



Shelia Grier
Bethel AME Church
Rosedale, Alabama

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Interviewer: Michelle Little
Transcription: Diana Dombrowski
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[*BEGIN INTERVIEW*]

[00:00:00.00]

Michelle L.: Great. Today is October 14, 2019 and this is Michelle Little, interviewing Shelia Grier for the Southern Foodways Alliance. We are at the Lee Community Center in Rosedale, Alabama. To get started with, if you'll just tell us your name and your date of birth for the record.

[00:00:29.18]

Shelia G.: My name is Shelia Grier. My date of birth is November 17 in 1951.

[00:00:38.25]

Michelle L.: All right. And where did you grow up, Ms. Grier?

[00:00:39.15]

Shelia G.: I was born in New York, Manhattan. I moved to Alabama when I was five years old, and I've been here ever since, in the Rosedale community.

[00:00:52.28]

Michelle L.: So, why did you move here from Manhattan?

[00:00:57.23]

Shelia G.: My parents moved, so I had no choice. [Laughter] But I never did ask them, you know, why. But my grandmother is from the South. She was born in . . . oh, I can't even

think of the place now, it's been so long. But she was born down South, and my grandfather was, too. So, I guess, they just came back home. I don't know.

[00:01:31.01]

Michelle L.: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents? What were their names and—

[00:01:34.26]

Shelia G.: My mother's name was Mamie. Mamie L. Parker was her maiden name. Mamie L. Grier was her married name. My father's name was Thomas Grier. They didn't divorce; they separated. I think I was seven or eight years old when they separated. I don't think I saw my dad for a long time after that, but he came back to Alabama eventually, and he died here. We buried him out at Elmwood Cemetery. My mom's deceased, too. She's at New Grace Hill Cemetery, so.

[00:02:15.29]

Michelle L.: What about siblings? Did you have any siblings?

[00:02:21.07]

Shelia G.: I had two sisters. My sister's that right under me passed, I want to say, three years ago. Her name was **Jerry** Grier. And my sister Pam is still alive. I have two brothers. One's named Thomas, Jr. and the other one's name is Harold, Reverend Harold Grier. They both live here. One lives in Rosedale now, still, and the other lives in Centre Point.

[00:02:46.21]

Michelle L.: And when y'all—do you have any memories of when the family moved back to Alabama, growing up here? What was . . .

[00:02:57.07]

Shelia G.: Well, the only three of us were born in New York, then moved back to Alabama. That's my older brother named Thomas, my sister that passed, and myself. The other two sisters were born here in Alabama. They don't have the same father that I have.

[00:03:15.02]

Michelle L.: So, and y'all moved back here to—

[00:03:20.26]

Shelia G.: To this community. To Rosedale.

[00:03:23.00]

Michelle L.: Okay.

[00:03:24.25]

Shelia G.: We lived in a house— if you go down to this corner and you go up the hill, it's a house, when you turn the corner, is sittin' right there. That's not the same house, but we had a house that was there that we lived in, that was torn down. It was a family property,

so you know how that goes with heir property, they sold all that. But yeah, we lived right up the street there.

[00:03:49.29]

Michelle L.: Can you tell me a little bit about Rosedale when you were growin' up here?

[00:03:55.01]

Shelia G.: It's totally different now. It really is. 'Cause right, where those apartments are, was a playground. This was dirt. We used to play down there in that. This building here was here, but it wasn't this building; it was an older building. I mean, and houses and stuff went all down the street. You could walk straight through, you know, when you came around the curve and come up. You could just walk straight down through the street. Where my church was, houses were all on that side, on both sides. Well, none of those buildings down there. That was home. Homestead. 'Cause my second grade teacher lived in that lot where, right across from—not in front of the church, but on the other side. Her house was on that street down there. So, it's a big difference. Down here, you could walk straight down through there, where that house is down there, and we had a football field down there. Rosedale, the school I came out of, is right there. It's the Islamic Center right now, but that's where I went to school. My senior year, they closed the school down, and we were bussed to Shades Valley. I didn't attend Shades Valley. It was my senior year. I got my G.E.D., so. Other than that, the school was from first grade through the twelfth grade. It's just been . . . this was the most friendliest place to live that you could ever think of. We could go to bed at night, leave our doors unlocked. You can't do that kinda

stuff now. You'd be crazy to. But this was the neighborhood everybody loved to come to. Everybody watched out for everybody. It was houses right here. My best friend's family lived in the house right here, that we grew up together. The white house that you see right there belongs to one of my church members, Ms. Josephine Daniels stayed right there, in that house right there. Her grandson owns it now, and granddaughter. They don't live here anymore. But we usually have school reunions every other year. We just had one this past summer. But it's amazing, how the people in Rosedale come together for everything. It's just, and this side, it's totally different in each side of Rosedale. This side has more people that hang out over here now than they did over there. It's a lot of people over there I don't even know now, 'cause they just moved in the community and stuff. But it's still people over there, 'cause I have a cousin that lives over there. Got two cousins that lives on that side, her son lives up on the hill and she lives down the hill. But it's quite a few people still over there that's brought up in Rosedale. So, this was a friendly place. We had people come in from Wenonah, Oxmoor... They used to go school with us up there. So. Nice place to . . . nice place to live. I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

