

EMMAUS HOUSE-PEOPLESTOWN DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

Interview with: Silva Griggs Britt
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LEEANN LANDS: Would you introduce yourself and tell me your history with Emmaus House?

SILVA BRITT: My name is Silva Griggs Britt. I have been a part of Emmaus House since 1968. I was ten, and I became one of the little children going to the summer program. And I had never had any experience like that before. And so I thought it was kind of neat, you know, all the different people I got to meet as a young girl growing up through Emmaus House. I remember the first time going on a plane ride. We went to Jekyll Island, and that was in 1968—[my] first time on the plane. And I thought, wow! I couldn't believe that I had a chance to get on a plane. And I noticed that a lot throughout my history at Emmaus House. It was so much that I had a chance to do that without Emmaus House I would've gotten to do—and my children too. And also some things I've been through—I remember going on the picket lines with Father [Austin] Ford and Mrs. [Ethel Mae] Matthews. And I remember Father Ford was saying, "Silva, come up." You know, I would come up to the front because I had a big voice. I would sing [those] freedom songs real loud. [I] just lov[ed] holding my picket sign—you know, just being a part of history. So at that time, you know, I didn't know everything that it was about, but I knew it was something important. And I didn't know that I would be like making history until later in life. So just getting the chance to do that, and also getting the chance to go to Camp Mikell [in Toccoa, Georgia] during the summer. They used to take us shopping and buy us [an] outfit, pajamas, toothbrush, toothpaste, tennis shoes, socks, and have our bags packed already on the beds at Camp Mikell when we got there. And it was just so much fun. You know, it's just hard to explain. It was just so much fun to be able to do that.

And I think it was the year of 1970 Father Ford asked my mom if I could go to the private school up in Buckhead—Galloway School. And my mom said, "Yes." So that was [a] new experience, going to school with the white people [laughs]. You know it was just new, you know. It was scary because I remember having a teacher in my fifth grade year telling me that,

¹ The Emmaus House-Peoplestown oral histories are edited to provide reading clarity while preserving the interview's conversational tone and the speakers' speech patterns.

you know, white people are smarter than black people. And so it was scary going to school. But I found out—half a day after being up at Galloway School—that was a lie, so it didn't take me long to figure that out. I went to Galloway [and] it was hard first couple of years—trying to just protect myself from all the criticism from some of the students, and, you know, all the ridicule from some of the students. But it was a lot of people who were very nice, who helped me make it through that. So I stayed there and graduated in 1976 from Galloway.

Another thing I remember growing up at Emmaus House was my momma, “Mrs. [Margaret] Griggs,” was in charge of the baby feeding program. We would go to the Richway up here on Jonesboro Road and just buy all this baby food—baby food, milk, fruit, vegetables. And on Friday nights, the women would come by and get a bag of food for their kids, and I would be here helping my mom pass out the food to the ladies for their kids. It was just something fun to do. I just enjoyed going to the Rich Way with momma and shopping for all this baby food and bring back here. You got to separate everything, you know, and then you got to bag up everything. So, it was fun. I can't remember exactly what year that was.

Then, I think in 1972. Father Ford talked my mom into running for [Atlanta] Board of Education, and she did. And she won. So that was another big thing. You know, it's just good. And I remember my mom also getting in trouble because I was going to the private school. When she was on the Board of Education [for the] public school, and so they was talking about, you know, impeaching her and all this stuff. Actually, I wasn't worried. I just know it was going on, but it didn't worry me. You know, I ended up staying at Galloway and she ended up staying on the board. As a matter of fact, she was re-elected for another four years. But it was, you know, all the opportunities that we got coming up through Emmaus House was just a wonderful.

Some of the people that I met [are] still in my life right now. My best friend [Mabie Sutledge], my godmother, Mrs. Johnnie Brown, I met her here when I was eleven. She was so nice to me, she was so good, she was so calm. And the way she talked to me made me feel so relaxed, made me feel so good. And, even when she was chastising me, it was in such a loving way, you know.

