could you tell me more about your educational background?
- Ethel Morgan** [25:52] Okay well I started school in Coffeerville, and I went

there until I was third grade for the first semester, and the the second semester I was in Water Valley high school. Um, and you know, after I got use to Water Valley, I always loved school. I went to school every day because my parents, they-we had no other choice but to go to school. We didn't I mean- [Ethel Chuckles] every morning we knew we had to get up and go to school because my parents- that was something they believed in. And, um, they believed in us going to church, serving God, [Ethel Chuckles] going to school getting a good education, and they believed in us being good to each other. So, um we had no choice but to go to school. My parents just didn't allow us to stay home. And even when we were sharecropping, when it was time-when-when school was in session, we were in school. Uh, I know when I was in elementary school, a lot of the students when it was cotton picki- see when had the split session. You probably hear of the split session where we went to school until May I believe it was. The school was out until uh, that was for people to chop cotton. And then it was out 'til August I think, I believe. We went no- that's not how it was. We went- we went to school 'til May. We were out June- I know for chopping cotton. And then we went back in school for two months. We were out in September to pick cotton so September and October we were out picking cotton. And then November, that was when we were back in school. So that was a split session. And my parents never kept us out of school to go pick cotton because you know-you you there were people you could go pick their cotton and they would pay you to pick. But they didn't- the didn't allow us to do that. You know if cotton picking time was before school or continued after school opened. We were-we didn't do that because they believed in us getting a good education. And uh, when I was fourth grade, I missed some days-no it wasn't. When I was third grade, that was when we moved here. Well, I had a sister who had surgery and we had to rotate staying at home with her. I missed some days that year and from the fourth grade until I finished high school I never missed another day of school.

Jaimee' Mitchell [28:28]

Mhmmm.

Ethel Morgan [28:31]

So that shows how important education was to my parents so yes, I had a perfect attendance from the fourth grade to the twelfth grade and when I was in school I was active in organizations. I was in the um, there was a tri uh, tri-hi y club I was a member of, the honor society um the student council so any organization that I could be in [Ethel Chuckles] I was in it and I also I- I- I cannot play basketball but I wanted to be with [Ethel Chuckles] the basketball team I just wanted to be a part of anything [Ethel Chuckles] and so the coach made me the trainer so I was a trainer for the basketball team and I went to the basketball games and my- my parents would always I had very strict parents too they would always take us to the school when

we needed to go for anything for choir rehearsal or oh na I didn't stay in the choir very long cause I can't sing I didn't know I couldn't sing [Ethel Chuckles] but I thought I could I was in the choir [Ethel Chuckles] I tried out for the choir and I think the um director she did her best to keep me but I just couldn't sing [Ethel Chuckles] so anyway I didn't make the choir but that was the only organ only organization that I was not in and um like I said I was active in most of them I even held some type of position and then when I graduate from high school I was class valedictorian yea and when I graduated from college I was the uh I graduated magna cum laude.

Jaimee' Mitchell [30:04]

Ok, ok so you were always an active child? Always, so-

Ethel Morgan [30:10]

[Ethel Chuckles] Yes.

Jaimee' Mitchell [30:11]

So would you say that um that spill spilled over into your adulthood like would you consider yourself active like as a young- young adult?

Ethel Morgan [30:20]

Oh yes, I've been active in everything I have at one I was so active that it would just after I retired from everything because see after I worked, uh after I retired, I opened up a store here I had my own shoe store that I opened- I opened that shoe store in 95 and then I closed in 02 because I wanted- I had just got tired I was involved in a lot of things and I just wanted-I just wanted to retire. But then after I retired I just- I just kept getting involved in so much in the community and that I was just so uh busy [Ethel Chuckles] all the time that I just decided to retire from everything so I started slowly giving up things because I was with the relay for life um, nah I started with the relay for life in Oxford and the reason why I started in Oxford because nah I was a member of Zion Grove Church- let me- Zion Grove was the church I was born and raised in in Coffeerville when we moved to Water Valley we went back to Coffeerville for church service and then um when I married, I joined my husband's church which was Bayson Chapel I was at Bayson Chapel oh from about, we married in 1968 well I joined his church long in about 1970 and I stayed a member of Bayson Chapel until 2000, but in 2000, um I joined a church in Oxford and when I was at this church in Oxford I sponsored the WYA organization and they started having a relay team and since I was their advisor- well see I participated in relay in Oxford but then um, after I was diagnosed with cancer well then I started participating in the relay here in Water Valley so I was- I formed my own team because after I was diagnosed u know I just wanted to- I wanted to do something to give back [Ethel Chuckles] and so I formed my own team and we associated with the Yalobusha relay for

