

## **TEXAS AFTER VIOLENCE PROJECT**

### **Interview with Joyce Easley**

Date: February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Place: Joyce Easley's backyard  
Forth Worth, Texas

Equipment: Sony HD DV camcorder

Recorded on: Sony miniDV  
One miniDV tapes

Interviewer: Rebecca Lorins

Videographer: Louis Keller

Transcriber: Sharla Biefeld

Proofreader:

Auditor:

Restrictions:

## **ABSTRACT**

Joyce Easley is the former wife of Charlie Jr. Brooks, and mother to two of his children Derrek Brooks and Keith Brooks.

In Tape 1 Easley describes her childhood friendship with Charlie, as well as the neighborhood she grew up in.

[TAPE 1]

REBBECA LORINS: So it's February 6<sup>th</sup> 2013, and we're here at Joyce Easley's home in Fort Worth. And Joyce Easley is the narrator, I'm Rebecca Lorins interviewing for TAVP and Loius Keller is the videographer. And we're here in Joyce's backyard. Joyce before we begin, you signed a consent form before the camera came on?

JOYCE EASLEY: Yes I did.

LORINS: And you're voluntarily interviewing with us—

EASLEY: Correct

LORINS: Okay. And so to begin can you first state your name and your relationship to Charlie Brooks Jr?

EASLEY: My name now is Joyce Hazzard Easley. But I was Joyce Brooks, and we were classmates, friends, later on we were husband and wife—

LORINS: Okay

EASLEY: And, uh first good morning America. How's everybody doin? We had a good schooling and a good upbringing, and it was, it was just great. And as time went on we got older and we decided to get married and then we had two sons.

LORINS: Before you, before because your—we want to know all of this history. But I kind of want to know a little about your background first, before we get there—

EASLEY: Mmmhmm.

LORINGS: So we kind of know you a little bit better. So if—  
can you tell me when and where you were born.

EASLEY: I was born in Fort Worth, Texas; April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1942.  
My parents was Mr. and Mrs. Jonny Hazzard. My daddy was a minister, my mother was  
a die hard Christian. We were raised in a Christian family. We had values. We were  
raised with values. And, we just had a good life. If we were poor, we didn't know it,  
because of the life my parents had for us. And we were—

LORINGS: Can you describe your childhood home and the  
neighborhood, a little bit?

EASLEY: Yes. We lived on West Belton Ave. Right down  
from downtown Fort Worth. My daddy built a home over there for us. And it was down,  
kinda like not too far from the Tarrant River in that area of the 7<sup>th</sup> street, on the other  
side of Henderson. That's where we grew up. And it was a small neighborhood, but it  
was a mixed neighborhood. We had Mexicans, and we had whites and we had blacks. We  
had all—I grew up predominantly with mixed races.

And it was just all in all a good relationship. Our church was, before the flood came, was  
around the corner from the house. So we was always at church doing something. I  
enjoyed church very much. I was very active in church services. And so that's about all.  
We just had a good lifestyle, a good, good upbringing. You know, at the time we were  
growing up, like I said if we were poor we didn't know it. We knew some had a little bit  
more or maybe a little bit less and those with a little less you always tried to help them  
out. Best way you knew how. My parents were giving people, very very much so giving  
people. And they never met a stranger, they never met a—when I grew up you could  
trust. You know, you trust a stranger. Now they tell you don't talk to strangers. Well kids,

which is good for them, of course. Because so many things is happened is happened to children these days. But on the whole we had a, I would say a wonderful upbringing.

LORINS: For people who don't live in the Forth Worth area, can you—you've moved here recently, to this area. How is the area you grew up in different than this house and this neighborhood.

EASLEY: Well this area here is predominantly young people. Well there's some elders live here. But the difference in this and where I grew up was, is the noise. We had quietness, because we lived on a dead end street. You know you would have—you would come down the hill and turn around and go back. So didn't very much traffic come through there. But here, this is more or less a neighborhood for the young, that's raising their families and stuff. But it's a good neighborhood. It's a, it's a very good neighborhood.

You know, and I have a couple of girls that comes by that we prompting to stay in school. And they'll come over, and, "Ms. Joyce, I went to school today. "

"Great! Did you fight today?"

" No mam, didn't have a fight today."

"Okay, great, we're making progress."