So then, when I started going to church up here, I would just get up—[I] didn't go to church with my mom—I would get up, get myself dressed, walk to Emmaus House to go to church. I think I started ten, eleven years old. I'm still going to church here. I would go to church. And then I started to bring my sister. My sister is down-syndrome, but I would start getting her dressed and go to church with me—bring her up here. Then, I started with my nieces and nephews getting them dressed and bringing them up here—so, you know, it's like a family thing now. Mae Helen Johnson is my sister-in-law, and her kids are the kids that I'm referring to. We're all still part of the Emmaus House chapel, but, you know—I know I'm getting all off—going back and forth and everything. But my best friend in the world, Mabie Sutledge, I

met her here. I think I was like 13 and she was like 19. She came from California as a counselor and [I] didn't like her, [and] she didn't like me. But the one thing we had in common was Johnnie Brown. After I found out that she loved Johnny Brown just as much as I did, we became the best of friends. We would have choir rehearsal at Mrs. Brown's house, and Mabie would pick us up from school—from Galloway. We'd drop off all the other kids. And I know on Mondays when Mabie picked us up I got the front seat because, you know, she would be there, and we were best friends. And so, I got to sit in the front seat with her on Mondays. I'd do that. And then we'd go to Mrs. Brown's house for choir rehearsal—those were the best times because I got to be with the two people that seemed like, you know, were just so close to me.

LANDS: What was her name again?

BRITT: Mabie, M-A-B-I-E. And right now, to this day, we are still close. She visits me every year. I try to go see her, but, you know, I hate to fly. So she comes every year to see me. As a matter of fact, I had surgery in March, and she came to stay with me [and] to take me to the hospital—to stay with me for a few days. We still talk to each other daily. She is like my best friend, my sister. So, the people that I met, you know, I've seen people come and go because I've been here for so many years. I've seen people come and go, but she was one who just stayed and in her mind and in her spirit and in everything. She stayed, you know, her body was gone but she was still here—her presence was still here. And is still here now and I love her [and] that's so important.

I also met my husband here. We grew up at Emmaus House. I met him I think when I was 11 and he was like 13. You know, we was friends and, you know, started dating later—ending up getting married.

I was baptized here, I think when I was 12. And when I had my kids, they were baptized here. They had so many opportunities that they would've never had if it hadn't been for Emmaus House—going to camp in Maine for the summer. [They] would never have gotten a chance to do that if it hadn't been for Emmaus House, you know. And so the people they met doing that, you know—the friends they got doing that. And so, Emmaus House—it's like Father Ford, he was just so loyal to this community, to the people, and especially to the children. And right now, me and him, we are still best of friends. As a matter of fact, I talked to him the other day. I need to go see him. I love him like a second daddy. I know he cares about me [and] cares about what's going on with me. He's worried about me now because of my back surgeries. He's really worried. He's just was so wonderful. And he just changed my life. Emmaus House changed my life. And, right now, sometimes I think I want to go to another church, [but] I can't leave. I can't leave Emmaus House. I tried to leave and go to other churches, [but I] always came back here. I can't leave it. I remember living here for about a semester in college. I was going to Spelman College I lived over in the cottage—[the] Poverty Rights Office. You know,

we had rooms where I lived there for a little while. And that was fun, you know—felt like I was grown.

LANDS: And you were an intern when you were living in the cottage?

BRITT: No, not really. I was just a student, and I just had been a part of Emmaus House. And Father Ford just asked me would I like to just live up here for a semester—just to get me out the house, out of my Momma’s house. You know, it was nice because we would have dinner together. Everybody had nights to cook dinner, and we’d all sit at the table and talk and have dinner. So, you know, it was just nice. I think Ray Quinnely was my roommate here at that time. It was just something different that I knew I wouldn’t experience if it hadn’t been for Father Ford and this Emmaus House. So, it’s like a home away from home, you know.

I remember when I used to would come up and answer the phones because [Emmaus House] stayed open from 8 in the morning until at 11 at night. [We] didn’t close the doors, you know, you had somebody. You had a person on the phone—not a machine. I’m old school, and that’s always good to be able to just talk to a person, you know; instead of talking to some machines. So, somebody was always here from 8 a.m. until 11 p.m.. I remember being here answering the phone, you know. And we’d have to clean up when you’re on the late night duty. You had to cleanup and make sure everything was closed up—all of that just helped me. I don’t know what else to say.

