

Gardena Emanuel

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Interviewer: Ruth Terwilliger
Transcribers: Janena Benjamin, February 2006 and Laura Cabbage-Draper, June 2019
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Abstract: Gardena M. Emanuel (1898-1990) was born in Far Rockaway, New York to Rose and Edward Brinney; she was the oldest of five children. Mrs. Emanuel moved to Metuchen following her marriage to Anthony Emanuel on February 18, 1916. Anthony Emanuel, who worked for the Manning Freeman & Son Coal Company, died of pneumonia shortly after the birth of their son Alston in 1917. Alston Emanuel graduated from Metuchen High School in 1935.

Mrs. Emanuel originally boarded with the Milligan family at 76 Myrtle Avenue before moving with her husband to 301 Durham Avenue. Following her husband's death, she designed her own house at 219 Central Avenue in 1928. Mrs. Emanuel was active at New Hope Baptist Church in the choir, chorus, missionary, and was a Sunday school teacher for fifty years. She was a member and trustee of the Republican Club in Metuchen, Black Voices in Metuchen, and the Metuchen Branch of the NAACP where she was a recipient of the NAACP Freedom Fund Award for Distinguished Service in 1988. Mrs. Emanuel is buried in Franklin Memorial Park in North Brunswick.

During this interview, Mrs. Emanuel discusses her family background, moving to Metuchen, and carrying out day's work for several local families in Metuchen. She also touches upon her shopping activities, her involvement with the church, and designing her home at 219 Central Avenue.

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R. Terwilliger: Tonight we're going to interview Gardena Emanuel, who lives at 219 Central Avenue in Metuchen, and today's date is September 19, 1978. [recording paused]

Gardena, were you born in Metuchen or someplace other than here?

G. Emanuel: No, Far Rockaway [Queens], New York.

R. Terwilliger: Far Rockaway?

G. Emanuel: Far Rockaway.

R. Terwilliger: Far Rockaway. And how many children were in your family?

G. Emanuel: Well, my mother had eight, but there were several of them died at infants, and there were only five of us grown.

R. Terwilliger: I see. And could you break that down? Were there girls—how many girls and how many boys?

G. Emanuel: Just two girls—

R. Terwilliger: Two girls and three boys.

G. Emanuel: —three boys.

R. Terwilliger: And Far Rockaway, what was that like back?

G. Emanuel: That's the beach. Far Rockaway is the beach.

R. Terwilliger: Did you live near the beach then?

G. Emanuel: Yes, yes. We just lived a few blocks from the beach, the Rockaway Beach.

R. Terwilliger: And was it a very populated area then?

G. Emanuel: Oh yes. It's like Coney Island.

R. Terwilliger: I've never been to Far Rockaway.

G. Emanuel: You know it's like Coney Island—not as many—not attraction, but I mean, the beach is like Coney Island.

R. Terwilliger: And what was your mother's name?

G. Emanuel: Rose.

R. Terwilliger: Rose. And your father's name?

G. Emanuel: Edward.

R. Terwilliger: Edward. And your last name, your maiden name?

G. Emanuel: Brinney.

R. Terwilliger: Brinney?

G. Emanuel: Brinney.

R. Terwilliger: Uh-huh. And what did your dad do for a living?

G. Emanuel: He was a boatman. He worked on a boat.

R. Terwilliger: A boatman? So did you spend a lot of time down near the water or on the beaches?

- G. Emanuel:** Well, as much as we could. As much as we could, we stayed on the beach.
- R. Terwilliger: And how long did you live in Far Rockaway?
- G. Emanuel:** I lived there until I was sixteen, and that's been, you know, about fourteen or sixteen.
- R. Terwilliger: And did you go to some school there?
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah, I went to [Far] Rockaway School.
- R. Terwilliger: You went to Rockaway School. And would you say that your family was a close family?
- G. Emanuel:** Well yes, my father died when I was quite young. But we were close, we were close.
- R. Terwilliger: And your mother had to raise this family then by herself?
- G. Emanuel:** By herself, yes.
- R. Terwilliger: So she also probably had to work?
- G. Emanuel:** And I stopped school and went to work to help her because I was the oldest.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, you were the oldest in this family.
- G. Emanuel:** The oldest in the family.
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah, so you did have to help her.
- G. Emanuel:** Yes, I had to help her.
- R. Terwilliger: Do you remember your childhood as a happy time in your life?
- G. Emanuel:** Yes, yes it was happy. We were poor, but we were happy.
- R. Terwilliger: Well, being poor doesn't necessarily mean being unhappy.
- G. Emanuel:** No. No.
- R. Terwilliger: I came from very meager background myself.
- G. Emanuel:** I mean, we were never on the welfare or anything like that. We worked for whatever we got. We worked for it.
- R. Terwilliger: And did you celebrate the normal holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving?
- G. Emanuel:** Oh yes. Yes.
- R. Terwilliger: And it was a happy family life together?

G. Emanuel: Um-hm, um-hm.

R. Terwilliger: And what kind of work did you do when you stopped school and went to work?

G. Emanuel: Well I babysit and washed dishes and did things like that.

R. Terwilliger: So you were a professional homemaker from way back. [laughs]

G. Emanuel: From way back, yes.

R. Terwilliger: Whoever got you, got you well-trained.

G. Emanuel: Well I don't know, but that's what I did.

R. Terwilliger: Did you have to help them with taking care of your brothers and sisters?

G. Emanuel: You mean financially?

R. Terwilliger: No, I mean with the care of them.

G. Emanuel: Oh yes.

R. Terwilliger: Was your mother also a domestic then? Is that what she did?

G. Emanuel: Well, my mother was a schoolteacher at one time. Then she had to stop when she got married and had children. And then she was—I don't know what you call her—a cook in a hotel. In Rockaway, they had big hotels. They would come down for the summer. It was a summer resort. Far Rockaway is a summer resort place and she'd cook in the hotel.

