

John Crane:

So, today is the 26th of February 2023. It's about two o'clock and it's a beautiful Sunday afternoon, clear skies and about 85 degrees. And I am John Crane with the Old Mandeville Historic Association. And with me is Chris Proctor, also of the Mandeville Historic Association. And we are here to do an oral history with Ms. Beverly Sylve.

And first, I have to ask you a question or two. So, we're going to be making this oral history for the Old Mandeville Historic Association. And by doing it, you're giving us permission to use it.

Beverly Sylve:

Yes.

John Crane:

And we'll try to provide you with it as well.

We're very happy to have this opportunity. We've been trying to collect oral histories and capture some things about Old Mandeville. So, I'd like to begin by asking your full name. And so, your full name is...

Beverly Sylve:

Beverly Foster... I'm taking my maiden name because everybody know us here, Foster. Beverly Foster, S-Y-L-V-E, Sylve.

John Crane:

Sylve. Okay, thank you. Do you prefer to be called Miss Beverly, or Miss Sylve, or-

Beverly Sylve:

You can call me Miss Beverly.

John Crane:

Miss Beverly?

Beverly Sylve:

That's fine.

John Crane:

Okay, good. So, I'd like to begin with just getting some basics. Were you born here? Where were you born? Where did you grow up? Were you born here in Mandeville?

Beverly Sylve:

Yes, born right here in Mandeville on Lamarque Street.

John Crane:

Born on Lamarque Street. And so, you grew up on Lamarque Street as well, and basically you lived here all of your life?

Beverly Sylve:

Yes.

John Crane:

Tell me about your family, your parents, how many brothers and sisters you had, things like that growing up.

Beverly Sylve:

My father name is James Foster.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

My mother name is Lucy Foster. And it was 10 children.

John Crane:

10 children, wow.

Beverly Sylve:

And we was raised on Lamarque Street, 438 Lamarque Street, right by the Dew Drop Hall.

John Crane:

Okay. So, from the lake, the church is next and then you were after that?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, it's the hall, the church, and that's our family home.

John Crane:

Okay, very good. So, tell me about your earliest memories living on Lamarque Street.

Beverly Sylve:

Well, I remember when the hall was open and my mother and father used to go to balls over there. And I remember B.B. King came there and played. Fats Domino came there and played. I was a little girl, but I was standing on the fence line, just looking at them, having a good time. Because they had these big old windows with the doors, I call it the doors, where you open them because they didn't have any fans in there or anything, and at night, and in the evening when they have something, you can see in there.

John Crane:

So, you would look over the fence, between the church and the hall-

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

... to see. What else did they use the hall for besides the music? Do you remember?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, somebody came in with a movie, did a movie in there. And it was a little sweet shop in there. And I remember that they did a movie in there where this man and lady they got married. And they came on Lamarque Street and put the houses that they had made to set up, I'd say, like plyboard.

John Crane:

Oh, really?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. From there, to the hall, and from the other side.

John Crane:

Huh. So, they built a set on Lamarque Street in the 400 block of Lamarque Street?

Beverly Sylve:

Yes.

John Crane:

Interesting, interesting.

Beverly Sylve:

And I don't know their name because I was young anyway. But I remember that this man and this lady, they got married in the hall, and they had set all of that up on the street. That's my first time seeing that. And they were shooting that movie.

John Crane:

Huh. Tell me about your parents. Were they born and raised in Mandeville or did they come from somewhere else?

Beverly Sylve:

My mother was born and raised from Folsom, Louisiana.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

And my father, he was... I think it was Eunice. Uh-huh. Yeah.

John Crane:

Over in Acadiana?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, Eunice.

John Crane:

Eunice?

Beverly Sylve:

My father.

John Crane:

Okay. So, what brought them to Mandeville? Do you know what-

Beverly Sylve:

I really-

John Crane:

Don't know?

Beverly Sylve:

... didn't know.

John Crane:

But all of your brothers and sisters were-

Beverly Sylve:

Well, we was raised on Lamarque Street.

John Crane:

Raised on Lamarque Street? So, tell me about what it was like growing up in Mandeville when you were a kid. What are some of the things that you remember?

Beverly Sylve:

I remember they had this store on the next block, and it was the store called Weisheit's Store.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

And I remember when we used to go there and buy sugar in these little bitty bags, the little bitty bags that they give you. Well, they're not in the big stores. The little bitty stores, you used to go in and get stuff in a little bag, like candy and stuff. Well, we used to get sugar in a little bag like that for 10 cents. We used to get rice in a little bag like that for 10 cents, and grits and cornmeal. Now, that took me way back. I remember that. Yeah.

John Crane:

So, that was on Madison Street probably?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Yeah. Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Weisheit's Store.

John Crane:

Weisheit's Store? Interesting.

Beverly Sylve:

And I remember the Glockners Fish Market.

John Crane:

Okay. Where was that?

Beverly Sylve:

On the corner of Marigny Avenue. When you leave from Weisheit's Store, it was a house, and the next building was a fish market. And the Glockners used to sell fish there.

John Crane:

So, they were fishermen? They would catch the fish and then they would-

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm, crab.

John Crane:

... sell them? And crab-

Beverly Sylve:

Seafood.

John Crane:

... and then sell them every day?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Interesting. Interesting.

Beverly Sylve:

And another thing, I remember that... What is it? Is it Madison Street? What is it? I remember that my daddy used to work on, they called it... Like a boat left from Mandeville going to New Orleans. They call it The Schooner. I was young. The Schooner. My daddy used to work there. And they had a sawmill. And they used to cut wood and stuff. And I think they put the wood on this boat, and they'd take it across the lake to New Orleans.

John Crane:

Was it a sailboat or a-

Beverly Sylve:

No, it was like a flat boat, like a barge.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

And they would load the wood up on it?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Did your father work in the timber industry? Or what sort of work did he do back in those days?

Beverly Sylve:

He worked there and also... We going to come back to that. I can tell you right now, when they built that causeway going from Mandeville to New Orleans, he worked it out there. And that was in '52.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

He worked it out there. And then, in '76 and '77, me and my sister Lucy, we worked at Pre-stress. Pre-stress was the one that built the slab that's going to New Orleans and the causeway. And then, in '76, from '76 on, me and my sister Lucy, we worked this five years over there at Pre-stress, and we was the one that was help pulling them wrenches.

John Crane:

So, tell us about those wrenches that you were pulling.

Beverly Sylve:

Those wrenches was 80 pounds.

John Crane:

So, each wrench was 80 pounds. And what were you doing with them?

Beverly Sylve:

Closing up. In order for to build the concrete for the causeway, we call it the slab, they have this mold. It's a mold that was made. You had to open it up. And we was the one... They call it the labor crew. We was with 24 men. And we all had to pull at the same time. And if you don't pull at the same time, that wrench... that screw going to lock. And then, we have to stop, and two or three men have to get on that wrench, and jump and break it, so that it'd be able to catch up with the rest of them.

Okay, that's the part that we open up. And they have to grease those mold. They have to grease it. And then, after they grease it, we closed it up. And after we close it up, they pour the cement. And after they pour the cement, the cement sets about three or four days. And then, they bake it. And they have a cover over it, and then they bake it.

And then, after three or four days, that cement is ready. And then, we come with our wrenches, and we open them up, and pull it. Everybody pull at the same time. We open it up. Then, the crane come. They had a big old crane. They had a track to the right, track to the left. The crane came with some boards and stuff to pick up that slab. They'd pick up that slab, and they'd take it to the lakefront out there. They'd take it to the lakefront, they'd load it on the barge, and they'd take it to the place where they needed to connect them slabs.

And that causeway, coming from New Orleans to Mandeville, me and my sister worked out there five years.

John Crane:

So, how long would it take to do the opening and the closing of the thing?

Beverly Sylve:

It was 24 people, and it'd take us about, I'd say, maybe about 10 minutes.

John Crane:

10 minutes?

Beverly Sylve:

Because everybody's pulling at the same time. And if one person gets slack, and don't pull, it's going to lock it. And then, they're going to have to have men to get on, whoever wrench it is, and two of them, and jump down to break that lock. And after it break, then all of the wrenches pull together.

John Crane:

Would you go from one, to the next, to the next? So, you were basically doing that all day long?

Beverly Sylve:

No.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

We'd do that. It'd take about 15 minutes, 10 or 15 minutes, everybody working to pull it. And then, after that happened, we let it set. And then, they'd grease it for another time. But it's three days in place of that that it have to set in, I can say bake, with a cover over it to make the cement hard. Three days, and then it'd be ready to go out there on the causeway, wherever it needs to go at.

But in between then, what we was doing, we was painting a big old thing. I call it the boom. You know that... It's big, big, that picks up stuff. And we paint the boom. We was doing the painting in between there-

John Crane:

Was that what-

Beverly Sylve:

... in between the time.

John Crane:

Were you way up in the air to do that-

Beverly Sylve:

No, no, no.

John Crane:

... or they'd set it on ground?

Beverly Sylve:

No, this is on the ground.

Chris Proctor:

How old were you when you were you and Lucy were working that hard?

Beverly Sylve:

Okay, then I had to been about 41. 41.

Chris Proctor:

And your sister?

Beverly Sylve:

And Lucy was about 39. Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

So, what kind of changes did you see? Because you obviously grew up in Mandeville before the causeway was built, the first causeway. Did you see a change in Mandeville from before it was built and after it was built? Or did it not really make that much difference?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, it was a big change. Because all of this out here, weren't nothing but trees. And in front of my house, it was Lovers Lane. And there weren't nothing but trees. And we used to go to a spot, I think that got to be where it was at, and fish. We used to fish in one of those canals. And all this was trees here. And the causeway, none of these roads or anything, was like it is now. It has been a huge change.

John Crane:

So, when did you move over here from Lamarque Street?