LANDS: When you were a child here at Emmaus, did y’all live in Peoplestown?

BRITT: I lived in Peoplestown.

LANDS: And since your mom introduced you to Emmaus House, can you talk about her for a second? Just paint a picture of your mom for me—besides the school board.

BRITT: Momma was kind of rough. She didn’t take too much. I remember when I didn’t like Mabie and Mabie didn’t like me. My momma was up here for some reason, and Mabie was talking about me to one of the other staff members—talking about how rude I was and everything—hostile. That was the word. [She talked about] how hostile I was and everything. So the guy was trying to point at Mabie—like, “look that’s her momma.” [Laughs.] “Mabie,” said my momma, “I teach her to be hostile because this [is] a hostile world, and I want her to be able to take care of herself and handle herself!” So then Mabie go, “But I really like her.” But momma was tough like that and strong-willed and kind of spoke her mind.

LANDS: How did she end up here at Emmaus House, do you know?

BRITT: Well, I don’t know if we got flyers or if Father Ford was just walking the neighborhood— I know folks thought he was a crazy white man, you know, walking the neighborhoods. So, all I know is, my momma said, “Okay, you going to start going to a summer

program at a place called Emmaus House up the street.” I was like, “okay,” and I came up here—me and my brother [Michael] We both came together and it was kind of rough. It was kind of hard, you know, the kids and everything. Because, you know, I wasn’t this outgoing [person]. I didn’t know a lot of people, and they seemed to be closer to Emmaus House, like [from] Washington Street. So, everybody knew each other, so it was hard because I was kind of quiet. It’s hard to kind of make friends. And, you know, folks made fun of me and stuff because I didn’t do the things they did. [I’m] kind of quiet [and] I didn’t, you know, do the things. I didn’t dance, and I didn’t do all this other stuff. But it got easier and easier as the years went by.

I became a counselor, a junior counselor. I remember going to Camp Mikell [and] being 14, being a counselor at 14 and having like seven or eight girls I was in charge of. We were great. We were the best group, you know. I’m not just saying that everybody saying that. We were the best! My group was always in order. Our cabin was always clean, you know. Everyone always talked about, “Silva got a good group.” Sister Marie [Mimi Bodell], she was hard. She was rough, oh God. But, I guess you have to be, you know, especially when you have so many children, you know. That’s a lot of responsibility when you got people’s children away from home. You want to make sure they’re all right. She used to tell us, “I will send you counselors home. This is not for you.” You know, we were kids, but we were more mature than it seemed like 14 years old kids are today. We were real mature, and we didn’t want to come home because we just enjoyed it so much. So whatever she said do, we did it. But we knew what we could get away with and stuff. She was strong too, but, you know, that’s how we heard about Emmaus House.

I remember the story about Mrs. Matthews, because Father Ford would just be in his yard working and see you walking down the street and he’d stop you and start talking to you. So, Mrs. Matthews was like “What is wrong with this crazy man, here?” [Then] he started talking about [a] welfare rights program here at Emmaus House. And Mrs. Matthews was in charge of that. So, you know, we got to know that he was serious. He was for real. He wasn’t out here to spy or anything else, you know. He was real. He was caring.

And, you know, he used to have Christmas parties, New Year’s parties every year. It was a big thing, you know—music and everything. So that, when I got old enough to go to that, you know, that was fun. It took me a while to get there. But, I can’t tell you exactly how my momma met him because I think when he first got here I was like nine and just playing in the streets and stuff.

LANDS: So you were in at least one of the protests singing. Was your mom involved with the Welfare Rights Organization or any of that organizing?

BRITT: I don’t remember her being involved in that. I just remember my momma being a part of the that baby feeding [program] and, you know, being elected on the board of education—

going through that whole process and everything. But I was up here a whole lot more. I was up here a lot—all the time, you know. So I was up here when she probably didn't even know where I was. I was at Emmaus House. [It was] just where I came for some peace. This where I came for some support, you know. This is where I came. It was like home, you know. It felt like home, you know. As a matter of fact, that's my used-to-be-husband. [Points to picture on wall.] He's not my husband anymore. On the end, over this way. Yes, the last one—the white t-shirt on the end.