life we just it covers Water Valley, Coffeerville, and Oakland and then um, I served as a team captain I believe it was from 06 to um 12, 20-yea 19, uh that's when it was from 06 to 12. And then I became the county chairperson, uh from 2012 to 2014 I was the county chairperson and I tell ya if-if I I'm in something um gone I want it to be the best and it was working me so hard because I was involved in so much I mean [Ethel Chuckles] I was um in the let me see what all there was four at one time I was working with I was volunteering with four different areas with the American Cancer Society I was a reach to recovery volunteer and that's a volunteer for people who are diagnosed with cancer I would go to the hospital talk to them and give them hope. Um, if they you know were in the hospital or either I had to- I would call them on the phone and I always tried to call them at least once a month once they were discharged from the hospital so I tried to meet the reach to recovery patient in the hospital, although that wasn't a requirement but I always wanted to meet them and see them so I worked with that program and then I would I worked with I was selected out of each state could only have so many what they call Heroes of Hope okay Mississippi had three Heroes of Hope and I was selected as one of Mississippi's um, Heroes of Hope. Um I went to Washington several times to lobby with our congressman to get them to increase funding for the American Cancer Society and um, there was another anyway we were all the work that I was doing with American Cancer Society I was awarded the uh, Mississippi State Volunteer of the Year award and with that's in on one of them sheets what year it was so there was one year when they had a banquet in Tupelo for Nor for North Mississippi all the volunteers in North Mississippi and uh, you could only go to it by invitation I was invited to it and that night that one night I received four awards I got more awards than anybody else there [Ethel Chuckles] one lady one time when I was on my way back to a to my seat a lady said you gone get all the awards [Ethel Chuckles] tonight yea so I received that one night I got so- I don't even- I don't even remember the name of the award but it's on it's on that sheet of paper so yes I did I did a lot of volunteer work so it was working me so hard I didn't have time to do things I needed to do what so what I started to doing I started slowly giving up each one I think the first one I gave up was Heroes of Hope and then uh, the last one I gave up was reach to recovery cause I continued that even after I gave up relay for life so I continued to work reach to recovery and I just gave up reach to recovery two years ago mmhmm yea cause I was ready to retire and just u know I- I wanted some time to just enjoy my husband I am married [Ethel Chuckles] we been married for 52 years and I wanted some time to just to enjoy him the children are grown and away from home so yea so now I just limit my work with my I-I work hard with my church so yes my- my volunteer work is with my church and with my district the district uh, our Baptist District Association.

Jaimee' Mitchell [36:32] So, talking with you I can tell lived a long life of just hard work and dedication and I think that's beautiful especially um, you know you being active and volunteering despite of your health and you're like motivating people you was like I- I think that's beautiful

Ethel Morgan [36:52] Oh, thank you.

Jaimee' Mitchell [36:52] That says a lot about your character.

Ethel Morgan [36:54] Well thank you, thank you.

Jaimee' Mitchell [36:58] Um, you did mention um, being recognized on the radio uh station.

Ethel Morgan [37:02] Oh yes so um, 92.7 in Holly Springs they recognized me um, they had a program going called People Helping People and because somebody recommended me uh to 92.7 in Holly Springs and told them about me about how I love helping people and with all I was doing at the time for people see as they um, when they contacted me they told me to come to the radio station they had sent a limousine to my house to pick me up and take me to the radio station they interviewed me there they presented me with flowers and um they took me out to lunch and they told me I could bring my husband with me and anybody else I wanted to, so I carried my husband and best friend and goddaughter. Ok, uh so they we went out to eat to a restaurant in Oxford, so they treated me like a queen for a day [Ethel Chuckles] yes uh huh.