Beverly Sylve:

I move over here about... I've been over here about 29 years.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

So, where were you living when you did the Pre-stress and everything? Were you living on Lamarque Street at that-

Beverly Sylve:

I was on Monroe Street, right behind the house where we was built at. I had bought that place behind there, on Monroe Street.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Uh-huh. The two-story house is still there. Yeah. And I was living there when I was working at Pre-stress. But we didn't have no service station. All of this wasn't nothing but woods.

John Crane:

Oh.

Chris Proctor:

Big change.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Big change.

Beverly Sylve:

I mean, it's a huge change.

John Crane:

How about in terms of... I mean, on Lamarque Street, you had two Baptist churches, one that you lived next door to and then one in the next block.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

What were the other churches that were on Lamarque Street? Were there other churches as well that are no longer there? Or was that always that-

Beverly Sylve:

They had another one, Newell. It's in the-

John Crane:

200 block.

Beverly Sylve:

... second block from the lake.

John Crane:

Yeah. So, there were three churches?

Beverly Sylve:

Three churches.

John Crane:

Were there any activities going on in those churches when you were growing up? I guess they were all three active churches and-

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm, the singing. I always did sing in the choir. Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

So, how many days a week did you all go to church? Did you have Wednesday services, and Bible studies, and things like that? Or was it just Sunday morning?

Beverly Sylve:

It was two. We had Bible study on a Tuesday and we had service Sunday morning.

John Crane:

Sunday morning?

Beverly Sylve:

Unless its Bible school during the summer, unless we had a revival or something like that.

John Crane:

So, what was Lamarque Street like at that point? Was it a pretty tight community? Or was it just a suburban area? Or how would you describe-

Beverly Sylve:

It was a pretty tight community. It really were.

John Crane:

Were most people related to each other or were there different main families?

Beverly Sylve:

It was different family, it was friends, just was close.

John Crane:

Okay. So, the name Foster, somebody had told me, and I don't know, but there were some famous musicians that were from Lamarque Street that were Fosters. Do you have any recollection of that? I heard that they went over to New Orleans and played in some of the clubs and things like that. Is there any truth to that?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Well, then you talking to one right here.

John Crane:

Okay. Tell us about that.

Chris Proctor:

Wow.

Beverly Sylve:

My stage name Classy Jazzy.

John Crane:
Classy Jazzy?

Beverly Sylve:
Mm-hmm.

John Crane:
Okay.

Beverly Sylve:
The hall had been closed down for a length of time. And when they opened up again, before they started doing a lot of stuff now, I had a band. I had a mixed band. We call it The Element.

John Crane:
The what?

Beverly Sylve:
Element.

John Crane:
Element, okay.

Beverly Sylve:
Yeah. It was a music teacher from Hammond. He played all the instruments. He was my band leader. And I had three white guys and two black guys. And we was the first one that played over in the hall over there.

John Crane:
What year was this when you were-

Beverly Sylve:
That was... Ooh...

John Crane:
... playing with the Element?

Beverly Sylve:
Let's see, it's been... Let me see when that's been. It's been about 15 to 16, 17 years. And then, I went on because I did a CD... Oh, I did, I did a CD myself.

John Crane:
Right.

Beverly Sylve:

And my CD is Classy Jazzy. Mm-hmm.

Chris Proctor:

I'd love a copy of that.

John Crane:

Yeah.

Chris Proctor:

Classy Jazzy.

John Crane:

What year was that put out, do you remember?

Beverly Sylve:

That's been about 15 years ago.

John Crane:

So, 2005, 2010, something like that?

Beverly Sylve:

And-

Chris Proctor:

After Katrina or before?

Beverly Sylve:

When I first did it, because I did that CD in Houston, Texas, and it was 206.

Chris Proctor:

Okay.

John Crane:

2006?

Beverly Sylve:

Uh-huh.

John Crane:

Tell me about the Foster family. I mean, is that accurate? It was a musical family with lots of people that had music talent? Or were you the main one?

Beverly Sylve:

It was another Foster family prior to... Older than me. I don't know about them. But I was the one in the Foster family that did music. And I did a CD and everything. And I sung over at the hall. I did shows in New Orleans. I did shows in Gulfport. I did shows in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. I went a lot of places.

John Crane:

So, what are some of the songs that you sang? Was it basically jazz that you were singing?

Beverly Sylve:

I did some jazz, but I mostly did R&B.

John Crane:

R&B?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

What were some of the favorite songs that you sang?

Beverly Sylve:

Did you say a favorite? I got a lot of favorites. All of them is a favorite. If You Think She's Better Than Me, that's one of them. I'm Classy Jazzy. It goes, "I'm Classy Jazzy. Look at these hips. Look how these clothes fit. If she thinks she better than me, it's time to dance. And at the right place at the right time."

Chris Proctor:

Did you write your music?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Yeah, I did. This is one I did over at the seafood festival. I forgot about this.

John Crane:

Oh, this is-

Beverly Sylve:

That's way back then.

John Crane:

Uh-huh. This is at The Trailhead, huh?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, that's The Trailhead. And I did one at the seafood festival years ago too. Let's see. Here it is right here. I try to keep up with some of that stuff.

John Crane:

Oh, wow. Yeah, get a picture of that one too. This is great. What fun.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm. I did that at Ruby's Roadhouse there.

John Crane:

Were you strictly a singer or did you play an instrument as well?

Beverly Sylve:

No. Singer.

John Crane:

A singer.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Do you still sing and do you still play?

Beverly Sylve:

I haven't did anything since we had... I'm just trying to see. I haven't did anything since that virus came in.

John Crane:

Since the COVID?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

So, what-

Beverly Sylve:

And I sung in the church too.

John Crane:

So, playing at Ruby's Roadhouse, what was that like?

Beverly Sylve:

It was the blues.

John Crane:

Blues?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Uh-huh, blues. Yeah.

John Crane:

Same basic group of singers and the same-

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

It was still The Element-

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

... that was doing it. That's fascinating. That really is interesting.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

What fun.

Beverly Sylve:

Just trying to... These here, this old stuff that I had.

John Crane:

It's interesting. You know Simmie Fairley, don't you?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Well, he apparently had a band called The Spinners.

Beverly Sylve:

Hmm.

John Crane:

Wow, look at that. That's a great pic.

Chris Proctor:

The Spinners?

John Crane:

Yep.

Chris Proctor:

I heard of them.

Beverly Sylve:

And this is another picture when I was at the seafood festival, here in Mandeville when they had it.

John Crane:

When they had the seafood festival?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

What would you say your most enjoyable memories were growing up?

Beverly Sylve:

Singing. I loved singing. Yeah.

John Crane:

Singing in the choir or singing with groups of people?

Beverly Sylve:

Singing in the choir. Or either singing in the choir or groups. Long as I'm singing, that's me.

John Crane:

Who would you consider your influence? Oh, go ahead.

Chris Proctor:

That's okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Who influenced me? Tina Turner. And not only that, Mahalia Jackson.

John Crane:

Mahalia Jackson and Tina Turner?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Did you ever have a chance to meet either one of those women? Wow. These are-

Beverly Sylve:

No.

John Crane:

Wow. These are lovely.

Chris Proctor:

You were a beautiful girl. Were and still are.

John Crane:

Ms. Beverly is showing us pictures of her, the time that she was a singer.

Beverly Sylve:

This is in Mississippi.

Chris Proctor:

Ooh. Woo.

John Crane:

Wow.

Chris Proctor:

I want to wear... Must've been fun to wear all those beautiful gowns.

Beverly Sylve:

Yes. I love it. Let's see. I think this is it. Oh, yeah. This one right here. This is at the Dew Drop Hall. You could get a better look at that one.

John Crane:

It's wonderful that you took-

Beverly Sylve:

This one here.

John Crane:

... pictures.

Chris Proctor:

I know.

John Crane:

Uh-huh, y.

Beverly Sylve:

The Dew Drop Hall.

John Crane:

Uh-huh.

Chris Proctor:

Oh, look at that.

John Crane:

Yep.

Chris Proctor:

We don't have [inaudible 00:23:14].

John Crane:

So, did you have a booking agent? Or who booked all these places in Mississippi and everything? Or did you do that on your own?

Beverly Sylve:

Well, I had two guys. My last guy that did that, he passed in New Orleans. Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

But he did the booking for you?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, he did. He did.

John Crane:

So, Miss Becky Rohrbough told me that one of the people that people didn't realize had come and played at the Dew Drop Hall was B.B. King.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

But you had seen him when he played there?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, him and Fats Domino.

John Crane:

And Fats Domino. What year was that when they played? Do you have any idea?

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, Lord. It had to have been in the '50s.

John Crane:

In the 1950s?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

So, was it a big dance that they had when they played or did people just-

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, they had a big band.

John Crane:

A big band?

Beverly Sylve:

Uh-huh, and a lot of people. My mother and them all, they went over there, and they paid to see them.

John Crane:

So, they paid a fee to go into the hall?

Beverly Sylve:

Yes.

John Crane:

Did they not have any chairs in there and people just danced? Or were they listening like a concert? Or what did they do?

Beverly Sylve:

I think it was mostly dance.

John Crane:

Okay. So, they were using it more as a dance, for a dance thing?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Interesting.

Beverly Sylve:

They still got them benches around the wall.

John Crane:

Right. Correct.

Beverly Sylve:

Uh-huh. And I think they had tables. And then, it had this open spot for them to dance.

John Crane:

Interesting.

Beverly Sylve:

And I remember another thing too. The Sons and Daughters Hall, we called it the double street. The next street over>

John Crane:

On Marigny?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, across from the Glockners, where they used to sell fish at, that was a hall there. But it's a house there now. And they called it the Sons and Daughters Hall. And people from New Orleans used to book it. And they used to have busloads of people to come over. And they had picnic and they had bands there.

John Crane:

Did the Sons and Daughters Hall look like the Dew Drop? Was it the same style? Or was it a different building?

Beverly Sylve:

It was a bigger, huge... It was bigger than the Dew Drop. It was bigger, where they can set up tables and all of that. And they did that. And then, a lot of people used to come from New Orleans on buses. And they used to picnic over there. And we was young. We used to go over there and dance.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:26:04]

Chris Proctor:

Yeah.