LANDS: The very last one?

BRITT: Yes.

LANDS: So what did you do in the summer programs?

BRITT: We used to have summer programs at, I forget the name of the school, but it was on Pryor Road. They closed that school down, and we would do like the basics. We always make sure we have some math, reading—

LANDS: So it was a *school* summer program?

BRITT: In the mornings and in the evening, we would go on field trips somewhere or swimming. We always did something fun in the evening, you know. So, that's the way it was fun. I liked summer programs. I liked being a counselor in the summer programs, you know.

I liked doing the protests marches and stuff. I went on more than one. I went on a few of them, and I was always singing loud—I remember that.

LANDS: Do you remember types of things y'all were protesting?

BRITT: Probably welfare, you know. Welfare and education, you know. You know, going to school together. And I'm thinking that's why we were really able to go to school in Buckhead, the [minority to majority bussing] program. I went to Galloway the year before that.

LANDS: Now *Armor v. Nix* has occurred by then. You mentioned that.

BRITT: Yes, that was what we were protesting at the time, you know. Really, at the time, [I] didn't know how important [it was]. I just thought it was fun being out there singing, you know. At that time, you know, I just thought it was just fun.

LANDS: When you're a child, does Emmaus House have the afterschool program along with the summer program? So did you start coming to the afterschool program too?

BRITT: Yes, because I was up here all the time, you know. If it was any program that I could go to, I would be up here, you know. Yes, we had after school programs—having snacks

always. They always fed us. We always ate, you know. They always fed us, and they always had somebody here to help us with our homework. It's really a lot. It's different now, you know. I'm not up there as much now as I was then, you know. But, yes, we had school programs to help with the homework and stuff.

LANDS: Gene Ferguson was telling me more about the boys programs, which your husband and your brother probably were part of. And the programs had names?

BRITT: Oh, first we had the junior teenage group. We had the senior teenage group. I was just a little afraid of the senior teenage group because I was just so quiet, so timid. I didn't just do the things, you know. I wasn't into boys, you know. So I didn't want to be a part of that group, but I became a part of the junior teenage group. So they might have been a little younger than I was—maybe a couple of years or so younger than I was. I couldn't hang with the bigger groups, the older groups. But he would kind of watch out for me [and] wouldn't let anybody bother me and stuff. Then, we had a group, the Liberators—now that was the best group right there.

LANDS: And that's boys and girls?

BRITT: Boys and girls. Liberators was both boys and girls. But I do remember the junior teenagers [and] senior teenagers. We had different programs, because I remember them taking the senior teenagers to Washington D.C.. We would ride on the Emmaus House bus. And we had this guy named Ralph—he would help Father Ford drive, and it was amazing how they'd switch up. They didn't stop the bus. One would just get up, and one would just slide in and the bus keep moving. I didn't go to Washington, but I did go to like New York. We went to New York on the bus, and we went to New Orleans. I remember going to New Orleans, and it was fun, but it was tragic too. Because we had some kids that died, drowned. Yes, that was a hard trip right there.

LANDS: One of the other people I interviewed mentioned "Among Ourselves"?

BRITT: "Among Ourselves." Yes.

LANDS: Is that a different age group, or is it a different time period?

BRITT: Just a different time. Yes, [a] different time, you know, around the same age. I remember that group too. I can't remember who was in it. It's just been so many names, you know. We wanted a name. We'd, you know, get a name.

LANDS: So, it was like having a club?

BRITT: I remember Sue Taylor. She was taking classes at Georgia State, and she had put on some kind of play. So, she came and got us to put on a play. Oh, they loved it. We were good. We had to write it and everything, you know. So, we wrote the play. Then, we performed the

play at Georgia State. It was so much fun. And that was the Liberators that did that. Yes, some of us from the Liberators.

LANDS: What was your play about?