R. Terwilliger: Do you remember what hotel that was there?

G. Emanuel: No, I don't remember now the names of them, because I haven't been back there in years in Rockaway.

R. Terwilliger: Oh, it probably is so changed now—

G. Emanuel: Oh I know.

R. Terwilliger: —that you wouldn't recognize it as the same place.

G. Emanuel: No. No.

R. Terwilliger: Now was this an area that were mostly all black people, where you lived?

G. Emanuel: Oh no.

R. Terwilliger: It was integrated?

G. Emanuel: At one time, we were the only black family that lived there.

R. Terwilliger: Is that right? Oh, that's interesting to know.

- G. Emanuel:** **At one time, and then it came on just like Metuchen. Usually they were—years ago, there weren't many in Metuchen. But now Metuchen is full.**
- R. Terwilliger: Yes, it really is. So then as a young girl, you don't remember any problems about your being black, that caused you any problems?
- G. Emanuel:** **Oh no.**
- R. Terwilliger: People were always kind?
- G. Emanuel:** **Oh yes.**
- R. Terwilliger: I can't see them being otherwise, just even the little bit I know you.
- G. Emanuel:** **No, no we didn't have any problems.**
- R. Terwilliger: And was your family the kind of family who always belonged—had close ties with your church?
- G. Emanuel:** **Well, my grandmother did. My mother [Rose (Johnson) Brinney], she wasn't as churchy as I am. [laughs] She went when she wanted to go, but you know.**
- R. Terwilliger: Did your grandmother live with you?
- G. Emanuel:** **Yes. Well my grandmother came from the South, and she would come up every summer and she would work in the hotels. And in the winter, she went back down south.**
- R. Terwilliger: Could you tell me where she came from in the South?
- G. Emanuel:** **She came from South Carolina.**
- R. Terwilliger: I see. Can you talk a little bit then about your *Roots* as Alex [Haley's] beautiful story on TV? Did you watch that, Gardena?
- G. Emanuel:** **Yes. Yes, I did.**
- R. Terwilliger: And do you feel it was pretty truly done, that this is some of the problems that black people do have?
- G. Emanuel:** **Well, I feel that it is, but I never experienced it.**
- R. Terwilliger: How about your grandmother? Did she ever talk about her childhood?
- G. Emanuel:** **No, no. Not as hardship.**
- R. Terwilliger: Did she live on a farm or did you ever hear where she came from in the South?
- G. Emanuel:** **Well she lived in the city, in the city, in the city.**

R. Terwilliger: Is any of your background rooted to the Old South and working for on farms or anything like that?

G. Emanuel: No, not that I know of.

R. Terwilliger: Not that you can recall. So your grandmother must have married someone down there? This was grandmother on your mother's side?

G. Emanuel: On my mother's side, yeah.

R. Terwilliger: And how did you mother come north?

G. Emanuel: Well just like the girls come north to work, I guess that's the way she came.

R. Terwilliger: Did she meet your father up here?

G. Emanuel: Yes, he was from Philadelphia [Pennsylvania]. And then she never went back.

R. Terwilliger: She never did.

G. Emanuel: And that's why we never went there, so therefore I know nothing about it.

R. Terwilliger: You know nothing about the South then?

G. Emanuel: No.

R. Terwilliger: You never visited with your grandmother in the South?

G. Emanuel: No. Nope, I went there when she died and I was there for oh, about a week. Just when she died. And then I've never been back. Just the first time.

R. Terwilliger: And did you like the South?

G. Emanuel: Well, it was all right. [laughs] And you know at that time, it was mourning and so I didn't see, you know.

R. Terwilliger: You weren't looking at it like you would on a vacation or something like that.

G. Emanuel: Oh no. No.

R. Terwilliger: And then at what age—or when did you—how did you meet your husband?

G. Emanuel: In New York.

R. Terwilliger: In New York?

G. Emanuel: In New York, we were married. And then I came to Metuchen.

R. Terwilliger: How did you ever decide to come to Metuchen?

G. Emanuel: He worked in Metuchen.

- R. Terwilliger: Oh, where did he work?
- Mrs. Emanuel: He worked at Freeman [Manning Freeman & Son at 707 Middlesex Avenue], you know the coal. Yeah, he was a driver on coal tracks.**
- R. Terwilliger: I see. Where was that located, the Freeman Coal?
- G. Emanuel: That was located—you know where the—right across from the Celotex [Corporation at 700 Middlesex Avenue].**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh yeah, yeah, right. It was right next to the railroad [Pennsylvania Railroad] there then. And that was called Freeman Coal and they delivered coal all in this area then, I guess.
- G. Emanuel: Yes, Freeman Coal, um-hm.**
- R. Terwilliger: Well, can you tell me anything about what Metuchen was like—this was what, about 1916, you say?
- G. Emanuel: Yes, um-hm.**
- R. Terwilliger: And was it this house that you came to?
- G. Emanuel: Oh, no, no. When I came as a bride, we boarded in South Metuchen and a family, the Milligans—**
- R. Terwilliger: Milligans?
- G. Emanuel: Milligans, yes. Did you know Percy Milligan?**
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah sure, very well!
- G. Emanuel: His mother [Mary Milligan]. We boarded with his mother. And then we got a little apartment down [301] Durham Avenue and stayed in there and then I moved in—my husband when he—after he died, then I started working and then I built this house [at 219 Central Avenue].**
- R. Terwilliger: You built this house? Oh my goodness, I didn't know that!
- G. Emanuel: Um-hm, piece by piece! [laughs]**
- R. Terwilliger: My gracious, that's really remarkable. Go back to when you were first married and lived in Metuchen, must have been a very quiet sleepy little town back then.
- G. Emanuel: It was, a very dark town too. You never went out at night.**
- R. Terwilliger: Really? There weren't many streetlights?
- G. Emanuel: No and there were so many trees, not very few houses. We lived down in South Metuchen and that wasn't built up at all.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, I can imagine. Was there a lot of land around Mrs. Milligan's house?

G. Emanuel: **Yes. Yes, not so much on that street but coming towards town there was. And that was on [76] Myrtle Avenue, a little house down Myrtle Avenue. It's right near the playground.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh yeah. I know exactly where that is. And how soon after you were married did you have your first baby, your boy?

G. Emanuel: **About a little over a year.**

R. Terwilliger: Little over a year. That's so nice and what is his name?

G. Emanuel: **Alston.**

R. Terwilliger: Alston. What a beautiful name. You have such beautiful names in your family. What was your husband's name?

G. Emanuel: **Anthony.**

R. Terwilliger: Anthony Emanuel. Anthony is a little bit unusual for a black person to name a child, wasn't it?

G. Emanuel: **Yeah, well they name them now all kinds of names!**

R. Terwilliger: But mostly, you know I've always heard these beautiful biblical names that they usually name their children. But he was Anthony Emanuel? And he was from Philadelphia?

G. Emanuel: **No. My father was from Philadelphia.**

R. Terwilliger: Oh, your father was from Philadelphia.

G. Emanuel: **I don't want all of my history on there. I'd rather have my background on that.**

R. Terwilliger: Where was Anthony from?

G. Emanuel: **New York.**

R. Terwilliger: From New York. And then you moved to an apartment up on Durham Avenue?

G. Emanuel: **Little house. You say apartment, but it was a little—then they didn't have apartments out here. It was a little house, a little three-room house on Durham Avenue.**

R. Terwilliger: That's very nice. And can you remember all—you didn't work then when you were first married?

G. Emanuel: **No.**

R. Terwilliger: No. You just took care of your boy and took care of home. Can you tell me at all of what your life was like?