And of them name is Marry, one is Moisha, and one is Taylor. And two of them mixed kids. Their mothers are white and their dads are black. And one of them is just plain, you know.

LORINS: And what is the name of this neighborhood. For—

EASLEY: This is Echo Heights. Which is up—for people in Forth Worth and hasn't been to Forth Worth, it's off Mansfield Highway and Miller. It's the neighborhood between Mansfield and Miller. Which I always thought was Forest Hill, until I moved here. And Forest Hill is on the other side of the Mansfield. That's how they separated. Forests Hill is on this side and this is Echo Heights. Like I said, I didn't know. I knew Samsfield was around there. It's a company that we all worked on Mansfield Highway. But I never knew the neighborhood. I never knew why. The bus comes through here and you would see the houses. But as far as living or coming and visiting, I never had a chance to do it. And I was born here. Can you imagine? Ya, and so it's a great neighborhood.

LORINS: Did you live in your childhood home, your whole childhood?

EASLEY: My whole life until married. And then we got married at Charlie's mother's house. Which is 2916 Inis, in Riverside. And the whole neighborhood and all my classmates and people that my dad, he was worked for Texas Motors at the time. And my sister sent invitations for graduation and marriage all together. We just got galores of presents and it was just wonderful. The streets was all full. It was just one big party. Over at Charlie's mom's house, because he was well known over there. And so was I. I had relatives over there. But Charlie was raised over there.

And, when we went to school, we were all friends. We came from all sides of towns. When I was coming up the people, the kids in Cleveland and Mansfield, and Weatherfoot, Grapevine, and what is that other one? Moses Valley. Had to be bused here. They went to junior high in their neighborhood, but to go to high school, they had to be bussed to our high school. Which was I M Torro. The almighty I M Torro. Yes, yes yes!

Wonderful school, wonderful teachers. And all, we were just all friends. We didn't all run together, but when we saw each other, we recognized one another. Even on the streets

now, you go, “Girl I know you. That’s Joyce.” You say, “I know you too”. You know we seventeen years old, and hey we made it. Three scores and ten.

LORINS: So what year was that?

EASLEY: That was in 1960, 61, when we graduated. Now we had graduated on the amphitheater. We had a theater outside of the school, where they put on live plays. We played down there. And we had ours outside instead of in the auditorium. And so that was great. We were the first class that did that in many years, in many years. But we had great teachers, we had great teachers. We had one teacher, Ms. Fleecy. I know you all remember her. She was our English teacher, and she was very strict about the margin on the notebook paper. You know it’s red on the back, and it’s red on the front.

“Do no cross the margin”.

She would cross that whole work out. No good. So we all had to just get down, and get down with the get down, at school. It wasn’t no plaything. They did not play with her. They were good to us, but we had to learn. You know there was no such thing as that you’re going to leave school and can’t read and write. And do remedial [inaudible] arithmetic. I wasn’t very good in math, but I made it you know. But on the whole it has been wonderful. But back to Charlie.

LORINS: When did you first meet him?

EASLEY: I first met Charlie, uh when we were kids, little. Because I would go to Riverside to visit my relatives, and we all met at the playground. So we were about, I would say eight, nine years old. And then, he went to his elementary school, which was Riverside, in Riverside. And we went to one called Gay Street which was next door to Saint John Baptist Church over on Baptist Hill, we called it. But it’s the east side project. And I, elementary school was on one end of the project, and our junior

high was up on the other end, where our house. and then high school was right in the middle. So all our schools was in one area. You could walk from one to the other. And we all met up in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, at GW Carver. That was kind of like one of the black school here that this area, the area I had to go to. So we all met up, from different neighborhoods, at the school. Then became friends and all. And we'd go to ball games together, Charlie and I, because he was charismatic. He had a lot of ladies. You know some days I would ride in the car, he'd take me home. Some days it would be someone else. And some days according to how I was feeling, I'd wear his football jacket. And then somebody else would wear it. We were just elementary kids, uh junior high kids.

And finally we left junior high, from GW Carver, and went to IM Torro. Which we were the first 9<sup>th</sup> grade to integrate into high school. Our year was the year that they integrated 9<sup>th</sup> grade. So the seniors over there go, "Wow these kids is coming to school with us over here?" You know, they didn't like it very much. But we all got along with them too. They were much older, and of course you respected the older kids. We were just taught to respect, period. You respected the older ones. We didn't step, get in their way, or step on their toes, and all that kid of stuff. We just kind of went on. But it was a great, great experience, to be in high school in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

So Charlie and I, we clicked up again together, we went to football—we never stopped being friends! You know, he had his girlfriends and I had my boyfriends, and then finally one day he said, "I'm gonna marry you."