John Crane:

So I remember somebody told me that the Dew Drop and the Sons and Daughters Halls were back to back. So you could go from one to the other. Is that correct or wasn't that correct?

Beverly Sylve:

No, it never was that close.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Never was because the woods is still in the back between-

John Crane:

Between the two.

Beverly Sylve:

But they got houses there now.

John Crane:

So when was the Sons and Daughter Hall tore down? Do you remember?

Beverly Sylve:

It had to been maybe about 30 years ago.

John Crane:

You think-

Beverly Sylve:

A long time.

John Crane:

... in the eighties maybe or something or maybe even before that?

Beverly Sylve:

Let's see, it could have been before then. I'd say maybe in the seventies.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, in the seventies.

John Crane:

It's interesting to me because the Blue Drop and-

Beverly Sylve:

The Dew Drop.

John Crane:

... what I little know about the Sons and Daughters is they were both associations.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

And for the Black community, they operated. You can tell me if this is true, but that they would help people with the funerals, they would do loans, but it was sort of like a social underpinning for the community and you belonged to that. Does that sound right?

Beverly Sylve:

But I didn't know. I was probably a little bit too young for that.

John Crane:

Before they came along?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, but I was there. I know the hall and all that. I know when people used to come from New Orleans on buses and they had big picnics out there and the ground with the trees. Some of them be out there under the trees, picnicking and a few be in the hall and they'd be selling stuff in vans and they just book it to have a good time.

Chris Proctor:

So it was New Orleans people that came over?

Beverly Sylve:

Hm-hmm.

John Crane:

Were they driving over or taking the buses?

Beverly Sylve:

Buses and maybe some of them in cars.

John Crane:

In cars.

Beverly Sylve:

But mostly it was buses.

John Crane:

Yeah, that's an interesting part of Mandeville's history that I didn't know anything about, but we need to remember that, that there was that kind of activity going on and those kinds of attracted people. So tell me about going to school in Mandeville when you were growing up. You went to school in Mandeville or which school?

Beverly Sylve:

Mandeville.

John Crane:

Which school did you go to?

Beverly Sylve:

We was raised up Catholic. So I went to the Catholic school and I think as seventh grade or whenever we started going to the public school.

John Crane:

Okay, so that was the Holy Name school that you went to?

Beverly Sylve:

Yes.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Until they closed it down.

John Crane:

Yeah. And then that's when it all came together, you went to the public school. So as I understand it, there was a Rosenwald school on Lamarque Street where there's now the playground.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. That's where we went, to the Rosenwald school after they closed the Catholic school down.

John Crane:

Oh, you went to the Rosenwald?

Beverly Sylve:

Rosenwald School, uh-huh.

John Crane:

What was that building like? How many classrooms did it have in it? Do you remember?

Beverly Sylve:

It was a small building and it sets up. It had, let's see, one, two... Far as I know it was, because I went there, three classrooms.

John Crane:

What grade would you say you were in?

Beverly Sylve:

It was from the first grade. First, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seven.

John Crane:

Okay. And what years were you at Rosenwald? Were you there...

Beverly Sylve:

Oh.

John Crane:

Taking you back?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, I'm 78. So you taking me way, way back? It had to been probably in the fifties.

John Crane:

Fifties. So you would've been second, third grade, something like that, probably?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, fifth and sixth is part of... Or fifth and sixth.

John Crane:

Do you remember when they tore the Rosenwald school down, because I understood there was some kind of a land swap or something where the Woodlake school... Somehow the city traded the property or something and then they built Woodlake and then turned the other into-

Beverly Sylve:

A playground.

John Crane:

... a playground.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Oh, I'm telling you, Mandeville really done grow and it's still growing. It ain't stopped.

John Crane:

One thing that's interesting to me is that when you look at the population's statistics, Mandeville was about 40 to 50% Black people back in the fifties and sixties. And that is now gone down to a very small percentage, relatively speaking. And I'm just curious, what were most folks doing for a living? I mean Simmie Fairly was telling me that a lot of folks worked in the hospital.

Beverly Sylve:

Yes.

John Crane:

What other types of work did people do to make a living in Mandeville? Obviously, Pre-Stress I guess was a big thing.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, Pre-Stress was a big thing because we had people that come from all over in New Orleans and people from New Orleans working over there. Pre-stress was a big thing. And Southeast, the hospital, was a big thing. Those are the two biggest things that I know that a lot of... Because my mother worked at Southeast and my father worked at Pre-Stress and then his two daughters went to work at Pre-Stress. And see why we went when they opened up for equal opportunity and we was making the same money like the men was making in our crew and we went for it. We wanted a better living, put it like that. We wanted a better living.

John Crane:

And that was really in the 70. That didn't happen until the seventies-

Beverly Sylve:

That's right.

John Crane:

... that you were given an equal opportunity. Before that you really didn't have that. It wasn't even open to you.

Beverly Sylve:

And when we was out there, when we started working out there, there was men from different places because they were from all over, Mississippi, New Orleans, Slidell, Hammond, Mandeville, Lacombe, Abita, Covington. And a lot of them were saying, "Y'all need to be home, washing clothes, cooking and taking care of the house and all that." We told them, "We taking care of the house right now making the same money you make, but we know what we going to do with it. We not going to give it to the women's and have a good name." Because a lot of them was out there, no more working and partying. "You made good money. What you did with your money?"

John Crane:

What was the salary like? What was the wage at that time? Do you remember?

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, Lord Jesus. I couldn't really tell you because we worked at... They didn't want us to make overtime and we told Mr. Goodyear, he was over everything and they had these little bosses that was over us, and we told our little boss, they let the men stay and make overtime and we want to know why we can't make overtime. And they never did tell us. So we told them, this particular day when we get off from work, we going to New Orleans, we going to the labor crew. And you know what, before we got off the whistleblower, they said, "The ladies stay. They can make overtime." We made a difference with that, but I think the pay then was maybe about... I can't really say because it's been so long, but it was good pay.

John Crane:

Were y'all part of a union or it was not a union?

Beverly Sylve:

No, it wasn't a union.

John Crane:

So there weren't those kind of rules protection, it was just strictly everybody got the same treatment?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Would you say that it was a safe place to work when you were working there or were there a lot of injuries and things like that because you're working with big equipment and heavy loads and stuff like that?

Beverly Sylve:

It was safe, but we didn't have too many people really get hurt every now and then and they had the safety man be on the yard all day.

John Crane:

Just watching.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm. And that was a good thing. But we enjoyed working out there. Only thing it is, during the summer we cooked and during the winter we froze, but we stayed there for five years so that we can take care of our children. Keep from, because some of them, a lot of people around here was living on welfare, making a little salary. So we chose to go out there equal opportunity and make this money and better ourself and have a better life.

John Crane:

Ms. Beverly, how many children did you have?

Beverly Sylve:

Five.

John Crane:

Five children. Wow. And so you were working so that you could feed them and bring them up. What have your children... Where are they today? Are they here in Mandeville or they moved out or?

Beverly Sylve:

I don't have any of them in Mandeville.

John Crane:

They've all left?

Beverly Sylve:

I have a daughter. She live in Franklinton. She's a social worker. Another daughter live in Franklinton and her husband's a VA. She gets good money. Both of them is doing good. My other daughter lives in Lacombe and her daughter, one of them is a doctor in Washington. The other worked for the White House in Washington.

John Crane:

Fantastic.

Beverly Sylve:

I got stuff from Obama and all of that up there. And my other son, Cartez, he lived in Arcola and my baby son, years ago, that's what really took me down, his wife put him in a \$300,000 policy and murdered him.

John Crane:

Oh, my goodness.

Beverly Sylve:

My baby son.

John Crane:

Oh, my. That's tough.

Beverly Sylve:

Yes, yes. And three years ago she came up on parole and I had to go to Baton Rouge to the parole board and I told them only thing I had of him is his picture. Her mother can go visit her, touch her and talk to her and hug her. Only thing I had was a picture and I told them to keep her and I wouldn't want to see another parent go through what I went through, especially with her. I told them to keep her incarcerated till my son come out of that grave and come back to me. This man told her and said, "I don't think you're going to get out. I don't think you're coming out."

I told, "Keep her incarcerated until he come back to me. I forgive her, but I wouldn't want her out because she might do that to somebody else's child." But I had to pray hard. God brought me through that because I used to cry all the time. I had a waterbed. This particular night I was crying and all of a sudden that waterbed, I heard that water. And I know that it was him. And he was telling me, "Stop crying. Don't worry about me. I'm with the Lord." From that day to this and I quit shedding tears.

John Crane:

You knew it was okay.

Beverly Sylve:

I quit shedding tears. I couldn't even talk about it without crying, but I thank God for it.

John Crane:

Ms. Beverly, your children have done very well and they're all doing well. What do you attribute that to? What gave them the different opportunity than what you have? What would you point to?

Beverly Sylve:

Well, my children tell me they looked and they seen how hard I worked. Okay. After Pre-Stress closed down, I went to work at the school on Mandeville. It was Mandeville Junior High because the high school moved over here and I was the head custodian. Mr. David Yarborough, he hired me. He made me a head custodian. And I used to work and after school, it was from six until two. I used to leave from school since the teacher see how hard I work, what a good job I've done, that's after Pre-Stress closed down, I used to go and clean those teacher houses in the evening after I leave from school. And then after then with Mr. David Yarborough, he used to live in this subdivision here three blocks from me. And he moved into the school board and I told him when he get in the school board, try to look out for me being transferred, driving school bus. He went in April and August. That following August they called me to drive bus. So I bought me a bus and I retired driving school bus.

John Crane:

Okay. So how many years did you drive a school bus?

Beverly Sylve:

I drive the school bus for about maybe 10 or 12 years. But I had been in the school system as a custodian.

John Crane:

Before that?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm. And see, my children seen how hard I worked and always tell them, "If you want to have something, you got to work, you got to get it. You got to get it honest." And so that's why they are like they is. And I thank God that I was example for my children.