G. Emanuel: Well I worked, afterwards.

R. Terwilliger: I mean when you were a young girl and just had your boy, and you just took care of your home.

G. Emanuel: Well, my life was all right. It was all right just like a—you know they weren't making too much money at that time.

R. Terwilliger: No, they were bad years.

G. Emanuel: You existed though. We got along, um-hm.

R. Terwilliger: But your husband had work every day?

G. Emanuel: Yes. He worked, yeah.

R. Terwilliger: [At] Freeman. Did he die young?

G. Emanuel: Yes, he died. He died young. He was a little older than I was. I'm not telling you how old he was, because then you'll know how old I am.

R. Terwilliger: I don't really want to know that. [laughs]

G. Emanuel: But I don't even want it on the tape. [laughs]

R. Terwilliger: No. But he died a young man and you were left widowed?

G. Emanuel: Yeah, yeah, from then on.

R. Terwilliger: How old was your boy when he died?

G. Emanuel: He was just under a year.

R. Terwilliger: Oh my gracious, really? Then you've had a lot of years of being on your own. I didn't realize that, I thought you were going to say maybe he was about sixteen or seventeen.

G. Emanuel: Oh no. Not quite a year old then.

R. Terwilliger: And what did he die from, Gardena?

G. Emanuel: Well, they said pneumonia. But in those days, you didn't know. When they die, you don't do it [an autopsy] and the doctor said pneumonia.

R. Terwilliger: Did you have a local doctor to look after him?

Mrs. Emanuel: No, he died in New York with his family when he was taken sick, and that was just a little too much for me.

R. Terwilliger: I see. Back home? Right. Then how long did you stay on Durham Avenue after he died?

G. Emanuel: Oh, I stayed on Durham Avenue for I guess about nine years in that little house.

- R. Terwilliger: Do you think his death could be at all linked with the fact that he worked with coal and coal dust got into his lungs or anything like that?
- G. Emanuel: Well that I don't know. I just wouldn't say that.**
- R. Terwilliger: But it was a respiratory kind of thing that he died of?
- G. Emanuel: That's what they told me. They thought it was pneumonia.**
- R. Terwilliger: And what did you do then after he died with this little infant son?
- G. Emanuel: Then I went to work.**
- R. Terwilliger: Then you started to work. And do you remember any of the families that you worked for?
- G. Emanuel: Well, the first family I worked for—oh, I did day's work so I worked with different families. I worked for the Robins [family at 443 Middlesex Avenue] and I worked for [Police] Chief [Willard] Hutchinson [at 32 Plainfield Avenue], which you've heard about.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh yeah. Oh sure, I know them.
- G. Emanuel: And from one to another. I worked for the Littersts [Louise and Elizabeth Litterst].**
- R. Terwilliger: The Litterst sisters? I just interviewed them not too long ago. They're in a nursing home.
- G. Emanuel: Yeah, I know. Oh, I worked for them for years and years. And they had the tearoom. I ran the tearoom for them.**
- R. Terwilliger: Up at the Ramble Inn [at 36 Middlesex Avenue]? Oh, I lived right near there.
- G. Emanuel: Oh, you do?**
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah, I lived right down toward Metuchen in the old Ten Eyck house [at 108 Middlesex Avenue]. I don't know whether you know Russell Ten Eyck?
- G. Emanuel: Oh yes, yes. That's right there at the railroad [Port Reading Railroad]. Oh yes!**
- R. Terwilliger: Right, yeah. Well when I came to Metuchen, my dad bought that house from Mr. Ten Eyck in 1939. And I worked up in the tearoom as a teenager.
- G. Emanuel: Oh, you did? In the tearoom? Well I don't see why you didn't know me.**
- R. Terwilliger: Well, I only worked there a short while. I worked, oh maybe for about a year, after school. Well I probably do know you because I remember seeing a black woman up there.

- G. Emanuel:** Well, they had another one, but not in the tearoom. Ida White, she was a laundress; she did the housework. And I went up and I did the ironing, and then I helped with the tearoom. And when they [the Litterst sisters] went on a vacation, I ran the tearoom.
- R. Terwilliger: That's wonderful. That was a nice place, wasn't it?
- G. Emanuel:** It was nice, yes.
- R. Terwilliger: But you probably worked very hard. They were quite busy.
- G. Emanuel:** It was hard and especially when they were away, because I had all of it to do alone, you see. When they were there, they were the two of them and I would go up and help wait.
- R. Terwilliger: And they served lunch?
- G. Emanuel:** No, they started with tea.
- R. Terwilliger: Tea, right. That's right.
- G. Emanuel:** And then they went into lunch (tea and lunch), and then they went into dinner.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh my goodness, I never realized that.
- G. Emanuel:** Oh yeah, they had—and parties.
- R. Terwilliger: And a lot of people in town came there to have lunch and dinner?
- G. Emanuel:** Oh yes, and parties. They had—a lot of people had their bridge clubs and parties.
- R. Terwilliger: Do you remember the names of any people that you met through working there that were old Metuchen families.
- G. Emanuel:** Oh, well I know the Halvorsens [at 141 East Chestnut Avenue], and the Potters [at 379 Middlesex Avenue], Mrs. Do Potter [phonetic], the Rueggers [at 245 East Chestnut Avenue], you know—oh, the Whitakers [at 64 Linden Avenue]. Oh, there was a lot of them.
- R. Terwilliger: Mrs. Buchanan.
- G. Emanuel:** Yes, Dolly.
- R. Terwilliger: Dolly Buchanan.
- G. Emanuel:** Yes, I know her well. We went to church together.
- R. Terwilliger: I know Dolly well too. [laughs] My husband [George Terwilliger] replaced Mr. [W. Franklin] Buchanan as borough engineer in Metuchen. Oh, I am so pleased. And it was such a nice transition because Dolly and I are good friends. As a young girl when I was first married, my husband went to work for Mr. Buchanan as a young engineer

when he was still going to school. And they always had a fine relationship, but I never dreamt at that time that one day he–

G. Emanuel: –would take his place. Well that’s what they do, you know. You work on and finally you work yourself up and you get in.

R. Terwilliger: Right. Well it’s very nice and I hope he can do the job that Mr. Buchanan did because he was a fine engineer.