BRITT: [It was] about the neighborhood. Oh, it was about the country store. I was the owner of the country store. So I was a grandmamma. And, then, I had my granddaughter working with me in the store. And, then, somebody come in to rob the store. But, grandma, I was bad. Grandma was bad [laughs]. Grandma reached up under the counter, you know. She was talking. I was just talking. I said, “Baby you’d bring me a bag of flour?” You know, [I was] talking to the little granddaughter or whatever. I forget who that was, but I reached up under my counter—because the man come in wanting to rob the store—I reached up under the counter, grabbed my shotgun, pointed it at him, said a few words to him, you know. He had to leave because my shotgun was kind of intimidating. So, it was just about that, you know. That was fun. So, we wrote it and did it. [We] gave everybody their parts and casting and everything [laughs]. That was fun. It was fun. I think, how old was I then, I was about fifteen. And everybody really liked the grandmamma. I’m just saying this now because it was me. I’m just saying because actually I had gone to Northside—it was Northside High School then—performing arts for a summer, for the performing arts and dance and stuff. I had gone there. So I got a little acting lessons and a little dancing lesson, and singing lessons there. So it was right after that summer that I did that. Yes, I was about fifteen, and I got my little part. I knew how to be a grandmamma [laughs].

LANDS: Northside High is known for its arts programs.

BRITT: Yes. Because my school didn’t have anything that, you know. It wasn’t old. It was rather new when I went. I think it was the second year of Galloway when I went. So they didn’t have anything I was interested in—which was drama, music, you know, that stuff. They [Galloway] didn’t have anything or dance. And, after I kind of complained, I thought about going to Northside, but then I didn’t want to.

I think I was the only one left at Galloway who started. It was eight of us that got scholarships, and I was the only one left. I’m not running. I’m not leaving. I’m not going. I’m going to graduate from here. And, as a matter of fact, Marty King graduated the year before I did from Galloway. He was the only black graduating, and I was the only black to graduate the next year. I said I was staying until I graduated.

LANDS: So the others transferred, to other schools?

BRITT: Yes, they left.

LANDS: Did you study arts at Spelman?

BRITT: No, actually my major was early childhood education. And then I went stupid and got pregnant and got married and stuff, and that was the end for me.

LANDS: Describe Peoplestown, from when you were small children, your earliest memories of Peoplestown. What did it look like? If you could imagine describing it to someone who has never seen it.

BRITT: Oh, I love Peoplestown. I love seeing the ladybugs that I don't see anymore, and the butterflies, and the streets, and all the kids out in the streets playing—just jumping rope, hopscotch, mother may I, Simon says—and the girls dancing, you know. And the porch on the house that we were in—I loved the porch that was a nice porch. I wish I had one now. They don't do things right no more [laughs]. It's just not the same. [The] porch went [gestures], and then it went around. So, my house was like a duplex house. We lived on the right side. It was downstairs, but, on the other side, it had a little foyer up the steps and then a whole another house. So, another family stayed in that house. When we wanted to hide from momma, do stuff on the porch, [we would] just round [the porch]—on the other side of the porch and hide and do whatever. Oh, the trees. I loved the trees, you know. I can just remember riding bikes—all of us getting together just riding our bikes all around the neighborhood. When the old stadium [Atlanta Fulton County Stadium] was up there, at Christmas time, everybody putting on their overalls with their little bandanas in their pockets with their iron skates—I don't think they make those anymore—and going and skating down the tunnels. If you didn't have skates, [you would] bring your bicycle—skating and riding down the tunnels. If you're on your skates, you can get behind somebody's bike and hold [on]. Oh man, those were good times. You don't see kids doing that no more. Kids always in the house now pushing buttons, you know. Nobody exercising, you know, doing anything. And so, that's what I remember most—just laughing, you know. Just walking. You didn't have to worry about a lot of stuff. You didn't have all this worry on you like a lot of kids have now.

LANDS: Who were your neighbors?