[00:07:18.16]

Michelle L.: So, and you said that the two different sides—and I know for people that may listen to this that have not driven through here—so, a road splits . . .

[00:07:32.04]

Shelia G.: Right. 18th Street out there, where Nilipour's [Oriental Rugs] is? On the other side is Rosedale, too. We had a swimmin' pool over there. I worked at the swimmin' pool.

[Laughter] But . . . so, that side is Rosedale, too. It's that side and this side. People don't understand; before Homewood even existed, it was Rosedale. Rosedale and Edgewood. Those were the two places. All the sudden, they decided to call it Homewood. They just, for some reason, just want to forget about poor Rosedale, but we're not lettin' them. 'Cause anybody asked me where I live, I say, "Rosedale." They say, "Rosedale? Where is that?" And if I say, "In Homewood," they say, "Oh, you live in Homewood." I say, "They call it Homewood, but I live in Rosedale. Where I live is called Rosedale. It's not called Homewood." I never called it Homewood.

[00:08:32.10]

Michelle L.: What are some of your memories of the school? I know you said they closed it your senior year—

[00:08:40.12]

Shelia G.: In 1969, when I got promoted to the twelfth grade, school closed down. They, I guess, I don't know why they did that, and I never did find out. But we had great times at school. When I know, we used to do what we called plait the maypole when I was in the sixth grade. It was just fun. It was just fun. School was fun then.

[00:09:04.15]

Michelle L.: What was it called again? The maypole?

[00:09:07.25]

Shelia G.: You know, like you have a . . . like a fun day, children have their school nowadays like with playdates and stuff like that. We had, like, a . . . thing where each class had to do something different. In one of my classes I was in, we did what you call plait the maypole. It's a pole with ribbons on it, and you go under each other.

[00:09:32.13]

Michelle L.: Okay.

[00:09:34.01]

Shelia G.: So, it was fun. It was fun. I loved school.

[00:09:36.05]

Michelle L.: Is it plant or plait?

[00:09:37.01]

Shelia G.: Plait. Plait the maypole.

[00:09:41.04]

Michelle L.: P-l-a-t. Okay, okay.

[00:09:41.18]

Shelia G.: Like your plait in your hair.

[00:09:46.25]

Michelle L.: All right.

[00:09:49.02]

Shelia G.: Like your plait in your hair. But we had great teachers. Like I said, my second grade teacher lived right over here with us. She sure did. My third grade teacher, Ms. Simmons, she didn't live in Rosedale but she went to church in Rosedale. She went to Union. Think that was the only . . . only two teachers. And my principal lived in Rosedale. His, the street over there, B.M. Montgomery Street, that's named after the principal I had. Named after the principal we had, so. And we had this one assistant principal that we used to call Mr. Colbert. His name was Mr. Colbert. He was a big man. Everybody was scared of him. [Laughter] Everybody was scared'a him. Everybody. Then we had Mr. Cook, was a science teacher. He married one of our people, our . . . ladies from over here. Mr. Montgomery, I think you met him Sunday?

[00:10:54.11]

Michelle L.: I did.

Shelia G.: He married her, his sister, Doris Cook. She was a teacher, too. But he married her, and he taught me. That was one of the only teachers that I really didn't care for. [Laughter] That was one of the only teachers I really didn't care for. I mean, I don't know what it was about him. I wasn't the only one. But . . . [Laughter] But it's all right. I mean, I passed his class and everything. There, see, there's my oldest son peepin' through the door now. He must want to buy a soda. Can we stop for a second?

[00:11:31.06]

Michelle L.: Oh, sure.

[00:11:36.00]

Shelia G.: Come on, Randy!

[Pause in recording]

[00:11:38.08]

Michelle L.: Okay. So, we were talkin' about some of your teachers.

[00:11:43.11]

Shelia G.: Um-hm.

[00:11:43.11]

Michelle L.: And you had one you didn't like.