I go, "No way Jose! Uhuh. I'm not marrying anybody. I'm going to college, I'm going to be an airline stewardess."

I just wanted to be everything.

At that time, when we were coming up marriage was the ideal thing if you wasn't able to go to college or your parents didn't—so we ended up—I said, "Well," I thought I said, well. He had given me some engagement rings and everybody at school knew it. And I



took them off and gave it back to him. And he went home and his mother called my mother and said, “Charlie’s having fit. She don’t want to marry him.” Well what do you do now?

Okay Charlie’s [inaudible]. We were really, really in love with one another. But most of all were friends, we were really, really good friends. And all, and we married. Because we made mess out of that. Being so young we had two kids. That he loves, and his parents loved, his family loved and mine loved. He loved his children, he loved his children! Mmhmm.

LORINS: When—you said—how old were you when you married?

EASLEY: I was nineteen, I think Charlie was—I think we were nineteen.

LORINS: Okay.

EASLEY: We had finished school, and then that summer we married.

LORINS: Okay.

EASLEY: I had turned, in like April I had turned nineteen. And I think that same summer he had turned nineteen.

LORINS: And how would people—how would his family and friends describe him as a father?

EASLEY: He was a good father. I’m sure they, when he was around. But he caught up in the epidemic, as a lot of them, these guys did. A lot of them

passed away, a lot of them had to go to prison. On the epidemic that we knew nothing about.

We were—my mother worked for a doctor named Doctor Mathis. And she told her—he told her, he was so crazy about my mom. He said, “Ms. Hazzard it’s going to be something that’s going to hit the black neighborhood, that you’re going to be ignorant of.”

So she said to herself, Is he calling us ignorant?

Well, he explained it. He said, “It’s going to be a drug.” And this is before it ever came. This doctor told my mom, that she worked for, she raised his kids up. And true enough; we looked around and golly chaos. What in the world, where did this come from? We don’t have this. We don’t have—you know nobody goes to Mexico and brings no drugs. Nobody, we don’t even have it in the neighborhood. But it was an epidemic.

And I think it started mainly from the Vietnam War. When those guys came back and they had been in the opium patches and the trees were already growing with the stuff on it. And so they just was told to smoke it, because it would calm you, which it did. But it became something that, apparently made them feel at ease in your mind. So who don’t want to feel ease at the mind? So you go, but then it started being homemade, chemically made. And it ruined a lot of people, good people, very, very good people. It just took ahold of our neighborhood and so far. But god is good, god is good. You know he put you through things, well, you put yourself through things. You go through things. And you’ll come out at the window and inaudible?, on top. You know

Like I said if we were poor people, we never knew it. We never knew it. Because we went to, we spent a lot of times in parks, and we spent a lot of times at the drive-in theaters. And we had a place called Good Luck, where you could go get the barbeque and the ice cream. So we had places to go. Over by the school, we had a place, it was a recreation center. It was called Harman Field. And we could go have dances over there,

they would give us dances on Saturday. It was always something to do, it was always something to do,

LORINS:                                Those were some of the things you did with Charlie  
on dates and things? Are these some of the—

EASLEY: Yes. We would go to drive-in movies. And what we would do, lord forgive us, we would put some in the trunk of a car. We didn't have enough money, and then we would get into the drive-in movies everybody would jump out. People didn't see us you know. Everybody was trying to get into the movies. And they had one right up the street from where he lived. I think it was called, the Riverside Drive-In. The kids, I don't know maybe some of ya'll can—I may not be saying it right. But you remember what I'm talking about. And then we had one up on, what is that? On Seminary and Campus Drive I believe, and we went. And we had some movies. We had a movie over on downtown Forth Worth, which was called The Ritz. We'd go there and we'd be upstairs and you know popcorn and everything. And then we had one called The Grande Theater. Which was over on Fabiens. And then we had another one, right in our little neighborhood called, The Rosedale. And so we had movies to go to.