G. Emanuel: Oh yeah, he will. Mr. Buchanan was there so many years.

R. Terwilliger: Yes. What did they say? Twenty-nine years, I think it was.

G. Emanuel: Twenty-nine years. I know when they had the celebration, yeah.

R. Terwilliger: Did you go to that, Gardena?

G. Emanuel: No, no I didn’t go. I worked. You see, I used to do catering work too.

R. Terwilliger: Oh my gracious.

G. Emanuel: And then I missed out on a lot of functions sometimes.

R. Terwilliger: Well you look so wonderful and so young for all your years of responsibility and hard work.

G. Emanuel: Well I had responsibilities all right.

R. Terwilliger: Now, did your son go to Metuchen schools?

G. Emanuel: Oh yes. He graduated all of them¹.

R. Terwilliger: From Metuchen High School?

G. Emanuel: Then he went to Perth Amboy Junior College and then he finished up at Lincoln [University] in Pennsylvania.

R. Terwilliger: What does he do today?

G. Emanuel: He works for the government. He started off as a–I don’t know what [he] started off as [speaking softly]. Because when he started off the work, it was during the Depression. And he worked with the ammunition, then he got to be a foreman, and then he went to Maryland. They sent him to Maryland to some college to take up more. And now he in St. Louis [Missouri], he teaches. He travels from arsenals–not all the time, but whenever they need somebody.

R. Terwilliger: Somebody for instruction or something.

G. Emanuel: Yeah. He travels, he does that. And he has his own office; he does clerical work.

¹ Alston Emanuel graduated from Metuchen High School in 1935.

- R. Terwilliger: Well, that's great. You must be very proud of him.
- G. Emanuel: Well, I don't see him enough to be proud of him. [laughs]**
- R. Terwilliger: Well, he must know that you're a person who can really take care of herself.
- G. Emanuel: Oh yes, he knows I can take care of myself.**
- R. Terwilliger: He doesn't have to worry about you. But let's just stop for a minute now. [recording paused]
- So Gardena, as a young girl and a young mother and when you had your young son, where did you go shopping in Metuchen?
- G. Emanuel: You mean grocery shopping?**
- R. Terwilliger: Grocery shopping.
- G. Emanuel: The A&P.**
- R. Terwilliger: The A&P was on Main Street, you said, where the bakery shop is now. Did you have a car then?
- G. Emanuel: Oh no.**
- R. Terwilliger: No, you walked every place you went then or neighbors helped you out?
- G. Emanuel: Um-hm, or a taxi. You could get a taxi then for fifty cents or thirty-five cents.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh my goodness! Did you ever go out of town for any of your shopping?
- G. Emanuel: Yes, I used to go to Perth Amboy. Yeah, I used to take the bus. They used to have the little-**
- R. Terwilliger: Trolley?
- G. Emanuel: Yeah, we used to call it the "little dinky." [We'd] run up and we'd catch that at Durham Avenue and Main [Street]. Then we'd walk to Amboy Avenue, and then we would catch a trolley from Amboy Avenue into Perth Amboy so we could do all our shopping. And then in years later, we used to go to New Brunswick. And that's the only place that we'd shop-New Brunswick. They were mostly-I used to go to Perth Amboy.**
- R. Terwilliger: That was almost the big city from Metuchen to do clothing shopping and that kind of thing.
- G. Emanuel: And then I used to go to the market. They used to have an open market in Perth Amboy at State Street.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh yeah, I remember that.
- G. Emanuel: I used to go down there for flower shopping.**

- R. Terwilliger: Did you work every day at that time?
- G. Emanuel: At that time, I worked every day.**
- R. Terwilliger: And who took care of your son?
- G. Emanuel: I used to take him with me. And then if I didn't take him with me, why once in a while, when the weather was bad, one of the neighbors would take him. I'd have to pay them, but they would take him. And then I had a sister [Rose (Brinney) Wright], because as I said, there was only two girls and when my mother died, she didn't want the girls to be separated. And I was only married about a couple months when my mother died, so then my sister came and lived with me.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, that must have been helpful.
- G. Emanuel: And she was younger, she's six years younger than I, and well she went to school. And then days when I couldn't take him, she would take him off. If I took him to a sitter (what they call a sitter now), when she came from school, she would take him home till I got there. I used to get home at five, five-thirty—from nine to five.**
- R. Terwilliger: That must have been very, very hard though.
- G. Emanuel: Then I used to do, as I said, I used to do catering work and then I would work at nights. Sometimes didn't get home until two, three o'clock in the morning.**
- R. Terwilliger: Doing this catering work?
- G. Emanuel: Um-hm. I used to—I catered for the Allisons [at 93 Hillside Avenue]. Did you know the Allisons? Junior Ramsey—no, Betty Ramsey [phonetic], well she was an Allison.**
- R. Terwilliger: I see.
- G. Emanuel: I catered for one of their weddings, I think it was Doreen but anyhow [speaking softly].**
- R. Terwilliger: Did your sister help you with your catering?
- G. Emanuel: Yes. When she got old enough, she helped.**
- R. Terwilliger: And did you prepare all the food and everything?
- G. Emanuel: Well I did most of it. Some places I did all of it, and then some place I—**
- R. Terwilliger: So you really know how to order and how to handle food?
- G. Emanuel: Well I don't know if I do now. [laughs]**
- R. Terwilliger: But back then you could.

G. Emanuel: Yes, back then I could. And then, the Mooks [at 231 East Chestnut Avenue]—I figured I had the whole wedding of Mrs. Charles Mook [Ruth Mook], her daughter’s [wedding]. I did all that cooking at home for her daughter, but most of them I went—

R. Terwilliger: Was that the Mrs. Mook that lived up on Chestnut Avenue?

G. Emanuel: Yeah, that just died.

R. Terwilliger: Ruth? Yes. I did an interview with Ruth also.

G. Emanuel: Oh, you did. You mean Ruth, senior?

R. Terwilliger: Ruth senior, yeah. She was my Girl Scout leader as a girl. She was active in girl scouts all the years. And I went to school with Caryl [Mook], the one that had polio.

G. Emanuel: Yeah, well I catered Caryl’s wedding too. She married a McNeill.

R. Terwilliger: Right. She lives down Philadelphia area. Right, so we have a lot of mutual friends, Gardena.

G. Emanuel: Yes, yes, funny I—what was your name?

R. Terwilliger: My name was Ruth Melillo before I was married. But I went to school with all those girls.

G. Emanuel: Well, my son was in Betty Mook’s class, Betty Mook’s class².

R. Terwilliger: She was what about three or four years older than Caryl? What year did your son graduate, do you remember?

G. Emanuel: I don’t know. [laughs]

R. Terwilliger: Because Caryl and I graduated in 1948.

G. Emanuel: Yeah well Caryl was—of course, Betty was the oldest, then they had Ruth and then Caryl. Yeah.

R. Terwilliger: I don’t remember Betty that much. I remember Ruth, but Caryl was the one I spent most time with.

G. Emanuel: Caryl, she’s a sweet girl. She loved me. She used to—oh, she’d come and cry on my shoulder. And my mother made her angry or something, she’d run to me. Now I worked for Craigs. Did you know the Craigs, didn’t you? In the house right—that big house on the corner [at 82 Linden Avenue]?

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes. Yeah right, I didn’t know them very well.