[00:11:45.10]

Shelia G.: Well, it's not that I didn't like . . . it just was something about him. But all my other teachers were fine. My other teachers were fine. What I didn't tell you was that my mom had an identical twin.

[00:12:01.12]

Michelle L.: Oh, wow.

[00:12:01.12]

Shelia G.: Um-hm. She had a twin sister, my aunt, Aunt Rosa. She died before my mother did, and . . . we all lived next door to each other most of our lives, 'cause they were just like this. So, those three had two sisters, and one brother. My uncle and my other aunt lived in New York. They stayed in New York. They never did come back down here. But other than that . . .

[00:12:34.11]

Michelle L.: And did y'all start goin' to Bethel A.M.E. when you moved back here?

[00:12:40.29]

Shelia G.: Well, now, my mom—far as I know, my mom was a Baptist. I joined Bethel Church. I went to church when I was little, 'cause Ms. Shepherd used to come around and pick us up and bring us to church, and her niece was my best friend. She died, oh, a long time ago. She was my best, best, best friend. I joined Bethel when I was twelve years old. So, I've been at Bethel since I was twelve years old.

[00:13:18.06]

Michelle L.: So, what—you said Ms. Shepherd came and picked you up. Is that how you started to go there, or—

[00:13:25.01]

Shelia G.: Well, no. She used to pick us up. I was goin' anyway, 'cause my mom was—"You goin' to church. God is on Sunday. If you don't go to church, you don't go outside the door." That's how we were brought up. We ain't do nothin' on Sunday, unless you went to church. You goin' out the house, you goin' to church. [Laughter] And that's how I brought my children up; I made them go to church. I mean, you know, God wakes you up every morning. God gives you breath. The least you can do is acknowledge him once out the week, if no other time. But they, Ms. Shepherd and them, used to pick up my kids. They sang in the choir. They did all kind of stuff. That was the kind of people that lived in Rosedale. They watched out for you; they helped you with your children. If you needed somethin', they were there for you. If they needed somethin', you were there for them. I mean, it was just the way we were. Nobody ever went hungry. Nobody ever needed—you know. If you needed help payin' a bill, if you're too . . . you know how some people are modest, don't want to ask nobody for nothin'. But we're a close-knit community. We were a close-knit community. It's somewhat dribblin' off, but I guess because of the generations. I don't know. Or because all of the other people have passed on. But the ones that are still here still do for each other. Um-hm.

[00:15:07.11]

Michelle L.: So, what was Bethel like back then? Was it—

[00:15:13.24]

Shelia G.: Oh, we had so many members. And it was just dwindled off to nothin', where people just—you know, they leave the church. Go off, say they found somewhere else they want to go. But I'm like this: I don't go to church for anybody but myself. I don't go for the pastor. I don't go for the other person sittin' on the other pew. I go for my soul's salvation. I'm tryin' to get to heaven. I don't know where nobody else tryin' to get. And I don't go back and forth; I join this church, next week, I'm gonna go join this church. That's just not me. I tell anybody, as like today, when I close my eyes, the church they goin' lay—roll my casket into—is gonna be Bethel. I been in Bethel all my life. I'm not fixing to leave there for nothin'. Nobody there has ever done anything to me. And with A.M.E.s, our pastors are only at our church, guaranteed, for one year. 'Cause we have annual conference every year, and we might get a new pastor. We don't know till conference is over with, or we might get the same pastor back. We, fortunate enough, we got our pastor back this year. But that don't mean next year we'll get him back, 'cause we've had pastors come and go. It's not our decision, 'cause if it was, we'd have had a pastor. Now, don't get me wrong, some of our churches have pastors, they stay there twenty, thirty years. But we never been that fortunate before. The longest one we've ever had stayed with us, is about ten years. But other than that, Bethel's been my home since I was twelve years old. Baptized, me and my best friend. Got baptized the same Sunday. We were twelve years old. That's fifty . . . will be fifty-six years come the seventeen of November, I've been at Bethel. Fifty-seven years, 'cause I'll be fifty-eight. Sixty-eight. Fifty-six years, that's right. Yep. If God lets me stay here till seventy, I'll have been a member of Bethel for fifty-six years. That's a long time.

[00:17:43.26]

Michelle L.: That is a long time.

[00:17:46.03]

Shelia G.: That's a long time. But I love Rosedale. I love my church. I love my church family.

And there's nothin' I wouldn't do for 'em.

[00:17:58.16]

Michelle L.: And what does A.M.E. mean?

[00:18:01.10]

Shelia G.: African Methodist Episcopal Church.