We were mainly church kids. We were really church kids. And NAACP kids, because I was secretary of my branch when I was in high school and church. I was secretary and my sons were president and vice president of the youth department. And there was a lady named Ms. Ruth Roberts, wonderful lady. She was a school teacher and all. She just was an advocate for kids. And it was at about 50 members when she started it up. And when she ended it it was 500 members, in the NAACP. That was a big thing for us also. The NAACP, because it—they had things for us; they had dances. We would go out of town when we were kids, up to Graham, Texas to compete. And we compete with the Bible. I knew the Bible, this is the truth, from backwards, forewords, forwards, backwards. This is the truth, I could go to it just like that. I still know my Bible kids, but I'm not as apt as I used to be. They would say go to such and such a things, and I would always be the winner. You know I was. And then I just enjoyed it.

One time, and one time, I must tell this story. We had an Easter program, right. So I was Marry and this boy was supposed to be Peter. He did not show up for it. So what they did, they snatched me behind the curtains and read it over to me right quick. And I ran out on the stage and said, "I am Peter!" Oh, the whole audience just thought they'd die. And when I went to school, they are, "Hi Peter." So we had a fun time. We had a great time.

And Charlie Jr. he was just, he was super blessed, because he was a child. His mother had him, she told me, in the change of life. We women, we know what that is. So, he was a blessed child and his dad was an older man. So he was always just a blessed child. But he was well liked, and his family—his daddy used to play Santa Claus. He was the Santa Claus in that area there. And he'd make sure all the little kids got toys and stuff.

I remember one time, because I rode the pony and Charlie was—I think I was like in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 10<sup>th</sup> grade, somewhere; I was in Riverside. And went by his house; went over to his house. He had Tony, the pony, and so we'd ride the pony. I remember we when we were like in 9<sup>th</sup> grade, I think it was the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, because he became a senior of course, you know, he gets to get a car. He had a fifty-five ' Station Wagon with, what do you call that? Wood, wood grain on it. So it held a lot of kids, and he was hauling kids and hauling kids, and taking us here and taking us there. And then 62,' his mother got a 1962 Impala. Well, of course he drove that also. But he hoisted it, made it come up in the back and down in the front. His mother [inaudible] had a fit! But of course Charlie would say, "Momma that's what they doin now." Which they were, they were but they were going in the front and down in the back. He went down in the front and up in the back. O my god! But all of it was great.

And then I remember, I think we were in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, might have been in the 9<sup>th</sup>, but I'm thinking in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, when Papa Charlie died, which was Charlie's dad.

And we had a moment of silence, at the whole school had a moment of silence and prayer for Charlie, because the word came while he was at school that his dad had passed. And it devastated him. It honest to god devastated him to the point to where he had—he

didn't have anyone little to play with. He had older sisters and brother so his older brother was more or less a stand in for his dad, after his dad passed.

But when his dad passed it was, it was strange in those days to lose your mother and your father, because we all had our parents. I was raised with my mother and my father, at all time. My daddy was my backbone, he was. While I'd go to little socials and they'd come, "Your daddy's outside waiting on you.

"Oh man why don't you go home? I can get a ride home, Charlie bring me home, or something"

But he was right there for me, 100 percent, my father was. I was born on his birthday. Charlie was born September the first. And like I said he wasn't the only child, but he was the only little one. But he had some aunties. He was the uncle, which was younger, and his niece was the oldest. But that was his niece. And he kind of grew up under her. Her name is Mary Dewhit. And they were very, very good friends. And she has some stories, but their older now and they don't really want to re-live what happened to him, because that's blood relatives. You know, I just married him, and my kids, they—when we went—

As I was saying, he had a good lifestyle, he did.

LORINS: So—

EASLEY: He was very gracious to people, Charlie was. Now he wasn't a pushover. Don't get me wrong, he wasn't that. And he was—in my day going to school, those guys were well dressed. Edwin Clapp shoes, very expensive clothes. They wore very expensive clothes.

LORINS: What else did they wear?

EASLEY: Huh?

LORINS: What else did they wear?

EASLEY: Sometimes Charlie would put on jeans going to school, but very seldom. They usually wore their slacks, and their ties, and their expensive shoes, and their hats, and—Because I think when Charlie was like in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade he was best dressed or something. And it followed him on through high school, and all.

So he would—he would kid a lot. Everybody knew him, they know I'm telling the truth about Charlie. Everybody knew him, but then like I said, that thing hit out here, and it was—everybody lots control.