Jaimee' Mitchell [38:03] Okay! Well deserving.

Ethel Morgan [38:04] Oh well thank you.

Jaimee' Mitchell [38:06] So um, we've been talking about your husband but maybe you could you tell um, more about how you all met, how it all started?

Ethel Morgan [38:15] Well we were in high school together and we were in different organizations so some of the same organizations cause we both were in student council we was both he was one year ahead of me in school we was both in the student council uh, i was in the tri-hi y and I think maybe he was in the hi y yes he was he was in hi y [Ethel Chuckles] because we use to go to district meetings together he was a good basketball player too and you know I was on the basketball [Ethel Chuckles] I was on the basketball but you know we never dated in high school when

he graduated he graduated a year before I did well after he graduated from high school then I was still in high school and when- when we would have games he would sit with me sometimes at games and then sometimes when I would when we would go off to games see he lived right in front of the school were the bus came you know to let us off and our parents would pick us my parents would pick me up so there was one night my parents wasn't there [Ethel Chuckles] so he brought me home so things like that we uh you know we sit together sometimes at the games then he brought me home one night after the basketball game and we just started dating we just started getting closer and closer [Ethel Chuckles] yes so um, I've known we've known each other since we were in elementary school like I said we didn't do any dating until he had finished high school and then I was a senior in high school and when he would come home from college you know for games we would sometimes just sit together we started talking and it just grew and got closer and closer [Ethel Chuckles] yea.

- Jaimee' Mitchell** [39:59] So he was off at college?
- Ethel Morgan** [40:01] Mmhm yes, he was in college and then on weekends he always he came home- he was at Mississippi Valley State. And when he came home on weekends if there was a game, he was at the game cause see he was a good basketball player, so any time he came home- most of our games would be on Saturdays anyway, so he was at the games on Saturdays.
- Jaimee' Mitchell** [40:21] And then you all married in 1968?
- Ethel Morgan** [40:24] Right uh huh mmhm and yes, we have two wonderful children.
- Jaimee' Mitchell** [40:29] Two children.
- Ethel Morgan** [40:29] Yes, a girl and a boy my daughter lives in St. Louis, Missouri and my son is in Vent Harbor, Michigan
- Jaimee' Mitchell** [40:35] Okay any grandchildren?
- Ethel Morgan** [40:87] Yes, uh- we have-uh-my son has two, my daughter doesn't have any. un huh.
- Jaimee' Mitchell** [40:48] So, we talked about you being a retired educator?
- Ethel Morgan** [40:51] Mmhmm.
- Jaimee' Mitchell** [40:54] Uhm, could you, you know, talk more about your career, and uh, what led you down that path?
- Ethel Morgan** [41:02] Okay, well, my major was Home Economics

Education, and w-what led me down that path, I was, my principal, and my home economics teacher. Ah, now my principal, he wanted me, because, in school, see, I was, my grades was always so good in Biology and Math. Um, believe my grades, I'm not bragging, my grades, they were good in *everything*, but he wanted me to major in Biology. Biology did not interest me. I did not like animals. I don't even like a dog! [Ethel Laughs] So, Biology just did not interest me. So, for the subjects in high school that really interest me, that I really enjoyed was Home Economics, and so, I believe [phone rings in background 41:52] you should enjoy what you do, and I really enjoyed Home Economics. I enjoyed teaching Home Economics because in teaching Home Economics, I was able to experience, so many experiences that I would not have got in any other area. Now, um, my, a- as a-a my-my career, [phone continues to ring] it has just been beautiful. I've been--I've had so many opportunities. People just don't know what Home Economics- like-you have to really be a major in Home Economics to know all the things because I love traveling.