G. Emanuel: Well, I was the maid there. When the Depression came and so many of the people’s husbands was out of work and what not, so then I didn’t have so many

² Elizabeth “Betty” Mook graduated from Metuchen High School in 1934.

day's work. So then I went as the maid at Craigs, and I was there for twenty-five years as a maid.

R. Terwilliger: Oh my goodness! You must be a very loyal person all these years.

G. Emanuel: As a maid! They built that house and they moved in—we all moved in the same house. They engaged me before they went. I did work for them before they moved there, and then I moved in there and it was twenty-five years.

R. Terwilliger: Were you a live-in maid then, did you live with them?

G. Emanuel: Yes.

R. Terwilliger: Oh, you did?

G. Emanuel: I did. You see, my sister was here then; she took care of the house [at 219 Central Avenue]. She was married and she took care of the house. And I lived in there for twenty-five [years]. Even now I can't—

R. Terwilliger: —believe that it was that long.

G. Emanuel: I worked for forty years.

R. Terwilliger: My gracious.

G. Emanuel: Because then after her husband [Percy Garfield Craig] died, she [Edith May (Mook) Craig] stayed in the house two years—she was allowed to stay there two years. And then she bought a little house on Library Place. And then I did day's work for her. I didn't stay, but I did day's work.

R. Terwilliger: She was in that last house next to where the nuns are.

G. Emanuel: Um-hm. I call it the first house.

R. Terwilliger: The first house, yeah. [laughs]

G. Emanuel: And it's the last one too, of the Kaiser [phonetic] daughter. They bought it and live there.

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, they live there now; I'm trying to think of what their last name is. I work in the library and they come over a lot.

G. Emanuel: I don't know them.

R. Terwilliger: But I do remember Mrs. Craig being there.

G. Emanuel: Oh, well I worked there until she died. It was so sudden. It was such a shock to me when she died.

R. Terwilliger: Well, you must have been like family to these people.

- G. Emanuel:** I was, I was. I went to the funeral right in the cars with them, and the weddings, I went right with them. I always had to be right with the family, just like the family.
- R. Terwilliger: When you're with someone for twenty-five years, that's a long time and you must be considered part of the family.
- G. Emanuel:** As I say, I worked forty years for them all together, but I was a sleep-in maid for twenty-five years in that house.
- R. Terwilliger: That was a pretty little house they had.
- G. Emanuel:** A little house! It was a big house! [recording paused]
- R. Terwilliger: I'll ask you again, because I don't think it was on the other side, how you came to build this house here? You said you bought the property from—
- G. Emanuel:** The Litterst.
- R. Terwilliger: He was a lawyer?
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah. George Litterst, the lawyer. There was two of them, Alex [Alexander] and George. That's the girls' father and uncle.
- R. Terwilliger: And you bought the property from him? This was his property?
- G. Emanuel:** He owned quite a bit of this property [speaking softly].
- R. Terwilliger: Did you have house plans drawn up?
- G. Emanuel:** No, I drew my own. I was my own architect and I guess I was something, because I'd change it and change it. [laughs] But anyhow, I knew what I wanted. And finally I got what I wanted. I know I came from walking from work—I used to walk from Durham Avenue down—and I got to the corner and upstairs I saw they had a window cut in and I didn't want that window. So down the street I came and said, "No." [laughs] And so of course they took it out. And then when the furnace man was here, when he got to the stage where they were putting the heat in, I came to see about where they were going to put the ducts over the floor and this [man] answers, "Who is she?" The carpenter said, "That's the boss." "What, as young as she is!" [laughs] He was so surprised.
- R. Terwilliger: What year did you build this house?
- G. Emanuel:** Twenty-eight.
- R. Terwilliger: Nineteen hundred twenty-eight. And do you remember who the men were that built it? Their names?
- G. Emanuel:** Well, the Flemings [phonetic] built it with the carpenter. And then I had various different ones, you know—
- R. Terwilliger: —for the electrical?

- G. Emanuel:** I know the plumber was Roland [phonetic]. He lived on Highland Avenue. Did you know the plumbers?
- R. Terwilliger: Oh yes.
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah, well he put the plumbing in. And I can't think of the name who did the electrician. He used to live on Amboy Avenue in a little shack.
- R. Terwilliger: I don't remember that name. And how long did it take them to build the house?
- G. Emanuel:** Well they started in—I think they started in March and I moved in the last of November.
- R. Terwilliger: Well you had your first Christmas in here then.
- G. Emanuel:** Yes. Yes.
- R. Terwilliger: And did you have your boy with you then?
- G. Emanuel:** Oh yes.
- R. Terwilliger: That's right, you said he brought his friends here from school.
- G. Emanuel:** Oh yes. He lived here until he's married. All my children lived here until they got married, all of them.
- R. Terwilliger: And how many children did you have?
- G. Emanuel:** The one.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, the one. But you mean your grandchildren?
- G. Emanuel:** Well I say the grand because the grand was born here. When he married, him and his wife [Ida Emanuel] lived here and the grandchildren was born here. And they stayed here even when the mother and father went, they still stayed.
- R. Terwilliger: You must have something special that all these kids love you so much.
- G. Emanuel:** Well, I don't know.
- R. Terwilliger: You must make good cookies or something that keeps them around.
- G. Emanuel:** I don't know, but they stayed when they got married.
- R. Terwilliger: What do you think about the difference in children today from when you raised your children? Do you think parents are too easy or were you strict?
- G. Emanuel:** No. Well, everybody said I was too easy.
- R. Terwilliger: Too easy?

- G. Emanuel:** Too easy. They all said I was too easy because I went without to give to them. And I had to in order to send them to school and they all went to college. And so they said I was too easy. I did more for them. They don't do anything for me now. And if I didn't do all that, I wouldn't have to even work now.
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah, but you're not sorry for it at all.
- G. Emanuel:** Oh no. No, because I'm not in work. I've never been on relief or never had to ask for anything. I worked for everything I got.
- R. Terwilliger: Have people been good to you?
- G. Emanuel:** Oh yes. All the places I've worked have been very good to me.
- R. Terwilliger: So now it's just you here alone?
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah. Well, my sister died; it will be twelve years—it's going in the twelfth year. And she lived with me all that time.
- R. Terwilliger: Well, she lived with you all of her growing years.
- G. Emanuel:** Yes, oh yes, yeah. Even after she got married, her and her husband [James Wright] lived here.
- R. Terwilliger: You sure had an open home for everyone. You must have—
- G. Emanuel:** And he's very good—her husband, my brother-in-law—he's very good to me, very good. He does whatever he can for me. He cuts the lawn out there. He doesn't take care of the flowers. He doesn't bend his back. [laughs]
- R. Terwilliger: Does he live locally?
- G. Emanuel:** He lives in town, but he doesn't live with—but he has a room here and he keeps his clothing, things like that. And he comes and watches over me. He fishes, he goes fishing and he brings me fish. And on the way up there, he passes a fruit stand or vegetables, he'll bring them—a basket of apples, or, you know.
- R. Terwilliger: How do you manage to do your shopping in that now? Do you still walk?
- G. Emanuel:** Oh, I walk, yes. Well I don't have to do too much shopping, just for me alone. But what I do is when I come—I walk—but when I come through the town, I'll stop and get one or two things and the next day I stop. I love to shop, so I walk to the store even if I don't buy nothing; I like it—and compare prices, you know. And I do that and then some of the places I work, they bring me home and they always say, "Now do you want to stop and do any shopping?" And they'll stop and take me to the bank. And my brother-in-law, if he's around and not fishing, he'll take me to Redfield Village. Otherwise I have to get a taxi or bus. But even if I get a taxi or bus, they pay for it, you know, the people pay for it. So I make out.
- R. Terwilliger: Do you feel parents today are not strict enough with their children? I mean, there are so many problems—