LORINS: When—you had mentioned the Vietnam war—Charlie did serve, you mentioned right—

EASLEY: He went to the air force, but he didn't get to go into Vietnam.

LORINS: Okay.

EASLEY: My brother went and came back all—well, well. Wow, we didn't know what to do with him. He was just nightmarish and, he'd wake up, he'd hear a car back fire and he'd jump. And he was just scared, and we just didn't know what to do. We didn't—we didn't know what to do, you know. And then they'd give him treatment but they would go take care of their own treatment with whatever comfort of drugs they could find out there. You know, because this is what they brought back with them.

Doctors' conversation and rehab, that was you know—we—rehab? You know. We prayed on it and but then, they took care of what they did. They didn't hurt people, they didn't intentionally hurt anyone, just whatever you had to do to get it.

LORINS: So Charlie Jr. served in the air force, just for about a year or so?

EASLEY: He stayed—I think Charlie stayed about a year. And he got out for, I think his mother got sick or something. Some reason he had to come back home, and he did. So, life went on. After awhile we separated, and I would go over to his mom's and he would come over to my moms. But we just, we just didn't click anymore. And—but we never fell out of friendship. Never did, never did.

LORINS: When did you have Keith and Derrek?

EASLEY: I had Derrek October the fourth, 1962. October the fourth, sixty-two, sixty-two. Sixty-one? Sixty-two, I haven't forgot. And then I had Keith the following year, November the fourth of sixty-three. So Charlie told me, said, "Well, I'm so glad you gave me two sons, because both them had somebody to play with." You know they were like kind of twins, eleven month apart or something, twelve, thirteen months apart.

And so he would take his two little kids everywhere he go, and my baby son would follow him more than my oldest child, more than Derrek would. He would go-- I don't if he said we finishing to go [inaudible] Africa. That kid was going with him, he'd always come. And my mom and dad loved him. He was just—he wasn't a bad guy. He did bad things somewhere down the line, but he was not a bad person. He really was not a bad person. And anyone that knew him can tell you that, and all.

But as far as his execution, I'm thinking, now this can't be real here. This—you know I know the law; I'm a law abiding citizen. I'm not stupid. So why is one going to go forty

years and they're going to kill my kids' father? I don't know, you've got to do better than this! This is not right, this is just not right at all. You abusing the law, and we're supposed to stupid to the fact that this has not been proven. They used ot say, beyond a shadow of a doubt. Now they say a reasonable doubt, anything can be a reasonable doubt to a person. Beyond a shadow of a doubt means, you did this. We know beyond a shadow of a doubt.

And it went on, they gave him stays. And I would talk to him over the phone. I talked to him one time, I said, "Charlie", I said, "just tell the truth about what happened. "

He said, "Well, I walked in on the situation and I just had to take it, Joyce."

I said, "Charlie please, what's—what's going on here?"

And if he didn't tell me, he didn't tell no-one. He didn't.

He said, "Well, I just had to take it."

Then he called me back one time, and he said, "Is anybody following you and the kids around?"

So I called his—I didn't tell his mom, because she had gotten older and I didn't even tell my mom, because they were getting older. But Mary and I talk and I said, "Charlie called me asking was anybody was following me and the kids around." I'm trying to think, what is going on? Never did find out what was going on. They kept it so—everything. But I know he went to jail and Jack Strickland, god bless his soul, he was the prosecutor. And he said every time that he would ask which on of ya'll did it, they would point at each other at the simultaneous, same time. So he just threw up his hands and said, "I don't which one, did it." So he became upset, and he quit the DA's office, because he didn't think that was fair justice. And it wasn't. And that's been a thorn in my side, I tell you Fort Worth, in my side for all this time. And as I talk about it now, it grieves me to think



that he lost his life, and they don't know whether he was innocent or guilty. And it has to be some kind of—what can you say—recognition for that. Something's going to happen. He told me one time also, he said, "Joyce, I'm not doing this for no reason." Well from that day to this, I'm trying to figure out what is the reason. Is it to help others to understand that, number one do not break the law, just don't. But if you happen to get in that position, get you a good lawyer and family stand by your people because they can put him in there, they put a name on him, they'll hide him. We used to say, they'll hid you in that jail.