[00:18:05.07]

Michelle L.: Okay. And so, how is it different and similar to a Methodist church or just an Episcopal—

[00:18:14.12]

Shelia G.: It's really, with the Methodist, the A.M.E.s, the C.M.E.s, the A.M.E-Zions, are basically the same. They're basically the same. C.M.E.s have bishops, just like we have bishops. We choose bishops, go to general conferences every four years. We might get a new bishop; we might get the same bishop back, but you can only have your bishop for eight years in one district, and then they send you another one. But the A.M.E.-Zion is

the same way. The C.M.E.s are the same way. It's just that C.M.E.s are Christian Methodists, and A.M.E.-Zion just add the Zion behind there, like. But it's all the same. We all under the same auspice.

[00:19:03.18]

Michelle L.: Okay. Yeah, I grew up Baptist, and so—y'all have a little bit of liturgy. I mean, y'all have—

[00:19:11.15]

Shelia G.: We have discipline that we have to go by, and where Baptist churches hire their own pastors, we can't hire ours. Ours is appointed to us. So, if ours would do somethin' and we don't like it, we can't say, "Get out." Well, y'all can vote y'all's out. You know, y'all get your congregation together and y'all vote, and the majority rules, is, "Pastor has to go." We can't do that. We cannot do that. And we have all these rules and regulations; we have all these different components we have and stuff in our churches. Like we have . . . I know Baptists have missionaries. We have auxiliaries. Y'all have deacons; we have stewards. Both have trustees. We have what we call a lay organization, which is people that are not ministers. If you're not a preacher, you're a lay person, in A.M.E. churches. So. And . . . we have plannin' meetings, where you have to—the bishop has his plannin' meetin' at the end of his last annual conference. And we have presiding elders that's over certain districts. So, it's quite a bit of difference in it. But we all serve one God. We all teach the same thing. All teach the same thing. We just have more rules and regulations

than y'all do. [Laughter] Which, sometime, it can be a good thing. Sometimes, it can be a good thing.

[00:21:01.18]

Michelle L.: Right, right.

[00:21:03.20]

Shelia G.: 'Cause sometimes, you might have a pastor that wants to go all out the **wall**. Turn the discipline out on it; nope, that's not what you can do. That's not what you can do. Certain things you can't do.

[00:21:16.09]

Michelle L.: And there's a lot of churches in Rosedale. I mean, even in just this one community. And I noticed in some of the announcements last Sunday, it seems like y'all do some things—

[00:21:31.19]

Shelia G.: Together.

[00:21:31.19]

Michelle L.: Together. Is that right?

[00:21:34.08]

Shelia G.: Yes, ma'am. Like, for instance, whenever they had—each church has somethin', we send out an announcement, and they'll come fellowship with us. Like we have Twilight Sunday School every year, which is—this year, we're havin' it on the third Sunday of November. And the other churches will come. We invite everybody, not just those churches in our community. But we have what we call sunrise service on Easter Sunday mornin'. That, we started that—I think that was before I was even old enough to know anything about it. Our church had burnt down, and they rebuilt it, and they marched into church on Easter Sunday mornin'. That's when they started Easter sunrise service at our church. So, we started sunrise service. Friendship usually have what we call Watch Night, goin' from leavin' the old year, goin' into the new year. Then we usually have Thanksgiving celebrations at Union. We used to. We don't do it anymore. Now, lately, Trinity usually has the Thanksgiving service and we go fellowship with them down there for that.

[00:22:56.15]

Michelle L.: Do y'all have a big meal?

[00:22:59.28]

Shelia G.: They serve up—now, for sunrise service, we always serve breakfast afterwards. We always serve breakfast. So, our kitchen committee will—we're at the church till, like, say three o'clock in the mornin'. 'Cause sunrise service starts at 5. People say, "5?" We say, "Sunrise." We march into church to see the sun rise. The lights are out. We're marchin' in with candles. The ministers and the choir march in with candles. Then we turn the lights

on, blow your candles out. We're in church, sun rise, the sun is risin'. You can't have sunrise service after the sun done rose. [Laughter] But usually, it's packed. But you know, that has died off, too, 'cause a lot of the people who used to come are deceased. But after that, then after that, whatever is . . . whenever we have anything at our church and we feed, we always see anybody that want to take anything home with them. Whatever is left, we'll pack up in pans and take some to where we know people need food to eat. So, we're always tryin' to help other people out. We buy gifts for children for Christmas and all that kind of stuff. We're always doin' somethin'. If not with our local church, with our connectional churches.

[00:24:31.11]

Michelle L.: So, do y'all cook there at the church?

[00:24:34.14]

Shelia G.: Yes, ma'am.