BRITT: Donna Mathis. First, we had these neighbors [that] stayed next to us, Marilyn King. When my brother ended up having a child by her [the next door neighbor], they moved. Then Lynn Huff, lived [there] next. Mr. Huff lives up the street. [Then] the Mathis's. There were a whole lot of Mathis's. I think it was a bunch of families of Mathis's lived on the same street. Then, you had Arlene. She like lived across the street in the little apartments. Oh, and the best thing was fourth of July, we all got new clothes and stuff and be out showing off our new clothes to each other [laughs]. Every fourth of July, you know, [we] got a new outfit. Yes, all of us. Oh yeah, I remember all them. I don't know where anybody is now. I know John Huff—he died. He was killed. I saw Lynn a few years [ago], but, yes, the Huffs, Mathis's. And it was kind of weird, though, because the Mathis's they kind of ruled the street because there was so many of them, you know. So, whatever they said, seemed like everybody else did, until somebody

decided to say okay that's it. I'm not going to do this anymore, you know. That was me and I was like, "no." It was like when they would get mad with one person. Everybody had to get mad with that one person, you know, kid stuff. So I stopped that because I really like Lynn. So after I stopped, she stopped, so then we all [did] and it just got better, you know. Then everybody started growing up and going their separate ways. Then we moved. We moved off Limon Avenue—which is right down the street, you know. We moved off there. We moved to Atlanta Avenue where my momma bought a house. She'd never thought she'd be able to own a house on Atlanta Avenue, and she bought a house down there.

LANDS: And that's really sort of the dividing line between Peoplestown and Summerhill?

BRITT: Yes, I think that [Atlanta Avenue] or Ormond Street [is the dividing line], because I remember it used to be like a rivalry thing—Peoplestown and Summerhill. Yes, you know, people would fight if you came on one house side or if we went over on their side, you know. They would fight.

LANDS: So how old were you when she bought the house on Atlanta Avenue? were you out of the house already?

BRITT: No, [I was] thirteen.

LANDS: Yes.

BRITT: I would still come up [and] walk up to Emmaus House. Yes, I remember when I was staying on Limon Avenue when I had to walk. When I moved from Limon Avenue, they had to pick me up. Then, not too long after that, we had to start riding the bus, you know, and that was hard riding a bus two hours trying to get to school, you know. But, I did it.

LANDS: You mean the city bus?

BRITT: The city bus.

LANDS: Really?

BRITT: Yes, you know, [we] had to start riding the city bus. So I had to learn how to ride the city bus. And I did, kept coming to school, [and] finished. I'm glad of that, yes. I met some nice people there, you know.

LANDS: So how's Peoplestown changed since you were a child?

BRITT: It always seems like everybody's afraid of something. It's like you had hope, you know. I know stuff happened then, but not like it's happening now. And it just seems like more people are just so in despair right now, you know. Even the kids worry. We didn't worry when we were little. We didn't have to worry, and you don't see the kids out playing hopscotch, you

know. You might see some out riding a bike every now and again, but you don't see the kids out the way we used to be out. Parents are kind of different too, because they're a lot younger. A lot of parents are younger than they used to be, and it seems like the man might have a baby here and have another baby here. Nothing is the same. Nothing is the same anywhere to me. It seems like, you know, I get discouraged about that. I'm not over in Peopletown a lot. I hate feeling scared to walk out, you know. Because my nephew [Andre Johnson] was shot [on]. . . Palm Sunday, I think. He lost his eye and everything. He was just coming from the store right here and so it just seems like. . . it's just so much more violence than it used to be. It's not as pretty as it used to be. It used to be pretty to me, you know. It used to be pretty. Everything looked better to me than it looks now. I don't want to say I'm not hopeful, you know, because you have to keep that hope. But it's just harder. Everything is harder, you know. And, the kids seem to be so different. I don't see the butterflies. I don't see the ladybugs anymore, [and] I miss that. You know, and the porches, what happened to the porches? [Laughs.] You know, I love porches. I don't know what happened to that, and it was like if I skipped school and the neighbors saw me, she got me. Then, she told my momma. Then, my momma got me. It's like the village raising the kids. That's gone too. When I was raising my kids, I'm scared of the village people now [laughs]. I mean, you don't know. I kept my own kids. I kept everybody else's kids—for some reason everybody trusted me with their kids. I'd pick up everybody's kids and take them because I was always around. I was always there, you know. I would hope that if my kids were out then they would help them, you know. Even people I didn't know, their kids were at my house, you know. I was like [the] neighborhood mom even when I used to live on Burroughs Avenue in South Atlanta, before I moved out to Austell. I lived out there for like ten years. Everywhere I been, I've been like the neighborhood mom, because kids just always been so important. Seems like all my life, [I've been] taking care of somebody. I had to take care of my sister. She has Down Syndrome. She was three years older than me, but everywhere I went just about, Brenda had to go. So I had to raise her [and] take care of her. Then, I help[ed] take care of my nieces and nephews, you know. Then, I had my own kids [and] everybody else's kids. So [I] always been the one take care of kids—didn't mind at all. But it was just that you can't trust a lot of people with your kids these days. That's different too, because [I] remember a time when you could [go to] your neighbors. Then, you know, like people say, "Well stuff was going on then [too]." Yes, stuff was going on then but stuff is out now. I mean it just seems like it's a natural thing for folks to just grab a child [or] abuse a child. You know, it seems like it's just the thing to do these days. So, that's different, and I say the scenery is all different. You see more concrete [and] less trees—that's different. Like I said, "I'm just like old school." I don't like computers. Before I heard folks say, "Obama is the antichrist." I said, "No, the computers the antichrist." I like talking to people and not machine—that's different. You don't see people outside. Peoples always inside pressing a button or something, you know.