Jaimee' Mitchell [42:26]

Uh-huh.

Ethel Morgan [42:28]

I would not have been able- I have been able to travel as much if I had not been in Home Economics. See, I had a-a club. I sponsored the FHA Club, and in the Summer, we, you know, whenever there was a district meeting, a state meeting, I carried those students to national meetings also, and I've carried students to meetings in California, Ohio, Washington D.C. uh, where Texas, and see by me sponsoring that club, I was able to visit a lot of the states, and I've been able to experience a *lot*, and by me being in Home Economics, I was able to work at Ole Miss, and when I was at Ole Miss, I was traveling too. Because see my job, I was developing school food services material, curricula material, and when I would develop a module, I had to go to a national meeting to present it and explain, because every, uh, when I developed something, it was used all over the United States, and I would have to go to a national meeting, now one year I went to Minnesota, and one year I went to Boston. So, I've had-experienced a lot of traveling. I've been able to meet a lot of people. Home Economics is a-an exciting career, and I don't know why they have taken it out of the curriculum. [Ethel Chuckles] It is out of the curriculum. They've changed, and what they've changed it to, is not as exciting. And see, I love to cook also. Everybody in my family could cook, boys and girls. I mean, like, you know I told you my brother was a cook for a hotel when he was in high school. So, all of us learned to cook, because we cooked at home. So, I wanted to be in something that I enjoyed. I enjoyed cooking. I enjoyed sewing, and least I used to [Morgan and Mitchell both laugh] but I stopped sewing! Let me tell you why I stopped sewing. See, I used to-would, I was making all my children clothes, my little

girl, and little boy. I was even making my little boy suits. I was making, I was sewing all the time, and it was, I didn't have the time to put into sewing that I wanted to put into it, and sss, I-I just stopped. I kept telling myself umma stop sewing, umma stop sewing. When I put my children to bed, I would be up late at night with my sewing. Kay, when they went to bed, I would be up sewing, and it just got to be too much on me, and I decided one night, I said you know what, I keep saying um gone stop, and I don't. You know like a person stop smoking cold turkey. I just did it cold turkey. When I stopped, I had a drawer full of fabric, because the fabric you know, I would buy it when it was on sale. I had a drawer full of fabric, a lot of patterns. I had cut out a coat for my husband. I had a dress cut out for me, and that night I said this, I'm-I'm just gonna stop. I took all of that fabric to a fr-friend of mine and I told her you can make quilts out of it, do with it whatever you want to. I said I'm not gonna do it anymore, and so that was when I stopped sewing. So now the only thing I do, if I need to hem up a- sk- hem something or sew a button on something, [shares a laugh with interviewer] I do it, but as far as me sewing, I just completely stopped. Because see my main int-, and I was not teaching sewing then either. I was teaching most foods, nutrition, job development, family living, that area. So, I gave up what was not important really to my life and my career. So, I just stopped the sewing, cause I needed to spend more time with my children. Yeah, uh, now that question, I don't think I answered the whole question. What did you ask? What was the question?

- Jaimee' Mitchell** [46:09] When I asked you about what led you down there.
- Ethel Morgan** [46:11] Oh, yeah. All that, cause I enjoyed cooking and sewing. Cause I started sewing when I was about seventh or eighth grade. Yeah, that was when I started sewing, and I just enjoy cooking and sewing.
- Jaimee' Mitchell** [46:32] Uhh, so, you know, thinking back on everything we talked about today, is there anything else that you want to add or think um, people should know about?
- Ethel Morgan** [46:50] The most important thing to me in my life, my-is God [Ethel Chuckles]. Yes, um, that he is the He is the most important. And then I put my husband and children next. So, I have a good husband. I tell you, I just- now- I have a good husband. He's has been so good, he's a good provider. He's has been- I mean, he's had a good career too. I don't pressure him into doing things that I- that he's not comfortable doing. I don't know why he didn't want to participate in the interview. When he told me he didn't wat to didn't ask him.
- Jaimee' Mitchell** [47:23] Mmhmm