- G. Emanuel:** Yes, yes. Oh yes, they're not strict enough. Children just do anything they want to do. Because I teach at Sunday school, and even if you say anything to the parents, they'll say, "Well--." Like the children miss Sunday school, you say to the parents why they missed and you'd like to have them come. They'll tell you, "Well if they want to come, they can come, and if they don't--." Now when mine was coming, it wasn't if they wanted to go. I taught Sunday school and we went to Sunday school. They had to go to Sunday school. They're not so churchy now.
- R. Terwilliger: Did you feel that religion was an important part of your son's life?
- G. Emanuel:** Oh yes. Yes. But as I say, they don't attend so much. Now one of my girls, she was an organist in the church, and they were all brought up in the church. My son, he ushered and he taught Sunday school for a while. And my girls taught Sunday school, they ushered, they sang in the choir.
- R. Terwilliger: Now what church is this?
- G. Emanuel:** New Hope [Baptist Church], Reverend Dale's [phonetic].
- R. Terwilliger: The New Hope. Right, I know Reverend Dale [phonetic].
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah, but the children do not come. We have trouble getting them to come.
- R. Terwilliger: That's really too bad.
- G. Emanuel:** It is. But years ago, they used to love to come to Sunday school. I don't know--
- R. Terwilliger: Well, it was almost a part of their social life now.
- G. Emanuel:** Now they have other things.
- R. Terwilliger: Other things that they do so that it's almost like a chore more than a pleasure to go. And it is difficult. I know my youngest boy is sixteen and to get him to go to church on Sunday, as you say, I don't ask him if he's going to go, I just tell him to get dressed, we're going to whatever service it is.
- G. Emanuel:** Now my grandson there--they just went to Puerto Rico in June [unclear] after school [speaking softly]. He spent the weekend with me. They lived in town but he spent the weekend with me because he had to go to church on Sunday mornings. Now if he stayed home, his mother doesn't make him go to church.
- R. Terwilliger: So it's not just the children's fault then, it's the parents?
- G. Emanuel:** Oh no, I think mostly it's the parents. We used to have such a wonderful Sunday school, a lot of children, of course there's--and there plenty of children in town. They all don't come--they come when they want to, when they don't want to.
- R. Terwilliger: Did you know Walter Qualls that was the councilman?
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah, sure. He lived two doors from the church.
- R. Terwilliger: From the church, yeah. But he doesn't go to that church, I don't believe.

- G. Emanuel:** No, but his children come to our Sunday school.
- R. Terwilliger: And do they come then quite regularly?
- G. Emanuel:** The children? Oh, the children come quite regularly, yes. And they come—the mother and father come—every time the children are performing. You know, Christmas, they come, and Easter.
- R. Terwilliger: I've been invited to come.
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah, well you love to come. We'd love to have you.
- R. Terwilliger: Who plays your organ? Lottie Minor.?
- G. Emanuel:** Francis? Well, she [Lottie Minor] doesn't play now, but she used to.
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah, well Lottie Minor and Reverend Dale [phonetic] invited me to come, and I want to come some Sunday.
- G. Emanuel:** Well, I'll invite you to come too.
- R. Terwilliger: I'd love to come.
- G. Emanuel:** We have a beautiful church, have you seen it?
- R. Terwilliger: Yes, I had to take pictures of it when I did Perry Letsinger's tape.
- G. Emanuel:** Not my church. I think his is Second Baptist [Church].
- R. Terwilliger: Second Baptist, yes. But we took them of the New Hope for some reason. I don't know who I did that was connected with your church, but we took them of that church also.
- G. Emanuel:** But I have a big window up there.
- R. Terwilliger: It's a beautiful church. We have one picture of it at Christmas time with those beautiful doors and the green wreathes on the doors.
- G. Emanuel:** Oh yeah. That's outside.
- R. Terwilliger: Yes. It looks really lovely in the picture. And you spend a lot of time there, I understand.
- G. Emanuel:** Oh yes.
- R. Terwilliger: You're a Sunday school teacher and what else—do you belong to some of the—?
- G. Emanuel:** I belong to everything proper in the church. I sing in the Gospel chorus and I've been a member of that for, I think this year is our thirty-fifth year since it was organized. And Lottie was our first organist. And the missionary—I'm president of missionary, serving two terms; I'm the president of the choir (two terms) and I

used to sing in the choir and the chorus. Now you either sing in one or the other. And what else—oh, I'm secretary of the flower club. And I was financial secretary for the church for thirty-six years, thirty-six years.

R. Terwilliger: Oh my gracious! My goodness, they must really miss your help now that you've given up some of those things.

G. Emanuel: Well I couldn't do it now because, you know they mean, we have children coming from colleges, teachers and what not, and we do it in more of a—you know what I mean—those years we did it in our crude way. We did it right, but you know.

R. Terwilliger: Right, but now they have such sophisticated bookkeeping.

G. Emanuel: Yes, yes, and I don't type. And this is one of my plaques up there on the wall, if you want to see it.

R. Terwilliger: Oh, I'd like to. Let me turn this off. [recording paused]

Gardena, I see you have two beautiful plaques on your wall for your loyal church service. The one there that says you attended Sunday school with perfect attendance for ten years, were there Sundays when you didn't feel so good and you made yourself go?

G. Emanuel: Well, I don't know. I can't remember now. [laughs]

R. Terwilliger: But that's a long time to go perfectly.

G. Emanuel: But I did go, yes.

R. Terwilliger: What are your feelings about church work?

G. Emanuel: Oh, I love church work.

R. Terwilliger: And is it just the personal satisfaction or do you really feel strongly about doing God's work?

G. Emanuel: Oh yes, yes. And I attend the prayer meeting every week. One thing—I don't walk to church now after dark.

R. Terwilliger: Oh no, I don't think I would.

G. Emanuel: Somebody picks me up and brings me back. But I can remember the time before we built our church, I used to walk up there. Our church was right in the back of where the new church is now [at 45 Hampton Street]. I'd go up there for prayer meeting and nobody would show up. And I'd go in there and sit and wait a while, open the door, turn the lights on and stay there for a while, come out, put the lights out and then walk home. But I wouldn't dare to do it now. Probably would be all right, but I wouldn't dare to do it.