John Crane:

You spoke about your children being in Washington. You spoke about Obama, the first Black president. What did that mean to you in your life?

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, Lord. He just took me up another level to know that my grandchildren is in Washington and that took me to another level and I had so much to thank God for. I thank God for my mother. I thank God for myself and I thank God for my daughter. And I thank God for my granddaughters. One of them is a doctor over there with a white guy. People is people. They in a firm together. And the other one, she's working over at the White House.

John Crane:

That's amazing. So were there civil right activities that took place in Mandeville at all or not really? I know there were in New Orleans. They had the counter, the sit-ins at the counters and some of the basic stuff that happened, they began to change things. New Orleans was part of that. Was any of that reflected over here? Did people talk about it or get involved in it or anything like that?

Beverly Sylve:

People talked about it, but they didn't get involved in it.

John Crane:

Was it because of fear or because of they just... I don't know. What would you say?

Beverly Sylve:

I'd say it like this here. Mandeville has never been a bad place to live. I always say, "If a person can't make it down here in the south, Mandeville, they ain't going to make it nowhere." You can achieve a lot of things that you want, but I know a lot of them that get a high, get the education, go to college and all that, but you got to go New York or different places like that to get a better job. And I understand that. But first, a regular person, say like a person that haven't been to college or anything, in Mandeville you can own your home, in Mandeville you can have just about what you want. In Mandeville we got a few prejudiced people, but everybody not prejudiced.

Because I can tell you this here, yesterday I was on my way going to my cousin's wedding in Hammond. And when I went in the Dollar Store to get a card, the lady told me that the computer went down. So I had \$10, so I couldn't get the card because she said it to be about eight or nine minutes before everything come up. They had this white guy and this white lady. She said, "Ma'am, how much are the card?" And I told her it was \$2. She said, "I have \$2." A guy was standing behind me. He said, "Miss..." He said, "I got a lot of ones in my wallet." So they paid.

Chris Proctor:

That's nice.

Beverly Sylve:

That's why I'm saying, "Here it just seems like people is family here, seem like people look out for each other." And I love Mandeville.

Chris Proctor:

Me too.

Beverly Sylve:

I really do because we don't have a lot of stuff. And I hope New Orleans, that mess from New Orleans don't come over here, because I mostly leave my door, my back door open when I leave and go somewhere. And when I had my children on Monroe Street, when I used to go to work and they go to school, we never did lock the house up. But this door be locked, but that door don't. I love Mandeville. I tell anybody, Mandeville is a nice place to raise children. Long as we don't get that group from New Orleans coming here, nice place to raise children. Nice place for the children to go to school. Mandeville is just a beautiful place.

Chris Proctor:

I think so too.

John Crane:

So, who were some of the leaders of the community when you were growing up and when you were living? When you look back, who do you look to and say, "Well, those were really the leaders in this community?" What people do you think about and what stories do you know about people?

Beverly Sylve:

Well, the leaders in Mandeville when I was coming up was the McGuire's. And it was the McGuire's and a few other ones that I can't think of. And not only that. I told you some of the stuff, but I was a reserve police officer here in Mandeville when I was driving school bus. I used to work on weekends. So that's why I say, "It's a lot of things a person can get into if they want it." And I was accepted just like that.

John Crane:

So you were working three or four jobs all the time, basically?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. I enjoyed it too.

John Crane:

So what did you do for fun?

Beverly Sylve:

What I did?

John Crane:

I know you sang.

Beverly Sylve:

Singing. That's me. Singing. I love singing.

John Crane:

What did y'all do as small children? What were you doing when you were living on Lamarque?

Beverly Sylve:

We used to have the ballpark there after they tore the school down. We used to play ball. Yeah, we used to play ball.

John Crane:

This is where the Rosenwald school was?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

And they had a ball field there?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Okay. Was that the first thing they made it after they tore it down?

Beverly Sylve:

Yes.

John Crane:

They made it a park, they made it a ballpark first?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

So y'all were playing baseball?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Girls against boys or-

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, we had a team that called The Angels.

John Crane:

The Angels. It was all girls?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Lady team, girls team.

John Crane:

What position did you play?

Beverly Sylve:

I always played... I played catcher. I played first base. I never did pitch, though.

John Crane:

Could you hit?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Yes.

John Crane:

Tell me what one of those games was like. What was it like to go to one of those games? I mean, was it people went to see them and that sort of thing or was it just pick-up games or what?

Beverly Sylve:

And people used to come to see them and my daddy, he was paralyzed. Yeah, my daddy got paralyzed. We was young, my daddy got paralyzed and we used to bring my daddy to all of the games, the games in Lacombe, the games in Covington, whatever. We used to pick my daddy up and bring him to the game.

Edward:

How you guys doing?

Beverly Sylve:

That's Edward. And we used to take him to games. My daddy was paralyzed and he couldn't walk. But every time we take him to the doctor, the doctor tell us it's amazing. Say for him to be paralyzed, he never had bed-

John Crane:

Sores?

Beverly Sylve:

... sores or nothing.

John Crane:

How did he get paralyzed? Was he in an automobile accident or what happened?

Beverly Sylve:

No, he was at a bar in Mandeville and him and a guy, they be joking around and the guy picked him up and when he picked my daddy up, my daddy went over his head and broke his spine.

John Crane:

Oh, my goodness.

Beverly Sylve:

So that's why us girls, we had to be boys in the family. That's why we worked at Pre-Stress. It was a reason. Yeah.

John Crane:

Because you had to. Were there a lot of bars in Mandeville? I know you had Ruby's, which was known as Bucks at that... Bucks originally and then it turned into Ruby's. What other bars were there?

Beverly Sylve:

Then they had one up here on what's called... Before you get to City Hall, let me see. Yeah, the next corner before you get to City Hall, right where they have Ochsner clinic, well, across from there there's a house there now. It was a bar-room there and they call it Mr. Sim's Bar.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

It was only two bar-rooms then.

John Crane:

Was Ruby's and then Mr. Sim's Bar?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Interesting, interesting. Tell me some of the stories that... Did you grow up hearing old stories in your family, your grandparents, your great-grandparents, things like that? Do you remember any stories about your family at all, your dad coming from Eunice or anything like that?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, my grandfather, he used to be a jockey. He used to, from Folsom, he used to ride horses.

John Crane:

Huh?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm. His name, James Brown.

John Crane:

James Brown?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

And was he racing or was he just riding?

Beverly Sylve:

He was riding for someone he was working for. And when they had the horse race, he used to ride the horse.

John Crane:

Was he a small man? Is that-

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Okay. So he was light, which is why they were like for jockeys, I guess. Interesting. And your dad came from Eunice. Was all his family from Eunice basically?

Beverly Sylve:

Well, I really don't know, but I think so because he had my daddy, daddy. Yeah, my daddy, daddy was in Eunice, but he had different... Had about seven brothers. And my daddy, it was just him and his sister. And when I really know them, she was living... His sister was living in Covington and my daddy was down here. But first history of them back then, I really don't know.

John Crane:

So what are the things that you would want to make sure that your grandchildren or your great-grandchildren knew about Mandeville when you were growing up?

Beverly Sylve:

Well, I just want them to know that Mandeville was a sweet place, good place, and we loved it, Mandeville. We loved to go on the lakefront and what I want them to know, that Mandeville is a place that I love. That's what I want them to know. Mandeville is a place that I love. I did a lot of singing in churches and after then I did a CD, a R&B CD. So, I just loved singing. And Mandeville was a... I just want them to know that my hometown, Mandeville, it was a good place to raise children to grow up - for you have children, for the children to grow up here in Mandeville. It was a good place. It was a sweet place.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:52:04]

John Crane:

So did people watch out? So when you were a young kid and you were growing up, was it the kind of place where your next door neighbor, if they saw you, something doing wrong, they would step in or...

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

I mean, were you more raised by the whole community? What was that like?

Beverly Sylve:

If they-

John Crane:

You know what the next question I'm going to ask you is?

Beverly Sylve:

If they see you doing anything wrong, my mother and them and father and them gave them permission to chastise us. And when my mother come home from work, or my daddy come home from work, we got another chastising. So we was raised up good and we didn't sass like these children now. They'll sass older people, they disrespect them. We better not do none of that. And right now I go to the store and they have these young ladies be working in there and, "Yes, ma'am," and, "No, ma'am." I feel like this here. They say you supposed to say, in school they start teaching, supposed to say yes and no. I feel like the, "Yes, ma'am," and, "No, ma'am," you giving a person respect and they will go beyond to help you.

John Crane:

You get back what you give. Yeah, I think that's right.

Beverly Sylve:

And I'm 78 years old and I'm quick to say, "Yes, ma'am," and, "No ma'am, and, "Thank you, darling." Yeah.

John Crane:

So now I got to ask you the next question. What did you get in trouble for?

Beverly Sylve:

Let me see. What in the world I get in trouble for? I am trying to think. Hardly ever got in trouble.

John Crane:

That's what I used to think about myself and then I talked to my mother and she reminded me of a few things that I had conveniently forgot.

Beverly Sylve:

I'm trying to think what in the world I got in trouble for. What in the world?

Chris Proctor:

You were an angel. You were just an angel.

Beverly Sylve:

No, I wasn't an angel, but I'm just trying to think of what I got in trouble for. Maybe not getting home on time, something like that. Or maybe try to chastise the little one was up under me. Yeah. And when mama come in, they run and tell mama a story. And that's another reason why I got in trouble. Yeah. Because it was 10 of us.

John Crane:

So in big families, the children raise the other children sometimes because the parents don't, they're not everywhere.

Beverly Sylve:

That's right.

John Crane:

Was your family like that? I mean, were the kids watching out for each other and keeping everybody in line pretty much?

Beverly Sylve:

Yes. Yes. My mother, she worked at South East and she used to go to work about five and get back home maybe about two, sometimes 1:30 or whatever. My oldest sister, Christine, that's the one that I wanted you to talk to too, she the one make us clean the house up and have everything clean when my mother come home. But she sleeps half of the day. I don't know how she do it. She can wake up at 11 o'clock and when my mama come home, the house is spick and span. But if we don't do what we supposed to do, she punch us on our shoulder.