And so its just, its getting to the point now where the drugs and no jobs and the economy and all this. Well we don't know what the young people are going to do, because you don't want hire , because they've been to jail for maybe a ticket or two. They you put it on their record, and then when you go get a job, that's on your record. Nobody wants somebody with a record, whether you can—if you would let me explain why its on there, perhaps you would hire me. But is ust—they just kick the door in your face. So those kids in these days, they just having it, well I won't say rough-n-tough, but a lot of them. Because a lot of these mothers are single, their fathers are either in prison or deceased. Like my kids dad is deceased.

And he was the first to die by lethal injection, and I felt like I was in a dream world. I go, this can't be happening! This really can not be happening. God, wake me up. And so it did happened. As we went to—after—we were in this little room at the prison. And there was people with signs hollering, "Kill him, kill him. " And there was one lady that I noticed though, I will never forget this lady. She was a white lady and she had no shoes, and it was cold, because it was in December. And she was just screaming and hollering, "Don't kill him, don't kill him. Please don't do this." And then she just disappeared out the—I didn't see her anymore. I didn't—I don't know where that lady went. But I will always remember her. She was very devastated, at the time. And we went over to the hotel and the chaplain came and said they wanted to do an autopsy.

And I said, "Well, they know what killed him. Why do they want to do an autopsy?"

He said, “Well, the way I’m thinking is they want to know exactly what drug did what, what did what. “

So he was a guinea pig there! You know, we go, now wait just a minute, what are you going to do.” Now if this is to help someone, then he’s a proud man. He died a proud man. He really did. He died a proud man, because he took it like a grain of salt. You know, he said, “I don’t want to embarrass my mother, my family, my children and all. But he didn’t—he wasn’t looking forward to—to to dying.

He sent me a book from prison, F.Lee Bailey’s book. And he had—I don’t know what happened to my book. Somebody took it from house or something, I don’t know. But I know he treasured that book, because he had underlined, in red, everything in F.Lee Bailey’s book. And he became a paralegal. He became a paralegal. And he was president of student counsel I think in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade or something. He was a quarterback at school, he was studious. He was just—he got caught in the mix, like a bunch of them. He just caught in the mix, you know.

And then they brought him back to Fort Worth and so his aunty called me, well his niece really. My kids call her aunty because she was older than their daddy.

And she said, “Well, they want a Muslim bur—service.”

I said, “Well, he was a devout Muslim.”

She said, “But they’re going to wrap him up.”

I said, “What do you mean going to wrap him up?”

I said first we’ve got to have a service for the people of Fort Worth and the families, and for me. I wanted to see Charlie Jr. I didn’t want him wrapped up in a Muslim thing.

Which they did later on, I'm sure. But they respected that and had it at the mosque down there. And then the second funeral was at—well it was a wake funeral and it was busses and busses of people. I've never seen so many people in all days of my life, all over the stop 6 area. People were just mourning and didn't understand, you know, what—that's not equal! That's just not equal! When both did the same thing, one gets to live and one gets to die. You tell me what is equal about that. What is just about that? It never made sense to me. And so it has to be reason, god does nothing that's not—for no reason—he is—everything makes sense that the Lord does. Satan will step in and screw you around, but Lord uses the clean—kicks him out the window way to. And going on and on—so we went to the funeral home, they didn't want no one to come in at that time. I guess they were waiting on the family, and so me and my two boys, Derrek and Keith went. My two younger kids were so young, to where I didn't put them through that trauma. They stayed with family members, and what have you. But they went to funeral and all that. And we went in there, and true enough, this is my right hand, I don't swear Lord. He was smiling, he was laying there and he just had a grin on his face. He had a little grey thing right here, showing his age. And I touched him, and his skin was as soft as mine, and warm. I said, "Boy, don't you open your eyes." He just grinned and grinned. And the funeral people came in and said, "I've never anything like this before. This man is actually smiling at everybody." The next time I touched him, he was as cold as a rock. I said, "Oh my god, he came back to us he really did, he didn't have—you think after what he'd gone through he would have this, maybe a frown. No! He looks just like Charlie laying there.

So then they started letting the other people in, and I just kept looking at him. I said, "Boy please don't open your eyes. Because t you know, I'll be laying next to you." Because you know I—don't open your eyes. I'm just thinking that he's going to open his eyes in a few minutes. I tell you what devastated me. I've seen one, a girl that lived back in the area with him. She said she had seen this program to where they were talking about lethal injection. And this man, said he believes that they're burying those people alive. Because, they're just deadening their heart, they're deadening this, just deadening that. Who know when it wears off though, they're going to be completely dead or not. So

that just, oh man, that frightened me so. That just made me think, how in the—the scratching trying to get out—you know all that. This is, its trauma, it really is a trauma.