R. Terwilliger: I've never heard of—

G. Emanuel: The thoughts of it.

R. Terwilliger: It's just that we live so threatened by everything today

G. Emanuel: Yeah, and they all say, "Don't do it, don't do it."

R. Terwilliger: Yes, yeah. But I used to, even as a girl, you know where I used to live by the Ramble Inn, and I used to walk all the way to the Y [Young Mens' Christian Association (YMCA) at 65 High Street].

G. Emanuel: I used to walk from Durham Avenue up to the Littersts to work. I used to walk [unclear]. Do you remember when they used to have the horse and buggy?

R. Terwilliger: The Litterst girls? Oh yes, yeah. And across the street from them was the Richmond [phonetic] family. Do you remember the Richmonds [phonetic], who had the horses? They used to have a little riding ring out front.

G. Emanuel: Yes, yes. And then did you know the—

R. Terwilliger: Who lived next door to them, I was trying to think?

G. Emanuel: In the big house right across from there was the Kennedys—the Kennedys, I think she's still alive.

R. Terwilliger: Is she really?

G. Emanuel: I think Marguerite is, but I haven't heard. She used to send me a card—

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE 1]

G. Emanuel: [recording begins mid-sentence] ... Carter and I think she's still alive, her mother and father. And then there used to be—

R. Terwilliger: Yes. Did you know the Wemetts then? Harry [Harrison] and Helen Wemett [at 224 Middlesex Avenue]?

G. Emanuel: Oh yeah. Yeah, and the Corbins.

R. Terwilliger: And the Corbins, yeah. Well that's where I use to play all the time as a girl. Harry Wemett, they never had children of their own, so he kind of adopted my brother and I. We used to have the best time in those barns and on those horses and running those fields. But it was a beautiful town then.

G. Emanuel: Yes, it was beautiful. And they used to have that wooden bridge, you know the one—

R. Terwilliger: Oh yes, going over the railroad, right. Yeah, we used to run out on the bridge when a steam engine would come along so we could stand in the smoke. Can you imagine anything so silly? [laughs] But we used to love to just disappear in that smoke when it came under the bridge. It would come up in a big puff.

- G. Emanuel:** I used to work for Mrs. Kennedy across the street.
- R. Terwilliger: Uh-huh. Did you ever work for the Wemetts?
- G. Emanuel:** No.
- R. Terwilliger: No. I don't know who they had, where they had domestic help.
- G. Emanuel:** They had Camilla, a girl named Camilla. She's down south. She lived down south, yeah. And they also had Alice Thompson.
- R. Terwilliger: But that was another beautiful home.
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah. Oh yes.
- R. Terwilliger: It was really, really lovely. And they certainly shaped my life with allowing us children to enjoy that farm life like we did. We'd bring fresh eggs home and he had a big garden and we always went home. I keep trying to remember the name of the man that worked for him, that took care of all his animals and his farm. He lived out back in the barn, I don't know whether he lived there all the time, but he had a room that had a pot-belly stove in it. He used to make us hot chocolate.
- G. Emanuel:** I don't know. I never worked for them—I knew them. I didn't [unclear] because they always had—
- R. Terwilliger: Did you ever work for the Cockefairs [phonetic]? Do you remember the Cockefairs [phonetic]?
- G. Emanuel:** On Amboy Avenue?
- R. Terwilliger: Well these lived on the corner by Grove [Avenue] and Middlesex [Avenue], just down toward Main [Street] from the Wemetts in that kind of a stucco English Tudor house; [it] had a little pond out front.
- G. Emanuel:** You know the Pecks.
- R. Terwilliger: Oh yeah, oh yeah. They were on [280] Grove Avenue. Right. And the Hanfords [at 279 Middlesex Avenue].
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah, the Hanfords, yes. They used to be a Cock-something?
- R. Terwilliger: Cockefair used to be with the [Metuchen] Building & Loan [Association], years ago.
- G. Emanuel:** Seems to me that I remember that name, yes. But I didn't know them.
- R. Terwilliger: But you used to walk all the way from Durham up Middlesex Avenue?
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah. Not every time, but when they couldn't come for me, yes. Oh sure.
- R. Terwilliger: Do you think winters used to be—

- G. Emanuel:** **Nothing like it used to be! Last winter was a pretty bad winter. But I can remember walking to work with snow above my knees—above my knees!**
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah, that's right; up the center of Middlesex Avenue because people didn't shovel their sidewalks right away.
- G. Emanuel:** **No, and then I remember the plow. You know the horse and the man would stand on it and this wooden plow would plow a path.**
- R. Terwilliger: Oh, that must have been beautiful to see.
- G. Emanuel:** **It was beautiful, but it was cold.**
- R. Terwilliger: Did you ever have a ride in the Litterst girls' buggy—horse and buggy?
- G. Emanuel:** **Oh yes. Oh, they used to come for me. I mean, when they could get out to do it, they would come, oh yes.**
- R. Terwilliger: That must have been nice to be able to ride up and the clop-clop of the horses. They were happy days weren't they, Gardena?
- G. Emanuel:** **Yeah, they were happy days, they were happy days. Hard days, but happy. And I had more those days it seems like than I have now.**
- R. Terwilliger: Well, life was so much more simpler.
- G. Emanuel:** **Well, food and things wasn't so expensive.**
- R. Terwilliger: Yes. Do you have any kind of a pension or anything now to help you out?
- G. Emanuel:** **Oh, I get social security but that's not a—**
- R. Terwilliger: It's not very much in today's world.
- G. Emanuel:** **Not too much. I don't get no pension because you don't get a pension from day's work. Of course, years ago, I could have gone to the arsenal or into the hospitals and things like that, but I never like working in a crowd.**
- R. Terwilliger: You're a very private person. I understand that.
- G. Emanuel:** **Yeah. Oh, I don't like a crowd and I'm very kind of—you know sometimes I go to a meeting, I used to go to meetings and I'd sit there the whole night and not say one word.**
- R. Terwilliger: I like you for that. [laughs]
- G. Emanuel:** **Not one word. And they would say, they'd say, "You haven't said a word since you've been here." And I'd say, "Yes, but I know everything you said."**
- R. Terwilliger: Why do you feel like that, Gardena?