John Crane:

So one of the things that Mr. Simmie Fairley told me was that one of the things about Mandeville that was unique was that the South Eastern Hospital always hired black people and always gave them a pension. And it was the only place that you could get hired and get a pension and get a retirement and things like that. And so when I talked to him, he said it was one of the most important institutions in this area because of the good employment that it gave and pensions. Does that ring true to you too, in your experience?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. That and the school, St. Tammany Parish School Board. Yes.

John Crane:

So those were the two places that you could get a job, that you would get a retirement and steady pay and all that.

Beverly Sylve:

But for us, working Pre-Stress too, because Pre-Stress was the main thing because a lot of people was making good money at Pre-Stress. I say Pre-Stress and St. Tammany Parish School Board and South East. That was the thing that really carried Mandeville. And we had restaurants and all of that, people working for a business because a lot of the business people working, they was able to draw social security. So we had business around here too.

John Crane:

Because it seems like it maybe was a little bit different than a lot of places where there actually was economy where you could get decent jobs and things like that for them.

Beverly Sylve:

And another thing I wanted to tell you, I remember when I was young, they did this movie they called Swamp Woman. I think they started in New Orleans. Three ladies broke out of prison, you can pull it up on your phone, broke out of prison and they lived in Lacombe Bayou in the woods. And they did a movie there. I seen the movie and it was way back then. I loved it, that movie. It was three ladies was living in the... They did, the three ladies living in the swamp.

John Crane:

Did they have...

Chris Proctor:

Is that it?

Beverly Sylve:

But it'd give you more.

John Crane:

Did they have people from Mandeville who were extras in the movie that you could see?

Beverly Sylve:

No.

John Crane:

No. They were all actors from outside.

Beverly Sylve:

We know they shot that movie. We know then, I was young, but I remember it.

John Crane:

And they shot it partly in Mandeville or all at Lacombe or...

Beverly Sylve:

It was done in Lacombe, Lacombe Bayou, and they escaped from a prison, but I think in New Orleans. But I don't think they had a prison in New Orleans. I think it went to prison in Angola but they shot it and

they did it the way... But they lived in the swamps and it was a good movie. It really were. And also, I remember when I was young, my sister, older sister Shirley, she worked at the hotel. The old hotel was on the Lakefront, and John Wayne came there and stayed. But they did a movie. Where he did the movie at, I don't know, in Louisiana. I don't know. But he stayed at the hotel in Mandeville on the Lakefront, right by the old drugstore. There was a drugstore on the Lakefront too.

John Crane:

Do you remember the name of the hotel? Was it the St. Tammany Hotel?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. That's it. That's it.

Chris Proctor:

What's there now?

Beverly Sylve:

They done tore it down and they build all of these-

John Crane:

It's condominiums, the big condominiums, right there by the... What is that? They have...

Beverly Sylve:

They got a bar there now across the street. But that-

Chris:

Don's?

John Crane:

No. No, the two-story one, the beer place.

Beverly Sylve:

The beer place? Now, that it used to be a drugstore.

John Crane:

Barley Oak.

Chris:

Barley Oak?

Beverly Sylve:

That used to be a drugstore.

John Crane:

Oh, really?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Where that was, and then they tore that down and built that thing-

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. That used to be a drugstore.

John Crane:

So you told me that you had a recollection of Roy Rogers coming here.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Where was that? What happened with that?

Beverly Sylve:

Well, what I'm saying is that my sister worked at the hotel and she had brought a picture of him, and he gave them a picture because they used to clean the hotel and all that. And we had a picture a long time at the house on Lamarque Street. But he did a movie somewhere in Louisiana, but they might've came and tour the Lakefront in Mandeville but he stayed a night over there.

Chris:

That's so cool.

Beverly Sylve:

And that's been years ago.

John Crane:

And this was John Wayne you're talking about? How about Roy Rogers? When was he here? Do you remember?

Beverly Sylve:

No, I remember. I think that was John Wayne. John Wayne. Yeah.

John Crane:

So tell me about hurricanes. You lived through a bunch of hurricanes in Mandeville. What are the ones, do you remember any growing up when you were a young child? I guess Betsy was probably came through in 1965, probably. And do you remember any of those and flooding and things like that?

Beverly Sylve:

When Betsy came, we didn't leave our house. We stayed there, but water came up from the Lakefront all the way up to, let's see, one block, three blocks, and then across from the Dew Drop and across from where we was raised at, that house across the street, it was the Anderson and that's a bayou back there and that water came all the way up. But it never did come to the streets across where we lived at.

John Crane:

Never came up in your houses?

Beverly Sylve:

Never did. Never did.

John Crane:

Was there a strong wind and things like-

Beverly Sylve:

Yes.

John Crane:

Lots of trees down?

Beverly Sylve:

But we stayed home. It wasn't no big old trees down then, not where we was at.

John Crane:

So tell me about some of the other families that grew up around you. You mentioned the Anderson's?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Was that a family that was living there?

Beverly Sylve:

Across the street from us and they have the Weston's lived on the corner from us. Yeah.

John Crane:

What were those families like? They'd been in Mandeville for a long time? They were old Mandeville families?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. And they had, I think it was, about 12 or 14 children. And the Anderson, across the street from us, had about eight kids.

John Crane:

Children. What did they do? Was the Anderson's involved at all in music or anything like that?

Beverly Sylve:

No.

John Crane:

No.

Beverly Sylve:

The daddy was a waitress at a restaurant on Bechac.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Bechac. He was a waitress.

John Crane:

And there used to be a building, there's that big old yellow house right now next to the Dew Drop and then on the other side they called it the Captain's Cabin or something like that. There was a small little house in there. Do you remember that house?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. One man used to stay there. It was just like a little bitty shed.

John Crane:

It was just a one or two rooms. Yeah. And then there was a woman that lived on the corner of Madison.

Beverly Sylve:

Ms. Reganey.

John Crane:

And then she died not too long ago, maybe around 20 or 10 years ago. 10, 15-

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, 10 or 15 years ago.

John Crane:

And then there was a house. Was there a house where that yellow house was, right next to the Dew Drop? Where that big yellow house, that two-story, was there a house there or was that just-

Beverly Sylve:

No.

John Crane:

That was just open?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, that was open.

John Crane:

So then after that they had that small house and then Ms. Reganey, was that on the other side of Lamarque?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

How about on the other side of Lamarque, were there houses? I know there was a house that was back-

Beverly Sylve:

It was across the street from Ms. Reganey and them. It was, let me see, one, two, three, we call it renter houses, 3 little shotgun houses that people were staying in.

John Crane:

Okay. And then coming up, then you had the Anderson's, I guess?

Beverly Sylve:

No, after the shotgun houses, it was-

John Crane:

Oh, the shotguns were on the corner?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, across the street.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Okay? Coming from up there, from that corner, coming from up, it was the three shotgun houses, then it was the green house with the pool, and that house fell in. And then they had Ms. Celeste, a lady and her husband used to cook food and used to sell pies. It was like a sweet shop, candy and all of that.

John Crane:

She would sell them out of her home?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. And then when they died, that house fell in too, so all of that had done fell in and then the Anderson home was still there.

John Crane:

Yeah. Yeah, I think they saved that one. They preserved it. I guess the Dew Drop has it now that they're using it.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Yeah. Tell me some of the other things that you've been involved in. I mean, I know that you're involved in the civic with the mayor and doing different things. What are some of the things that you are involved in today with the city of Mandeville or just being involved?

Beverly Sylve:

Well...

John Crane:

I know that you did... You're another movie star. That's where Becky said she met you, was in her starring role. Was that the first time you'd been in front of a camera or you had done that before?

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, no. I did that so many times.

John Crane:

Really?

Beverly Sylve:

Especially when I was performing.

John Crane:

So you were used to being in front of a camera?

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, yeah.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Did you ever do any acting or anything or just singing?

Beverly Sylve:

Well, I mostly did just singing. And when I perform on stage, I had to move. Yeah. Yeah. Yes. So I just love doing it. But right now, my point of view, my sister, two years ago, she lived in South Carolina, her husband was in hospice, so I went over there to help her. And then he had passed because I stayed over there a month. And then a guy that was driving, she had a Mercedes and he hit us in the back. He had a Jeep with a bar on it, that bar in the front, and he hit us in the back.

And the back of her car was shoved up to the window, and we was lucky that the gas tank didn't explode. We was on interstate and we were lucky that another car didn't come and hit us, and he hit us so hard. Both of my knees hit the dashboard. And this been two years, and I had surgery the 29th of August. I had to get a knee replacement in this one. Now, on the 13th, this one coming up. I got to do this one here. So that's why I've been trying to lay back. It's been going on two years.

Chris Proctor:

Sorry about that.

Beverly Sylve:

So I got to get this one here done. But I still try to move around.

John Crane:

Are you finding that with the new one that you don't have pain? Or do you still have pain with it?

Beverly Sylve:

Dr. Ladner said it would take a year, and everybody that I know that had it said it take a year for it to heal. The outside done heal real good but inside I have these little shocking pain and that knee stay hot all the time. So they told me it'd be a year before it get well. And this here haven't been six months, next month would be six months, I got to have another one. But when it happened that both of my knees hit, and then it was bone rubbing bone. And I've been dealing with that.

So in August I had to make a charge, which one we going to do. So I told them we'd do the right and after I had the right one done, it was so bad. A month and a half, nothing but pain, night and day pain. I get up, get up and sleep a half an hour, up the next hour, half an hour, because he wouldn't let me rest. So I said I wasn't going to have this one done. I have to get it done because three weeks ago I wasn't able to walk, couldn't get out of bed and walk. It had messed with my muscle in my leg.

So I'm getting ready to get that done on the 13th, but I ain't going to let it slow me down. I ain't going to let it stop me. I'm praying for this one here to get better, and that way I'll be able to move around, walk and get involved in stuff like I wanted to do and like I should do.