And I hated it for my children so bad, so bad. But they loved their dad. It was so much Charlie's fault as it was mine. I didn't put no big effort in to trying to make the marriage work. I just, I don't want no more of it. They we would go back together and then we would move together, and they we would da, da, da da da. And then finally he just disappeared. Well, then we started writing each other, and going to prisons to see him. And what have you.

But a lot of things happened to Charlie because he had vehicle. He had a vehicle. And when you put the studious kids out at home, then you got lot of time to go pick up ones that wasn't mean no good, half the time. And I would tell him, I would tell him, "You need to quite foo—riding all those different guys around. You know there not going to do anything. You're going to end up in trouble." Mark my word. 33:10

LORINS: So, actually to—to go back a little bit, to when he—because now you're going back to when he started to get into trouble. I know Papa Charlie dies when Charlie was around 13. But, how did his family react to the arrest and the charges of capital murder. What was sort of the reaction around the family?

EASLEY: It was devastating to them, because he had older sisters and brother. It really devastated his brother, as well as his sister. He had an older sister—two older sisters. And, it devastated them, it really did. To see that they were going to kill their little brother, and all. And it devastated my family. It really got the best of my daddy. He goes, "There not going to do that to him, not Charlie." And they did, and you could just see he dropped his head, and he go—started praying and going—But his mother, I believe that's what really made her sicker than what she was, because after awhile she just kind of got Alzheimer's and stuff. And she thought the kids were still little kids, because they would go over and stay with her quite a bit. And it devastated her; it just really, really devastated her. I just can't say that enough, what it did to that

family. This is why they don't want to bring it up, and get on camera now. They don't—They're in their eighties, and their seventy-fives, and all that. And they don't want to hash it up.

One of his favorite little nieces, Berigene Carter, well she's Berigene—what's that girls last name?—Mitchell. I'm sorry Berigene. Berigene Mitchell, and she was kind of younger than him and she was right there as his little sister, because he didn't have one. She was devastated. She was down in Huntsville, she went down to the wall, with us down there, and was in the hotel room. So, she was down there when they, you know, did that to her uncle. But—on a whole they were all good strong people. But on a whole, you can tell that devastated that family. It really did. It really did his brother, because he was much older than Charlie and in the neighborhood they lived it was kind of like a little café down the street, and we would go down there. And he would always walk down there to see what his brother was doing. And it just kind of like, I don't know, it just devastated those people. You know, you can imagine what it did to the family because it devastated people that wasn't related to him, and all. They didn't do much talking on it, and all. But they were there for him. What ever, but they didn't—they wasn't—they no, go from house to house discussing, they're not the kind of people. You know, their private life is their private life. And they're not hiding anything and trying to do anything. They just—there wasn't nothing to just talk about. You know, you got to first heal. This is the truth. I have not healed. I have not. I have been angry. I have been angry. Like I told them, I'll be a law abiding citizen, but I will never trust the justice system to bring up justice for anyone because this just broke the camels back. It did, it just, wow, you know? And one's walking around free and the other on is deceased. Does that make sense to anyone? And if does, well you're not on the same planet I'm on, and all that. You know, other than that.

You know we're sitting in the backyard in our Forth Worth, Texas, in the rain trying to get this commentary going so we can help other people that might have to experience this and lethal injection is not a fun thing, at all. Because you can imagine—it was three drugs. One of them was sodium penathol, I know. The truth serum. I guess thought

maybe if they put the serum in, he'd go confessing. He had nothing to confess, because he hadn't done anything. He knew what had happened, he knew what had happened. I'm sure he knew what had happened, but he didn't do it. He—you know. But he didn't speak on it, because—you know—I guess that was the bond that they had. You know, you didn't speak on it, and all.

LORINS: How much time do we have?

LOUIS KELLER: We're at forty minutes. Inaudible.

LORINS: Do you have any follow-ups?

KELLER: Do I have any questions? Yeah, I guess—this question was asked yesterday to your son. Did you have any thoughts on the death penalty, I guess before you knew Charlie?