[00:24:35.23]

Michelle L.: For sunrise?

[00:24:35.25]

Shelia G.: Yes, ma'am.

[00:24:38.08]

Michelle L.: I think someone told me, on that first floor of the church, is that where y'all have—

[00:24:44.21]

Shelia G.: That's down there, the kitchen is down there. Fellowship hall and the kitchen. Yes, ma'am. We cook at the church.

[00:24:51.20]

Michelle L.: What kind of dishes do y'all—

[00:24:54.26]

Shelia G.: We usually have grits. We'll have plain grits, we'll have cheese grits. We'll have bacon, sausage, eggs, pancakes, coffee, juice. We have milk, if they want it. But eggs and fruit. Basically, we try to have healthy food.

[00:25:21.17]

Michelle L.: Is there one particular dish that you cook?

[00:25:26.09]

Shelia G.: Not really. I've had—my job before I retired, I worked in child nutrition. For thirty years. So . . . worked at Vestavia High School for thirty years.

[00:25:42.09]

Michelle L.: Wow. Can you tell me a little bit about that? What did you do there?

[00:25:46.17]

Shelia G.: Worked in the lunchroom.

[00:25:50.16]

Michelle L.: Bet you've got lots of stories from the lunchroom. [Laughter]

[00:25:54.07]

Shelia G.: Well, I went there. Mr. Gross, the principal at—used to be the principal at Homewood High School—he had talked to, this is my second grade teacher that he had talked to, before she died, and asked her, did she know anybody that needed a job? At the time, I was just workin' basically part-time here. So, I went there, me and . . . one, two, two other ladies from the area went there. They quit. [Laughter] But I didn't. But they couldn't, they couldn't get along with the manager at the time. And she was somethin' else. She really was. But I was the type person that I'm not gonna leave a job. She's gotta do somethin' horrible for me to leave a job. I stayed there. I became an assistant manager. When I left, I was assistant manager. When I retired, I was the assistant manager. But I been there, I stayed there thirty years. And wasn't nothin' in there I couldn't do. Thirty years. Spent thirty years . . . after thirty years, I say, "Well, it's time to go." Then I said, I prayed, and I said, "God, if you say it's time for me to go home, I'm goin' home. But if you tell me to stay there—I'm sixty-five." I was said I was gonna stay there till I was sixty-five. I said, "If you say, 'Stay till sixty-five,' I'll stay. But if you say 'Go home,' I'm goin' at sixty-two." He said, "Go home." So, I went home. I have not regretted it since. I've been away

from up there since 2013. 2013 is when I retired. But I wouldn't change a thing about it. I really—I enjoyed it, I really did. I really did. Stable job, great benefits. I had a family to take care of, so you know I had to work somewhere. I was a single parent with four kids. So . . . had to keep a roof over their head and food in their mouth. Although I had help from my mama, but still, they were my kids, so. I felt like that was my job. I was the one was supposed to take care of 'em.

[00:28:28.02]

Michelle L.: So you ran, ran the lunch room? Ran it? Wow. That sounds like a lot.

[00:28:34.15]

Shelia G.: It is. It is. With all the different personalities and stuff, and then you got some people you want to tell, tell 'em how to do stuff, and they lookin' at you like, “Who are you? Who you think you are? You can't tell me what to do.” You know. It's not that I'm tryin' to be bossy, but I am one of your bosses. So, you know, “Do it this way. Don't do it that way. This is the way I want it done.” It worked out. It worked out. We had good days and bad days, but it all worked out. I left there with a smile on my face.

[00:29:14.25]

Michelle L.: So, how much food prep did you guys have to do at—

[00:29:20.10]

Shelia G.: At the school?

[00:29:20.10]

Michelle L.: At the cafeteria, yeah.

[00:29:23.26]

Shelia G.: Well, you have certain people in certain areas. Like, for instance, vegetables. I did all the vegetables myself. No help. In meats, we had two people. In bread, we had one person. Then you had a salad person that makes the, do salads. Then we had a person that makes sandwiches. 'Cause what we had was, we had the hot lunch, and then we always made a salad box and a sandwich box. So, we had a person make sandwiches. But I did all the vegetables myself, by myself. Whatever we're havin' that day, I cook. Yep. Yep. And I was at the high school, so you know that's a lot of children you got to prepare food for.

[00:30:18.03]

Michelle L.: Right. How many students attend Vestavia?

[00:30:22.10]

Shelia G.: Ah . . . if I had to say off of my head, a thousand and somethin', maybe fifteen hundred if not more. Now, I'm not gonna say all of 'em ate there, but the majority of 'em did. The majority of 'em did.