John Crane:

So Chris, I've been talking. Do you have any questions?

Chris Proctor:

Well, you mentioned her being a movie star and I don't know what that's about. I'm curious.

John Crane:

She said she did something.

Chris Proctor:

It was in the city? You were in-

John Crane:

Yeah. Yeah.

Chris Proctor:

For the city of Mandeville?

Beverly Sylve:

I had performed at Ruby Roadhouse. I performed at the Dew Drop Hall and yeah. Those two places that I have done.

John Crane:

I think what she-

Beverly Sylve:

And on the Trailhead, but I haven't did no movies or anything.

John Crane:

I think what she was talking about was what you did with Becky on the new trash system... You know the new...

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, yeah.

Chris Proctor:

That I don't know about.

John Crane:

Okay.

Chris Proctor:

Yeah.

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, where your phone? Give me my phone and move here. I can pull it up.

Chris Proctor:

Okay.

John Crane:

So do you have trash collection in Mandeville with a new-

Chris Proctor:

Yeah, it's coming up.

John Crane:

So they made a-

Chris Proctor:

In March.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, a video.

John Crane:

They made a video.

Chris Proctor:

You did that? Oh, you're famous then.

Beverly Sylve:

Let me get this here.

Chris:

Are you talking about Becky Deano?

John Crane:

No, Becky Rohrbough.

Chris Proctor:

Don't know her.

John Crane:

Yeah. They did a segment for the city on how to position your...

Chris Proctor:

Oh, that's funny.

Beverly Sylve:

Here. It's right here.

Chris Proctor:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, no. I don't want me showing myself on that. Wait. Come on now.

Clay Madden:

[inaudible 01:11:04] one A, one B-

Beverly Sylve:

Let me get it better.

Clay Madden:

Main thing [inaudible 01:11:08].

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. (video playing in the background)

Clay Madden:

Hi. I am Mandeville Mayor Clay Madden and I want to welcome Coastal Environmental Services, our garbage provider and their new automatic side loader truck to the city of Mandeville. With this new service, all of your household garbage items need to be bagged and placed in the cart. In other words, containerized.

Rebecca Bush:

Hello, I'm Rebecca Bush, Mandeville City Council District One. One of the key elements of this new service is cart placement. So please keep all carts at least three feet from all mailboxes or other obstructions, including vehicles, and remember handles to the house.

Rick Danielson:

Hi, I'm Rick Danielson, Mandeville City Councilman at large. With the new trucks from Coastal, you can continue to use your 95 gallon carts as they are, but if you need an additional one, you can call Coastal and order that for \$24 a year, or you can buy your own cart. But just remember it has to be the same shape as this one, on wheels, no removable lids and no round cans and remember, handles to the house.

Beverly Sylve:

Mayor Madden, I'm concerned about

That's me.

... the debris, which are we going to have debris picked up around here?

Clay Madden:

Yes, ma'am. That's a great question, Ms. Beverly. The debris pickup in Mandeville is going to stay the same under this new system. It's still going to be twice a month or every two weeks, your debris will be picked up. It's very important that you put your debris piles, whether it's fence boards, sticks, bamboo, logs, in a pile at least three feet away from a mailbox or a low hanging wire or a low hanging rim. Also, we're going to put the zones on the city website and on Coastal's website, but your debris will still be picked up once every two weeks.

Beverly Sylve:

All right, that's what I want I want to hear.

Clay Madden:

Thank you, Ms-

Beverly Sylve:

Thank you.

Speaker 2:

Mayor Madden, I'm so excited about these new trucks. However-

Chris Proctor:

Is that it?

Beverly Sylve:

No, you got to see the end.

Clay Madden:

Great question, Ms. Cynthia-

Beverly Sylve:

Ms. Becky going to be on there too.

Clay Madden:

... will still be picked up on Tuesdays and garbage will still be picked up on Wednesdays. Please have your carts to the curb either the night before or before five AM on those pickup days.

Speaker 2:

Okay. I have another question for you. My neighbors and I have multiple carts and we will get the carts that look just like this one, however, we tend to put them together right now. Can we still do that?

Clay Madden:

Another great question, Ms. Cynthia. No. You would need to space out the carts three feet apart so that the truck can grab it and remember, handles to the house.

Beverly Sylve:

Do you want something to drink? I'm sorry, forgive me. I should have been asking.

Clay Madden:

As you can see, the arm is on the right side of the truck, which means it will go down the right side of the street and pick up that side first. Don't worry, don't panic, it will come down the other side of the street later in the day.

Becky Rohrbough:

Mayor, I'm concerned with the new arrangement about the fact that we often have extra garbage bags when the can is full set out and the automated system can't grab the bags. We want to keep our streets neat and tidy, how do we handle that now?

Clay Madden:

Great question, Ms. Becky. We absolutely want to keep Mandeville beautiful. We encourage people to containerize everything. So if you have excess bags, we encourage you to get another container or additional containers. Coastal will be renting them for \$24 a year or \$2 a month, which is on the cheap side because if you go to a store and buy, it's going to be a little bit more expensive. But some people may want to buy their own at Home Depot or Lowe's. We just encourage them to be the same size and shape as the Coastal carts. But we do want to keep Mandeville beautiful and get those bag and additional items into the container and containerized.

Becky Rohrbough:

Mayor, the other thing I worry about is I live in Old Town and our streets are narrow. We have beautiful mature trees and we have a lot of low hanging limbs that we don't want damaged. How do we avoid that problem in Old Town with an automated pickup service?

Clay Madden:

Great question, Ms. Becky. Of course, we want to protect the trees and keep Mandeville beautiful. That's why we ask with the new truck, the automated side loader truck, we want residents to be cognizant of where they're putting their cart. Absolutely, we do not want them to put it under low hanging limbs or low hanging wires or also near mailboxes. And remember, containerize!

To report a missed pickup, request debris service, or request a cart, please visit the customer care section of the Coastal website at www.ces-la.com. Or call the phone number, 985 781 3171.

Beverly Sylve:

I want everybody to remember when you get this can make sure you have it handle to the house.

Chris Proctor:

I love it. You're a natural. You're a natural.

Beverly Sylve:

Right.

Chris Proctor:

Trying to watch that and read the instructions.

Speaker 4:

Try this strange 10 second technique tonight to reverse high blood sugar while you...

Chris Proctor:

That's fantastic.

John Crane:

Was that the question that came up?

Chris Proctor:

Yeah.

Beverly Sylve:

Handle to the house.

Chris Proctor:

I know Becky. I just didn't remember her name.

John Crane:

Yeah. Yeah. So you knew Clay Madden pretty well, I guess. Did you take him on the bus? That's what I want to know.

Beverly Sylve:

No, I worked at the school with his mother. I was a head custodian over there.

John Crane:

This is at Mandeville High School?

Beverly Sylve:

Mandeville Pontchartrain Elementary.

John Crane:

Pontchartrain Elementary.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Which schools did you work at?

Beverly Sylve:

I worked at Mandeville Junior High, and then I left from there. I went and drove bus and then I got married. Then I got all of this here, here. And after then we divorced and then I seen Mr. Clanton, I went to apply for a job. Mr. Clanton say, "Ms. Beverly, we got buses. You want to drive bus again?" I told him, "No. The children done changed," and I didn't want to do that. He said, "Well, I got a head custodian job opening." He said, "Right down from your house," that's about four blocks from my house. He says, "And if you want it," he said, "fill out an application and put my name as a reference." That was so sweet, for me to put his name as a reference. I did, and I got the job.

Chris Proctor:

How long ago was that?

Beverly Sylve:

That's been about, I'd say about ... let's see, about 14 years.

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:18:04]

Chris Proctor:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, about 14 years.

John Crane:

Are you fully retired now or are you still working?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Okay, so you are retired?

Beverly Sylve:

I was retired, but I went back to work after I got a divorce.

John Crane:

Okay. Was your Sylve family, were they from Mandeville also or were they from somewhere?

Beverly Sylve:

No, he was from Slidell.

John Crane:

Slidell. Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Okay.

Chris Proctor:

How long were you married?

Beverly Sylve:

I was married to him for about maybe five or six years.

Chris Proctor:

Just long enough?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm. I would just say five or six years.

John Crane:

Can you think of anything else? We don't want to keep you too late today.

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, don't worry. Listen, this is your time. This is y'all time.

John Crane:

Well, you're the one that's giving us the-

Beverly Sylve:

This is your time.

John Crane:

What are some other things, some other stories that you think you'd like to record to keep in the history of Old Mandeville or Mandeville? You were talking about the Weisheit's store. What did that look like inside? What did the store look like?

Beverly Sylve:

The store?

John Crane:

Yeah.

Beverly Sylve:

The new one?

John Crane:

The Weisheit store that you were talking about that was around the corner on Madison. Was it a big building or small building?

Beverly Sylve:

It was a size of the ... let me see, that flea market that burned down in Covington.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

It was that size, and the floors was like that. The wooden floors.

John Crane:

Wooden floors, sure. Kind of ...

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Uh-huh, up and down.

John Crane:

What sort of things did they sell in there? Was it just groceries or did they sell hardware or?

Beverly Sylve:

They sold some clothes in there.

John Crane:

Clothes.

Beverly Sylve:

Uh-huh, but I always did like to go and get that cheese and they sliced the cheese.

Chris Proctor:

Oh, yeah.

Beverly Sylve:

Ooh, ooh. And they had those big old Jack cookies.

Chris Proctor:

Jack?

Beverly Sylve:

The cheese and the Jack cookies. I loved that.

John Crane:

When you're talking about a Jack ?

Beverly Sylve:

Round them Jack cookies.

Chris Proctor:

That was a brand that we had in the south.

John Crane:

Huh.

Chris Proctor:

Jack's Cookies.

John Crane:

Oh, okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

Chris Proctor:

Our old neighbor used to be a Jack's cookie distributor.

John Crane:

Oh, really?