Um, but I said he ha- he has-been a good husband, a good father, and he's been a good career person too, because he started out teaching at Ole, at uh Batesville, South Panola, and he left there. He was teaching, he was teaching Scien- Science. His major Biology, and he came here as assistant principal to the high at the high school, and then when he retired, he worked at the Corp of Engineers full time. He retired from teaching in 1994, and then he worked 22 years with the Corp of Engineers. And after working with the Corp of Engineers full time, he retired from there. Uhm, I uhm forgot what year he retired, so he's been retired now oh good seven or eight years. Maybe longer than that. Oh, and we love traveling. [Ethel Chuckles] Forgot that. We've ah, that's an, oh uhm I love traveling. My husband and I we've been to a lot of places, and my daughter and I, we take vacations, just the two of us. We do a mother and daughter trip. We like doing that. So, some of the places I've traveled to, oh, I'll tell you the most exciting trip was the one my daughter and I took in 2019. We took a Mediterranean Cruise, and we spent a day in Italy, uh because we went to-we spent, oh no, we spent three days, because we flew to Barcelona. We flew to Spain that's wha- we-we spent three nights in Spain, and then we boarded the ship. We did a lot of sightseeing in Barcelona, Spain. We uh boarded the ship, and then we ah, we made stops. When we would make a stop, we were there the whole day. All kinds of tours, in Italy, uh Rome, ooh Rome. Rome was just great. I got to see, went in, we toured the Vatican. We saw where the Pope makes his speeches from. Uh, the Vatican, that was that just was great. And you know the Coliseum which was one of the seven wonders of the world? We toured that. Ah, we went to France, and I can't re- I've forgotten the name of the town, but is where the movie, where the ah actors and actresses meet once a year for, ah, a movie uh review. You know they- we actually saw the building, you know where they have their--I forgot what they call it, I should have looked at those pictures. Well, anyway, that was an exciting trip because we toured Rome, Italy, France, and then we spent three nights in Spain. Uh, I was gone from home for thirteen days, the longest trip I ever had, but my daughter and I- we really enjoyed it. Now, my husband and I, ah we have done the Eastern Meh- the Eastern Caribbean Cruise, we have done the Western Caribbean Cruise, and then my daughter and I, we did another Eastern Caribbean-Caribbean Cruise. Ok, then we, ah, we, my daughter and I, along with a group of women about four years ago, we went to Dominican Republic, and we stayed a whole week in Pinta Cana, and I tell you going to Pinta Cana made me really appreciate America, and Water Valley. It really did. Um it was really an enlightening trip, really, I enjoyed that one too. So, we flew to Pinta Cana, and that's in Dominican Republic, and we did some touring. Ah, we were there from Sunday to F-Friday. I believe it was because we returned home on a Saturday. Ah, so, we have been to Jamaica, Cayman Island,

uh Montego Bay. Uh where else have we been? We've been to a lot of- most of the places in the Caribbean, ah, we've been. Yes. And then my husband and I, we like going to Hawaii. We've been to Hawaii three times. We had planned a trip to Hawaii last year, but then because of the pandemic, we didn't go. So, when we get from under the pandemic, we're going back to Hawaii again. Oh, my husband and I, we have been to Alaska also. We've ah, yeah so, I love traveling, and I'm, I love fishing! Because when this interview is over today, I'm going fishing! [Both laugh] Yes, I love it so much. Yes, so, I love it so much that my husband bought me a pond where I don't have to go out and look for a place to fish. He bought me a pond with a cabin on it.

Jaimee' Mitchell [52:17]

Aww, okay.

Ethel Morgan [52:18]

And so, we stay out there a lot too, because it, it's really nice. So, yes, he, I have my, we have my, we have our own fishing place. It's not a small pond, it is a, it's a big pond! It really looks like a lake. Uh huh.

Jaimee' Mitchell [52:33]

Okay, okay. That's ah, I think that's a good place to end the interview, and then we can get photos.

Ethel Morgan [52:37]

Okay.

Audio ends. [52:43]