LANDS: How about at Emmaus House, how have you seen it changed? You were here within a year of its founding, so you've seen a great deal happen.

BRITT: Oh, to me, it's changed a lot. When you come up here right now, it used to be where people would always be here, you know. Somebody was always here. You had the dining room where everybody ate together—like all the staff. [You] always had some staff members here for either the summer program or just all year round, you know. [You] just had duties to do, when it was time to. People is not into politics like they were. We would always be up here passing out leaflets. You don't see that anymore up here, you know. I don't know how they do the staff meetings, but [it] used to be a whole bunch of people in the staff meetings, you know. It wasn't like you had one [meeting] this month and another one six months [later]. You had [meetings] all the time, you know. So, that's different. When [the Emmaus House] close up at five o'clock, and, then when you call you don't get a person, you get the answering machine [and are asked to] leave a message [for] such and such person—that's different. We still have programs going on but it's not like it used to be. It's just lacking something. I know people say, "Well, Father Ford retired." I know it hadn't been the same since he left. I know nobody is going to be like him. This was his baby. He started this, you know. You had to have something. Something had to be different about you to come to the south side of Atlanta, you know. And [to] do what he did. But, a lot has changed, and I think a lot of people who came behind him were here for different reasons—not for the reason that he was here, you know. Some people are just using it maybe as a stepping stone to just move on. Some people who are here now don't even probably want to be here right now.

Everything is different, but it's still a good place. I'm not up here as much, you know. I still come to church. It's hard for me to leave that. So at least I'm still doing that, you know.

LANDS: Do you think the neighborhood still needs a place like [the] Emmaus House was in the 1970s—a place that stays open 8 to 11 o'clock?

BRITT: I think Emmaus House probably needs it more now [than ever] because, you know, [there are] no programs for the kids. Everything is cut out, you know. The kids hang up here at the park. Then, [the] police [are after] them because they hang [around] the park. There's nowhere for them to go. So I think the community needs Emmaus House now more than ever. [A] place like Emmaus House is needed, you know, for that reason because there's nothing for the kids here. You know [the] government just cut out everything, you know.

LANDS: Have we missed anything about Emmaus House you think I should know?

BRITT: I don't know if we missed anything. It [is] just a special place—just a real special place. I'm glad Father Ford came. I'm glad Emmaus House was here, you know, because sometimes I wonder where would I be if it hadn't been for some of the people that I met at Emmaus House. It save me, you know, because I could feel myself going. [I] could've been going in the wrong direction if it hadn't been for people around here. Whatever was bothering

me, [I could] go to them. I could always go there, you know, when I needed to. Like I say, I met the father of my children here, you know, and they're real special.

LANDS: I appreciate your time today!

[Recording Ended]