Beverly Sylve:

Uh huh.

Chris Proctor:

When I grew up, yeah.

John Crane:

Oh, really. Okay. Yeah. I never knew that.

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, you didn't?

Chris Proctor:

Yeah. They had such good stuff.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

Chris Proctor:

Bolo bars.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

Chris Proctor:

Remember that?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Ooh, yes they did.

John Crane:

So would you go to that store every day just about or not?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, we was going to the store every day.

John Crane:

Every day.

Beverly Sylve:

We used, it was a path between the church in the hall. We had a path that we go through in the woods and we just come out to the store.

John Crane:

Right in front of the store.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

The store, when did it disappear? That building's no longer there, I don't think.

Beverly Sylve:

No. It's been a long time.

John Crane:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm. And I've been up here about 30-something years now.

John Crane:

I met a woman, Ms. Evelyn. What was her last name? And I think her parents owned that store.

Beverly Sylve:

That's right.

John Crane:

She was a Weisheit, I think. But her name now is, I want to say Chenier or something like that.

Beverly Sylve:

Uh-huh. She had that little trailer park across the highway in Mandeville.

John Crane:

Right.

Beverly Sylve:

Uh-huh.

John Crane:

Yeah. Anyway, she was telling me about the store, but she never told me what it looked like inside. I guess it was just a wooden building, basically, and they had shelves. Did they have meat as well, or just?

Beverly Sylve:

Meat? Yeah, they had meat.

John Crane:

They had a meat counter, too.

Beverly Sylve:

Uh-Huh,. You go back there and they slice the meat.

John Crane:

Like a deli?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, like a deli. That's the way it were, like a deli. But for like a roast, like chicken and all that. I don't remember them selling that. I remember selling stuff like cold cuts.

John Crane:

Okay, so it was more cold cuts and things like that.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Uh-huh. You make sandwiches.

John Crane:

They had vegetables and things like that?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Or fruit and stuff?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

Chris Proctor:

They probably had a separate meat market you had to go to.

Beverly Sylve:

Hm?

Chris Proctor:

There was probably a separate store that was a meat market, right? Probably.

Beverly Sylve:

Oh. Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Probably it Saia's or something like that.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Yeah.

Beverly Sylve:

Saia's wasn't there in ...

John Crane:

At that time?

Beverly Sylve:

During that time.

John Crane:

It came later.

Beverly Sylve:

It wasn't. Yeah. They had Band's.

John Crane:

Right.

Beverly Sylve:

Band's was a grocery store, too.

John Crane:

Right. On the corner?

Beverly Sylve:

What Jill and her husband has.

John Crane:

Right, and now David McGuire's there.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Yeah. When they widened Florida, did they knock a bunch of houses down to make Florida wide? Didn't it used to be just a two lane road?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, they did. They did the Burns house.

John Crane:

Was it between Ruby's and the road they'd knocked down or was it on the other side?

Beverly Sylve:

Uh-uh. They took part of that road where the Burns was at, and some of them other stores going down 190 and then on the other side, they did. Mm-hmm.

Chris Proctor:

It's a shame right there.

Beverly Sylve:

And they widened It widened.

John Crane:

They widened it.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

Chris Proctor:

Happens all the time.

John Crane:

When you drive up Lamarque Street today, does anything look the same or is it just completely different?

Beverly Sylve:

It's completely different.

John Crane:

Are there some houses that are still there that go way back or most of them all new?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. My mother and them's house. My sister, why nothing haven't been done to it. My sister is buying it. She live in Texas and maybe before the next three weeks that's coming up, we getting ready to finish the paperwork and all that. She going to get it and she going to remodel it.

Chris Proctor:

I love that.

John Crane:

Wow. That'll be great.

Beverly Sylve:

She's the one out the family that wanted it.

Chris Proctor:

What's the address?

Beverly Sylve:

Hm?

Chris Proctor:

What was the address again?

Beverly Sylve:

840.

John Crane:

438?

Beverly Sylve:

I mean, 438.

John Crane:

438, yeah.

Chris Proctor:

438.

John Crane:

The Dew Drop, the Baptist Church, and then it's the next house.

Chris Proctor:

Oh, I love that.

John Crane:

That'll be great.

Chris Proctor:

That's so nice.

John Crane:

That'll be wonderful. I'm trying to think of stuff that I know later, I'll say, "Man, I wish I had asked her that."

Beverly Sylve:

That's okay. We have the time.

John Crane:

Yeah, we might come back and talk to you again.

Beverly Sylve:

You know, anytime. Anytime. But first, Mandeville. I love Mandeville. Mandeville is a beautiful place. Ooh, that lakefront is gorgeous, you hear me?

John Crane:

Did the lakefront change at all in the time you grew up or does it look pretty much the way it did before?

Beverly Sylve:

No, it really changed. Hold on. (cell phone music) That's my niece. Let me tell her I'll call her back.

Hey Cheryl. I'll call you back.

Cheryl:

Okay.

Beverly Sylve:

Bye.

Yeah, the lakefront really changed. The building, the homes and the shrubberies that they have out there.

Chris Proctor:

Changed?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. They got a lot of trees out there now. They got the big oak trees is still out there, but those other trees that they have. They got benches on the lakefront. It's beautiful.

John Crane:

They didn't have that when you were growing up?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-mm, and that little waterfall for the children.

Chris Proctor:

Yeah, that's fun.

Beverly Sylve:

All of that.

John Crane:

There wasn't anything like that?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-mm.

John Crane:

Did a lot of people go to the lakefront when you were growing up?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

So were they fishing out there?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, fishing.

John Crane:

Crabbing?

Beverly Sylve:

But now you don't find people fishing. We used to go out there and fish, too.

John Crane:

What would you catch?

Beverly Sylve:

Croakers. Oh, I love the croakers. Yeah. Catfish.

Chris Proctor:

Did y'all get in the water and swim?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah. We used to swim out there.

John Crane:

Huh.

Chris Proctor:

Did you see any alligators?

Beverly Sylve:

It was beautiful. We used to picnic out there, too, until they opened it up. Until the people from Baton Rouge and Hammond and Covington, and they picnic out there and was shooting and all that and they shut it down.

John Crane:

Oh, really?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Oh, there were fights out there?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm. Shooting and all of that.

Chris Proctor:

I didn't know about that.

Beverly Sylve:

And see, that was our joy to be able to, the people in Mandeville and go out there and picnic and swim and have a good time, but they shut it down and we couldn't do that anymore because of other people. It wasn't the people that live in Mandeville and that's what happened. People from somewhere else come mess up a good thing for people.

John Crane:

Yeah. That sure can happen. That sure can happen.

Beverly Sylve:

But the lakefront, those houses is gorgeous.

Chris Proctor:

I know.

Beverly Sylve:

Beautiful. And the restaurants, oh my God.

John Crane:

Great food.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

Chris Proctor:

I miss the lake house.

John Crane:

Yeah.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm. It is so pleasant. It's pleasant out there.

John Crane:

What were some of the restaurants that were on the lakefront, do you remember when you were growing up? Do you remember? Bechac's you had mentioned?

Beverly Sylve:

It was Bechac's. Wait. Bechac's, Rips, and what is the other one? They had another one.

John Crane:

The Lake House? No, that was Bechac's. Yeah, that was Bechac's. Then there was ...

Beverly Sylve:

Rips. There was Rips and another one all the way down ... what is the name of that? What was the name?

John Crane:

Oh, oh, oh. Somebody told me that it was a hotel, too, wasn't it? What was it called?

Chris Proctor:

Down towards the marina?

John Crane:

No.

Chris Proctor:

The other way?

John Crane:

The other way, I think. It was a hotel and ...

Beverly Sylve:

I forgot the name of it.

John Crane:

Oh, I forgot it too. Somebody had told me that.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, that was in another one. Mm-hmm. But I liked at that drug store that was on the corner, you can go and sit in there and get a fountain drink, ice cream. Yeah.

John Crane:

Did you ever go to the movie theater there? They had a movie theater there, too.

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, yeah. The movie theater, yes.

Chris Proctor:
Where was that?

Beverly Sylve:
That was where this big old recreation center now.

John Crane:
Where Justine is.

Chris Proctor:
Oh.

John Crane:
Across from Don's Bar.

Beverly Sylve:
Yeah.

John Crane:
Across the street from that.

Chris Proctor:
Okay.

Beverly Sylve:
See, when that came in ... What is it called? The other mayor, I can't recall his name, but he bought that place from Foster and they brought it on a boat, on a barge, and it sat out there in the lake for about six or seven months after they tore that old show down and then they brought it in and put it together and fixed it up.

Chris Proctor:
That's amazing.

John Crane:
Yeah, they brought it in by Barge. I think it's from New Iberia.

Beverly Sylve:
That's right. You right.

Chris Proctor:
I've heard y'all talk about that before.

Beverly Sylve:

I went and seen that place when I was doing music. I did a city at, they called it Windsberg. Windsberg. That's when I did this one here over there. I did this one here over there. That was my first name. I didn't like it. Scandalous. I had wrote a song. They called me Scandalous. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. Because I know what to do. Boom, boom, boom, boom. Boom, boom. They call me Scandalous. I can get down, too.

Chris Proctor:

I love it.

John Crane:

Did you ever meet any of the big musicians in New Orleans, like Allen Toussaint and people like that? Did you ever have an opportunity to run across those people or?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, I met a lot of them over there, though. I did. Yeah, I did. Allen Toussaint.

John Crane:

Professor Long-

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, and when B. B. King passed, we did a show on the side of his house the day that they did the parade and I sung over there.

Chris Proctor:

Oh, my god.

John Crane:

Fats Domino or B. B. King? Or Fats Domino.

Beverly Sylve:

Wait, wait. It wasn't B. B. King. It was Fats Domino.

John Crane:

Fats Domino. Yeah.

Beverly Sylve:

Fats Domino. They had that parade. Yeah, Fats Domino.

John Crane:

Right.