[00:30:41.06]

Michelle L.: Who did you learn to cook from?

[00:30:43.23]

Shelia G.: My mom and my grandmama. My grandmama was one of those scratch cookers.

[Laughter] She . . . she didn't buy that stuff in cans and stuff and cook. She liked to cook from scratch cook. Like if she bought green beans out of a can, she'd put 'em in a colander, rinse 'em off, after she done cooked her ham hocks and put 'em down in there. So, when I went to work at the school and I was fixin' green beans one day, I got a colander and poured 'em in there and rinsed 'em off and stuff. They say, "What you doin'?" I say, "I'm rinsin' all that other stuff off of 'em." "Why?" "'Cause this is how I fix it at home." And it makes a difference, when you get the taste.

[00:31:27.04]

Michelle L.: Oh, yeah.

[00:31:28.28]

Shelia G.: 'Cause I had several teachers—Lord, bless their heart. They used to come to me and say, if I let someone else cook somethin' in the vegetable line and it didn't taste the same, I had one teacher named Ms. . . . what her name was. Ms. Sue. She would come to me, she'd say, "I know you didn't cook this today." I say, "Why you say that?" "'Cause it don't taste like it." 'Cause I let this girl one day cook some, buy some frozen field peas, with the snaps. And she cooked 'em, but she didn't cook 'em long enough, and they had still had the crunch to 'em. Afterwards, she came to me. She said, "You didn't cook this, did

you?" I said, "No, ma'am. Why?" She said, "Listen." She put some in her mouth and went to crunch. [Laughter] I couldn't do nothin' but laugh at her. So, I told the young lady. I said, "Look." I asked her, I went back, I said, "How long did you cook those peas?" She said, "Fifteen minutes." I said, "Those were raw. You can't cook 'em in fifteen minutes like they're gonna be done. It takes longer than that. And add a little bit of salt and a little bit of pepper. You gotta put somethin' else in there. If you don't have any ham hocks or nothin' to put in there to cook, get the ham base and put it in there. You got to season 'em up. Gotta give 'em some kinda taste. Make 'em taste like . . ." And like macaroni and cheese, oh, God. We had this big old kettle that I used to cook that in. 'Cause I wouldn't let—it wouldn't be nothin' like . . . pan this long. I used to have to do, like, fifteen of them each whenever we had mac and cheese on the.

[00:33:19.18]

Michelle L.: Oh, goodness.

[00:33:17.11]

Shelia G.: Grate your own, I had to grate my own cheese up. But what I did was, I prepped the day before. So, it pays off to prep your food. You got time to prep for the next day, do it. It helps you out the next mornin'. I couldn't get that in some of them's head, though. [Laughter] But then they'll be callin', "Ms. Shelia?" "Yes?" "Can you come help me do this?" "No. You had time yesterday to prep your stuff. You should've done it." And they think I'm bein' mean. I'm not bein' mean, I just want you to learn how to do stuff the right

way. What you gonna do when I'm gone? I guarantee, the next person not gonna come over here and help you do this, too. But.

[00:34:07.00]

Michelle L.: Are there some specific dishes you remember your grandmother teaching you? What were some of your favorite things your grandmother cooked?

[00:34:16.02]

Shelia G.: I don't think I really had no favorites. I just, whatever she was cookin', I'd try to cook too. Whatever she cooked, I'd try to cook, too. As far as, like, chili and stuff, people buy beans in the can to make their chili. We get either the navy beans or the pinto beans, the raw ones. We cook them first and then make our chili. She made her chili from—that's just how I was brought up. And people think I'm crazy now, 'cause they say, "If you have to cook, you cook from scratch." Well, that's the way I was taught, you know. Somethin' that sticks with you. Now, if I'm in a real big hurry, I might go get a can and you—but not gonna be my idea to do that. I'd rather cook mine from scratch. That's just how I was brought up. That's how I was brought up.

[00:35:16.04]

Michelle L.: What about for holidays? Were there any special dishes that your family would cook? Or Thanksgiving or Christmas?

[00:35:24.15]

Shelia G.: Not really. Same thing. Turkey dressing, sweet potato pies. The usual. Nothin' special, um-hm. I can't think of nothin' special. Just regular family gatherings. All us got together. My mom and her sister and her children and us, and my grandma.

[00:36:00.28]

Michelle L.: And at the church, do y'all do some of your gatherings at—I know in Spring Park, didn't the churches sometimes get together and have meals at Spring Park in Rosedale?

[00:36:17.10]

Shelia G.: No.

[00:36:18.20]

Michelle L.: No. I thought there used to be a kitchen over there.