- G. Emanuel:** I really don't know. I think because growing up I never was allowed to play with children. I never was—I can't remember whether I wasn't allowed, but there weren't children around. When I went to school, I went home, I had my chores to do and I never mingled. Even now as old as I am, I go to meeting—I was at a meeting last night, teacher's meeting—I don't think I said three words. And of course if anybody said anything to me, I answer them. But I mean just—
- R. Terwilliger: It's not that you're antisocial or snobbish or anything, it's just that you're a very private person who enjoys listening.
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah. And then of course I was at the Middlesex Convention at the [unclear] Convention Baptist; I was superintendent, assistant president of that. I had to talk a little bit there, but I still was shy. I never did any more talking than I had to.
- R. Terwilliger: Well, I think that's terribly important. Let me just check this [tape], Gardena. We have a little bit of time left. I think that's terribly important because you seem to me the kind of person who kind of mind your own business, but got the job done.
- G. Emanuel:** Yes, but then I am the kind of person—don't wrong me because when I do get angry, I'm angry.
- R. Terwilliger: Well that's very healthy. [laughs]
- G. Emanuel:** Yeah, I'm angry when I'm angry, you know. Just don't bother me, you know what I mean.
- R. Terwilliger: Well you seem to have a wonderful grasp on life and what is important, Gardena. Can I please ask you this question about—what do attribute your peacefulness and your good happy life that you've lived and you've been successful in what you've done—what do you think is important to being a good person?
- G. Emanuel:** Well I think to believe in God. I've always, always believed in God. And I've always—my church always came first, always did.
- R. Terwilliger: Do you pray every day?
- G. Emanuel:** Oh yes, I pray. In fact, I walk along the street and pray. Not that I'm so good, but I do now because when the children was coming up enough, I'd be walking along the street and I'd pray and thank God for this or that and they used to say, "Who you talking to?" You know some time I would say something out loud or they'd hear me mumbling or something, they say, "Who you talking to?" And then they'd laugh., and then they'd come back and tell the other one or tell their mother or daddies, "Grandma was talking to herself, she was walking along just talking." And I sing a lot, I sing a lot. Even at work when I'm working, I especially I get—I sing how good God has been to me and I just feel so happy and I just sing, sing, sing.
- R. Terwilliger: That's beautiful.
- G. Emanuel:** So many of my friends say, "I just love to hear you sing." And then sometimes when I don't sing, they say, "Are you sick or is something the matter? You're not

singing today.” But sometimes, every time I sing, I’m not happy. Sometimes I sing when I’m sad too. You know, when I’m trying to get my mind off some sad doings.

R. Terwilliger: And does it help, Gardena?

G. Emanuel: Oh, it helps me.

R. Terwilliger: Gee, maybe I should try it. [laughs]

G. Emanuel: But it helps me. I don’t know.

R. Terwilliger: And you haven’t been lonely all these years without a companion?

G. Emanuel: Oh yes. No, not without a companion, but I’ve been lonely in the house.

R. Terwilliger: You mean these years alone, you’ve been lonely.

G. Emanuel: Yes, I’ve been lonely in the house.

R. Terwilliger: I’ll come visit you anytime.

G. Emanuel: Well, that would be very nice. And then especially now since the girl and her son are gone.

R. Terwilliger: Yes, that must be a big void.

G. Emanuel: So it was—I think, you know what I think is—I said you know then if I get sick during the night, you can call your cousin or aunt or child or something, but I have no one to call.

R. Terwilliger: You call me. You’ve got lots of friends.

G. Emanuel: Well some of them said. But you know lots of time people say, “Call me, call me,” but lots of time they don’t mean it. I find that out they don’t mean it. But I haven’t had to call. Well one day, I called my brother-in-law and I couldn’t get him. I called the neighbors. I had a nosebleed. I suffer with high blood pressure—not bad—but I do have high blood pressure. I go to the doctor and get a check-up when he tells me. But this time I woke up, I got up out of the bed—I didn’t wake up, I was awake, but I didn’t know it. But as soon as I got up, the blood just began to pour, just like—oh, it just poured!

R. Terwilliger: Oh, that must have been frightening for you all alone.

G. Emanuel: It was frightening. And I ran to the bathroom and ran and grabbed the towels, and it just didn’t, just kept—I couldn’t stop it, just couldn’t. So then I called the girl over next door and then she took me to the emergency. By the time I got to the emergency, it stopped it. They didn’t know what was wrong with me. They said my pressure had gone up, the blood.

R. Terwilliger: But your pressure had gone up and caused it to bleed?

- G. Emanuel:** Oh yes.
- R. Terwilliger: Do you take medicine for your high blood pressure?
- G. Emanuel:** Oh yes, yeah.
- R. Terwilliger: You have to watch your salt and diet a little bit? You're so nice and slim—do you work at that?
- G. Emanuel:** No, no.
- R. Terwilliger: No. You've never had to watch you weight?
- G. Emanuel:** No, not had to. I'm stouter now than I've ever been.
- R. Terwilliger: You've always been very slim.
- G. Emanuel:** Real slim, yeah. And they say that if my nose hadn't bled like that, I probably would have had a stroke.
- R. Terwilliger: Yeah, that was probably God's way of saving you.
- G. Emanuel:** What caused it—I don't know what caused the pressure to go up.
- R. Terwilliger: But you still didn't answer my question all the way about what do you think is important to living a good life. You said believing in God. God's the center.
- G. Emanuel:** Well, I think that's the most important. I think that's the most important to have something that you believe, and something that you hold on to, and something that you trust. You put your trust in God.
- R. Terwilliger: Yes. Did you always have that, Gardena? Or was that something that through years of experience—
- G. Emanuel:** Well, it's something that grew. No, when I was younger, I was like anybody else. I went to parties and danced, and I had a good time. I used to go to Perth Amboy and danced and had fun. We used to have parties here, the girls used to have their records, you know, particularly music. And I would dance with them. And my son and I, we used to dance a lot. He liked to take me out. Every once in a while, he'd say, "Ma, get dressed. I'm taking you out." And we'd go down—he'd take me down to Asbury Park [New Jersey] and we'd have a good time, once in a while.
- R. Terwilliger: So that this shows that you know all sides of life. It wasn't like you've lived like a saint all these years.
- G. Emanuel:** Oh, no. No. And then I used to go every once in a while to the Republican's Dinner Dance. And I danced. I was the only—I don't like the word black, but colored or Negro.
- R. Terwilliger: You like colored better? Oh, I'm sorry.

G. Emanuel: No, no, no, I don't mean to you. But I mean just ordinarily, yes. I'm the only one, I'm the only black [that] belongs [to the Republicans].

R. Terwilliger: I'm Democrat and Lottie Minor is.

G. Emanuel: Is the only—well Perry [Letsinger].

R. Terwilliger: Or Perry, yeah.

G. Emanuel: No, but I'm the only one. Sometimes I get razzed about from my friends because all of them are ... [recording ends]

[END OF INTERVIEW]