Chris Proctor:

Did you ever meet Aaron Neville?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

Chris Proctor:

Yeah?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

Chris Proctor:

That's so cool.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Irma Thomas. I met a lot of them.

Chris Proctor:

That's so cool.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

Yeah, because you were part of a certain time when-

Beverly Sylve:

And the guy that was old, his name is Ken Hill.

John Crane:

Ken Hill.

Beverly Sylve:

Ken Hills. He passed about, oh, I say about three years ago, so everything just went down and I went to help my sister and got in an accident, so.

John Crane:

Okay. You said you grew up Catholic.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Was the church that is here now, was that the same church that you grew up with or?

Beverly Sylve:

Yes.

John Crane:

That was a brand new church in what, 1954 or something like that?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

Do you remember them building that or I guess you would've been pretty young at that time.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, I was pretty young.

John Crane:

Yeah.

Chris Proctor:

You talking about Our Lady of the Lake?

Beverly Sylve:

Our Lady of the Lake.

John Crane:

Mm-hmm.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

Chris Proctor:

Was that the only Catholic church in town?

Beverly Sylve:

That was the only one that we know of. Yeah, that was the only one in town.

John Crane:

Yeah. They had another [inaudible 01:32:01].

Beverly Sylve:

And there used to be a boy's home across the street. The sisters, like people from New Orleans, family from New Orleans used to send their sons. It was a boy's home that the sisters kept and they went to school there and we went to school there, too.

Chris Proctor:

Okay.

John Crane:

That was what, with the holy name hall, that they call the Holy Name Hall now I think.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

Chris Proctor:

What corner is that?

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah.

John Crane:

It's Madison and Lafitte Street. Oh, no. Yeah, Madison and Lafitte. I think that's right.

Chris Proctor:

Okay, so it's back behind the Sweet Olive, in that vicinity?

John Crane:

Yeah, it's a couple houses up that way.

Chris Proctor:

Okay.

John Crane:

So where Maison Lafitte is here and it's across the street.

Chris Proctor:

Okay.

John Crane:

Catty corner.

Beverly Sylve:

And they built a lot of new stuff in there, too.

John Crane:

Yeah, all that stuff.

Beverly Sylve:

It was a two-story place. The boys lived upstairs. The sister lived on the third floor, and they had the cafeteria where we went to school at the bottom floor.

John Crane:

Okay. Did you walk to school or did you ride a bus?

Beverly Sylve:

No, we walked to school over there. Yeah, we walked to school.

Chris Proctor:

Wasn't that far for you?

Beverly Sylve:

No.

John Crane:

It's pretty close for you.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Chris Proctor:

Fascinating. I love hearing all this.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. We loved it. We did.

Chris Proctor:

A different time.

John Crane:

Yeah. Well, listen. I really appreciate you taking this time for us. Is there any story that you want to tell and make sure before we get out of here?

Beverly Sylve:

Let me see. Let me think about way back when.

John Crane:

Well, I know you've got a lot of them, but sometimes they don't all come out at one time.

Beverly Sylve:

I was like seven, eight years old way back then.

Chris Proctor:

May I take a picture?

Beverly Sylve:

Yes.

Chris Proctor:

I'll do another one too, but I like when you're laughing.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. The only thing that I would like to say that when I was coming up, Mandeville was the ideal place to live, the ideal place to raise your children, to raise a family, too. We had some good stuff here.

Chris Proctor:

Yeah.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm. But everything done change. But it changed, you asked me, it changed for the better because we got more opportunities here that we didn't have then.

John Crane:

I think things have changed a lot in the time that you grew up from the 1940s to 2023.

Beverly Sylve:

And I'm 78 now.

John Crane:

The world has changed.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

It's a different world in a lot of ways. It's not perfect, but it's different.

Beverly Sylve:

A lot of places that stores and stuff like shopping and all that, we used to have to go to New Orleans and go out of town to get it. But we got everything here now. The best restaurants here.

John Crane:

Yeah. Got every store. You don't have to go anywhere every time.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah. A lot really have been changed. And the children smarter, you know? Yeah.

Chris Proctor:
School's different.

Beverly Sylve:
Yeah, the school different. Mm-hmm. I'm a people person. I just want to let you all know. I love everybody. I'm a people person.

Chris Proctor:
Well, that shows.

Beverly Sylve:
And another thing too, that Mandeville, Mandeville is beautiful and I love Mandeville. Like my neighbor over here across on the next street. She had surgery somewhere around about the first or the middle of January and she by herself. She'd be walking, walking the dog, and she knew that I had surgery on my knee. She came to the porch and she talked to me because sometimes she don't see me sitting out there because of my knee. She told me she's going to have surgery for her breast, and so I asked her what date. She told me. So I told her, not the day that you have surgery, but the next day, I'm going to do some Cornish hen, green peas, and potato salad or sweet potatoes and send it over to your house, and I did. And when she got better, she came on the porch. She said, "You didn't have to do that." She told me thank you. I said, "That's what neighbor is for."

Chris Proctor:
Exactly.

Beverly Sylve:
If you don't know, you can't do anything, but when you know, you can do what you can do.

Chris Proctor:
Gotcha.

John Crane:
So what was your favorite food when you were growing up?

Beverly Sylve:
They sweet potatoes.

John Crane:
Sweet potatoes?

Beverly Sylve:

An old man lived across the street. His name Albert Crumley. He worked in the restaurant and my daddy used to work in the restaurant. My daddy was a cook, James Foster. He said that James Foster children is the first children that I know eat sweet potato sandwiches. I love sweet potato.

John Crane:

Sweet potato sandwiches?

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm.

John Crane:

So what does that look like?

Beverly Sylve:

See, like you baked sweet potato, but when you got a lot of children, you do things. We used to peel them sweet potatoes, slice them, put them on a piece of bread and just eat them.

Chris Proctor:

Yum.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm. But right now, when I cook, if I'm going to do a baked chicken, mostly whatever I cook, I would like to have candy yam potatoes. I'm just hooked on candy yam potatoes and green peas.

John Crane:

When y'all were growing up, did y'all have vegetable gardens? Did y'all grow any food at all or not much?

Beverly Sylve:

No, we never did.

John Crane:

Never did. Never really had to do it because you had stores all the way back there.

Beverly Sylve:

Mm-hmm. Yeah, we never did.

John Crane:

You probably got your sweet potatoes.

Beverly Sylve:

Yeah, from the store. I love baked sweet potatoes. I eat sweet potatoes in the can. Lord, when you cook, if you cook a roast, I love to have sweet potatoes. If you don't have no potato salad, sweet potatoes and green peas in the meat. Or I eat baked chicken, sweet potatoes and green peas.

Chris Proctor:

Well, I know what I'm having for dinner.

Beverly Sylve:

Or either baked chicken sweet potato. I just love my sweet potato.

Chris Proctor:

Well, it's good for you, too.

John Crane:

I'm glad I asked you because I never heard of the sweet potato sandwich. That was the first.

Beverly Sylve:

They said James Foster children sweet potato sandwich in here.

Chris Proctor:

I never heard of it either.

Beverly Sylve:

We love the sweet potato, mm-hmm. And I'm number one, I'm really hooked on sweet potato. When my friend Ed would be cooking in there and I'd say, "You got the sweet potatoes, huh?"

John Crane:

Let me see how, this thing's still plugging along. Yep. Still going along for that thing right there. We've been at it for two hours and so we've been at it for a while.

Chris Proctor:

Ms. Beverly, I want to get a picture of you somewhere that you want to be so I can do ...

Beverly Sylve:

Okay.

Chris Proctor:

... a standing up thing because you're so pretty.

Beverly Sylve:

Oh, don't say that.

Chris Proctor:

A full view. No, you are.

Beverly Sylve:

78-years-old.

John Crane:

Yeah, but look at [inaudible 01:39:40].

Chris Proctor:

You look like you're 50.

Beverly Sylve:

Okay.

Chris Proctor:

You choose where you like to be. Something pretty you want to stand in front of? I mean, you look good in the chair, but we had all the papers on the table.

Beverly Sylve:

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

Chris Proctor:

How about ...

Beverly Sylve:

Wherever you want, I can put this other light on in here.

Chris Proctor:

Oh, look. That would be pretty in front of the ... wait. Where do you think John, by the cabinet here?

Beverly Sylve:

Wherever you want it at.

John Crane:

Yeah, that's great.

Beverly Sylve:

All right.

Chris Proctor:

How about ...

(inaudible) don't want to be in it.

Beverly Sylve:

You think you have that reflection of the ... you want me to stand up?

Chris Proctor:

It's up to you. You choose.

Beverly Sylve:
Whatever you want.

Chris Proctor:
What would you like to do? Why don't you stand up then? We can do it on your front porch if you want.

Beverly Sylve:
Okay.

Chris Proctor:
The light was good out there.

Beverly Sylve:
Yeah, that's what I would worry about because this going to have a glow.

John Crane:
I'm going to sign this off because we'll lose it but let me just, before you go out there real quick. I want to thank Miss Beverly Sylve for her oral history and I'm glad that she said that we might be able to come back.

Beverly Sylve:
Oh, yeah, yeah.

John Crane:
But we've learned a lot. We've learned about the sons and daughters, we've learned about a lot of things about Mandeville, and we really appreciate you giving us this history that we can add to our collection of things that people will remember hopefully a long, long time from now. Thank you very much.

Beverly Sylve:
Thank you.

John Crane:
Okay.

Beverly Sylve:
Okay.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:41:01]

Addendum:
This is John Crane – the date is Feb 27th 2023. And this is an addendum to our oral history with Ms Beverly Foster Sylve which we took at her home on Feb 26th 2023. Sunday yesterday.

Ms Sylve called me to give me an update. I had asked her during the interview if there was anything in particular she would like to be remembered or to have people remember about Mandeville. And she called me to let me know that she wanted people to remember that she was the first black woman ever to have a CD made (a music CD made) of her group which was called "The Element". And this is something that she wanted make sure was recorded in history so I add this to her oral history with her permission. Thank you. Bye bye.