[00:36:21.00]

Shelia G.: There used to be a kitchen over there. But no, we didn't come together and have no meals over there. Hm-mm, hm-mm.

[00:36:24.13]

Michelle L.: Oh, okay.

[00:36:26.25]

Shelia G.: There used to be a kitchen over there. It did. They tore it down. Used to be a swimmin' pool over there, yep. Like I said, I worked down there, too.

[00:36:39.24]

Michelle L.: At the park?

[00:36:39.24]

Shelia G.: Um-hm!

[00:36:42.00]

Michelle L.: Oh, what'd you do at the park?

[00:36:43.23]

Shelia G.: I was behind the—took the money for the children to come in and go swimmin'. Ran the concession stand that was back there. Yep. I did that before I started bein' a gym supervisor, um-hm. Like I said, I been around here a long time.

[00:37:02.22]

Michelle L.: [Laughter] You really have.

[00:37:03.16]

Shelia G.: Yes ma'am. I was workin' when the old building was up.

[00:37:09.07]

Michelle L.: The old community center that was right here?

[00:37:14.13]

Shelia G.: 'Cause the school used to play their own basketball games in the old gym. They used to call it the cracker box. [Laughter] 'Cause it wasn't a big, big gym like most schools have big gyms. We played at the community center. Yep. Yep. Sure did.

[00:37:40.07]

Michelle L.: So, what other—I'm tryin' to think if there's any other gatherings that the church has. I know that you said the Easter morning, and then y'all do somethin' at Thanksgiving.

[00:37:57.08]

Shelia G.: New Years, goin' into the new year.

[00:37:59.21]

Michelle L.: Okay. What do y'all—is that the Watch Night service?

[00:38:01.07]

Shelia G.: That's the Watch Night service. It's usually held at Friendship, where all the churches in the community get together. Go over there. It used to start at twelve o'clock. No, wait a minute, I take that back. You start at ten o'clock. And when the New Year come in, we're

ending it, and where one of the ministers from one of the churches does a sermon, and then we just fellowship together. Then, after that, they serve—they gave us breakfast, a breakfast-type meal after that, yeah. But now, they change the time, where they do it . . . I think last year, they did it at six o'clock. I said, "Well, that's not Watch Night. That's not bringin' the—takin' the old year out, bringin' in the new year." Why, I don't know why he changed the time, but they did. They changed the time. Maybe it's because of the—so much goin' on and so much happenin', and people gettin' killed and all that stuff. I want to say that's why he changed the time, to make people be home at a certain time before it gets too dangerous out there. 'Cause most of their members don't live in this area; they live across town in different places. All that. Friendship. [Phone Rings]

[00:39:40.11]

Michelle L.: Oh, do you need to get that?

[00:39:40.23]

Shelia G.: I'll call them back later. That's Reverend Bradley. I'll talk to him later. But, so, I'm figurin' that's why they did it. 'Cause there's so much goin' on nowadays, all this killin' and stuff. It's just sad that you can't go nowhere no more and be safe.

[00:40:01.22]

Michelle L.: Right.

[00:40:03.18]

Shelia G.: Not even safe in church anymore. Like the . . . that guy came in there in Emmanuel, our church in South Carolina, killed up all them folks. Sittin' right there at Bible study, left one lady there so she could tell the story. So she could tell the story. And that was just so sad. Real sad. But not much we can do about it. Wish there was.

[00:40:50.05]

Michelle L.: Have you ever felt unsafe in Rosedale, or do you feel like this community's still—

[00:40:55.21]

Shelia G.: Well, no, I don't. I mean, I still feel safer in Rosedale. I really do. I really do. Because, hey, I've been here just mostly all my life. Never had nothin' happen to me, so. Never had anything happen to anybody, so. No houses broken into or nothin'. Other than that, I feel safe. I mean, now, you have stuff that goes—you have people that come over here and want to act crazy with some of the kids that's over here, but then you say, "Look. Go back where you came from." We don't have that goin' on over here. We don't allow, we don't want that over here. I thank God for the young men, when they be sittin' out there playin' cards or dominos or whatever, if they see someone comin' over here actin' crazy, they'll go to 'em and tell 'em, "Y'all got to leave way from over here with that. We don't have that over here. We don't have that over here." 'Cause very rarely, you see—anything on news about anything happening in Rosedale. As far as violence is concerned. And that's a good thing. That's a good thing.

[00:42:29.07]

Michelle L.: Is there anything that you wish people knew about your church or about Rosedale?

Anything that we haven't talked about?

[00:42:45.21]

Shelia G.: As far as my church is concerned, I would love to see my church grow. If people came to my church and saw the members that we have, how kind and compassionate and loving we are, I would hope that they could keep comin', and eventually join. That's like Dr. Little. She kept visiting us, back and forth, back and forth, and she finally joined Bethel. She said what drew her to us was the kindness we showed and the love she saw we had amongst each other. That, you know, it wasn't nothin' that we wouldn't do for each other. 'Cause we have a lady in there now that's sister is havin' surgery tomorrow. She has cancer in her mouth. And she, herself, she said, "I thank God every day for my church family. 'Cause I know y'all got my back." She says, "Y'all got my back if ain't nothin' wrong. Y'all got my back if—whatever I need, I know I can come to y'all." That's what you're supposed—that's what church is supposed to be about, helping one another. Not—and we're not, just helping inside the church. We have people on the outside of the church, anybody that we can help. Like I was sayin', the people in South Carolina, at Emmanuel, when the A.M.E. churches, they all got together to send . . . to help the people out. Our 9th District was raisin' money to help. We, as a church ourselves—and we thank God for . . . O.L.S.? O.L.S., I think it was, bought us a donation to give to the people. So, our church was able to donate x amount of dollars—I won't say what it was—to this cause. And our bishop, he thought that the church itself gave the whole amount. We told him, "No, bishop. We had a church in our community that gave, felt in their

hearts, to give us a donation to give to the people in South Carolina at Emmanuel Temple. We say, thank them every day." They came to worship with us the Sunday they brought it. And it was just so nice. It was just so nice to have people think about you, and you give—if you give, it's gonna come back to you. Eventually, it's gonna come back to you. So, we try to do what we can for anybody. We're little in numbers, but we've got big hearts. And it's just like the Dorian—that's Tornado Dorian [Interviewer's note: Hurricane Dorian hit the Bahamas in September 2019] —we took up the last collection for it yesterday, and donated so much money for that. Dorian relief. There's a lot of stuff we do stuff for that people don't even know about. I mean, we're not doin' it just to get no accolades or nothin' about it. We're doin' it 'cause we know people need stuff. We know people need stuff. And that's somethin' that we've been doin'—ever since I've been old enough to know about it. So. We continue to do that. And like our missionary society, we give and we give and we give to people we know of. Listen to the girls. From up to the Islamic school.

[00:46:35.22]

Michelle L.: Right. They come here in the afternoons.

[00:46:37.18]

Shelia G.: They come every—now every day. Oh, dang, fixing to be loud. But . . . I wouldn't change anything that we do. Like we always say, we keep praying God's gonna send us some more members. God is gonna send some more members. But until then, we're gonna keep doin' what we doin'. Gonna keep doin' what we doin'. Yep.

[00:47:14.16]

Michelle L.: It's a special place, that's for sure. You can really tell when you walk in the door.

[00:47:20.23]

Shelia G.: I'm glad you see that. Thank you.

[00:47:24.16]

Michelle L.: Well, is there . . . is there anything else you wanted to talk about? I know we touched on some of the food gatherings that y'all have. I know they might have been a little bit bigger back when you were growing up.

[00:47:49.03]

Shelia G.: Yeah. Well, we were talkin' Sunday about tryin' to start another, doin' a food bank thing, where we collect food and pass it out to families that need food. For Thanksgiving, we're getting ready to have a meal. We thought about just buying the stuff and giving it to a family and letting them cook it, but then we changed our minds and said, "We'll go buy it." Already—you know, go to Publix or somewhere and get a cooked Thanksgiving meal and give to some needy family. We'll either do one or two families to start out, so. That's what we're gonna do for this Thanksgiving, I know, as one of our projects. We normally—and then during the Christmastime, we usually give out Christmas baskets to sick and shut-in, like that. We usually have been to the nursing home and go sing to the people that's in there and gettin' them baskets and stuff. Or we'll call and ask the people,

what do they really need? Whatever they tell us, we'll go get. We'll buy. And take it to 'em. 'Cause one of our deceased members used to be a minister, Reverend Ballard. She was in one, and we used to go out there with her and sing to them and take gifts out there to them. When she was in there, she told us basically what they needed, so we bought it, carried it out there, and they were just so happy. To see a smile on somebody's face, to know that you've helped somebody and they really appreciate it, oh. Just bring tears to your eyes. It really does.

[00:49:52.18]

Michelle L.: Well, I think that's all the questions I've got.

[00:49:55.15]

Shelia G.: Okay.

[00:49:57.07]

Michelle L.: I really appreciate you taking the time to talk with me today.

[00:50:01.09]

Shelia G.: I appreciate you! Thank you.

[End of interview]