EASLEY: Never, never heard of it. Never dreamed of it. You know, I used to hear about the electric chair, I couldn't imagine that either. Hanging in cowboy days, but I had never heard of lethal injection; never in my life, until this incident. Never heard of it, never dreamed of it, never thought of it. You know we were—in black neighborhood we were innocent, because we were kept away from a lot of this whirly stuff. We—we just, you just didn't know.

LORINS: So—

EASLEY: Not that we were dumb, it just wasn't presented in our neighborhood, because we had no reason to even consider it.

LORINS: How about, you were mentioning, how about trust in the justice system? Or—

EASLEY: No, no.

LORINS: Before—

EASLEY: I have faith in the justice system, but trust? I can't say too much on that one, because I've seen people being exonerated, say for instance in Dallas. They exonerating people that's been there for: thirty, forty years, Twenty-five, fifteen years of their life. Well there getting paid for it but how do you buy back that time, when I had told you, "I didn't do this."

See—identifying a person—and I have imagined in my mind, if something happened, what would I remember about this person, if I have to be a witness. Would I remember their hair or their shirt? What would I remember about it? And you know they say we all look alike. Like I said, all racist, all whites look alike and all blacks, and all that. But how would you identify a person if you did not know that person, and it's just for a second or two, or maybe thirty minutes. What would you remember to tell that he police the he had on, or she had on, or whatever. And I, I just don't believe in it. I think they should have evidence, fingerprints, evidence, DNA ya'll. Can we get one please Mr. Strickland? I would satisfy this family very much, me personally, very well, to have a DNA on Charlie. I don't have no money or anything, but if you could see to that my sons can clear their dad's name, or see what really, really, happened. I know it would make you happy, and I know it would make us happy. That's just a plug to you Mr. Strickland, and all that.

LORINS: Did you finish—I'm sorry—did you visit Charlie?

EASLEY: Yes.

LORINS: You did?

EASLEY: One time he had went to Louisiana, don't know what he did. I'm telling you, he never told me anything. He kept me in the dark on what he was doing. He didn't sit down and say, "Joyce, I just did this, that and the other. He wouldn't do that, he did not do that. But I remember one year he went to Louisiana, for something, I don't know. Him and a bunch of guys got caught doing whatever they were doing. And they sent him to this thing called Angola. Okay, me and his mom and the two kids and a friends of hers, just drove us over there. We went down on the Mississippi, down on the Bayou down there, and the car had to—to get on a barge. They put the car on the barge and we went across the Mississippi, to this little road with only one car at a time. On each side of this little road, leading to this prison, was a drop off. You could see the top of trees, and we went all the way down there, a long ways, to this prison thing. And then when we got over there to the prison, they told us that, it was late at night when we got there, so there were visiting hours the next day. They told us to park close to the fence thing, and we did, and I had to get out and do something for one of the kids. And they said, Stay close to the car. And Oh, my god, we were just so devastated. You couldn't move around, you couldn't do anything. Well, the next day we went into to see him.

And I go, "Charlie, what are you going way down here? What went on?" He never said a word.

He says, "Just take care of the kids, and take care of yourself." He said, "I'm just going through some things.

I said, "I wish you—" I always told him, "Tell the truth. Just tell the truth!"

Well, guys are not made that way, girls not either. You not just going to—they call it rat, you ratting on somebody or something. So he never did, but I remember that one episode, going down to Louisiana. My kids at the time, I think Derrek was like two, and Keith was like one. And we was taking them over there to him to visit.



I went to see him the time or two that he was in jail up here. But they would put him in; they would let him out. I'm going to tell you, a lot of his problem was he was on parole, probation or something. And they would revoke him. That's what a lot of black guys got their time from, because that one thing that you have done, they would revoke you four, or five, or six times on that one incident. And therefore, they're giving you a long record of going to prison, but it's just one case, against you. And so that ended up to be his problem also.

He'd come home and he'd be going to college, he stayed in college. He stayed in college, very, very educated man. He kept his shoes. He had some combat boots; boy you could see your face in them. He kept his boots shined, he kept—he was just all around just an average guy. Good guy.

So he went to school, and then time rocked on. He kind of like went and got him a girlfriend, and I went and got me another guy, and had two more kids. We were still friends, a time or two I would see him.

LORINS: What did he study in school?

EASLEY: What did he study? Law. He studied a lot of law. He liked computer, but it was just the beginning of the computer thing. But he was an apt law person. He could—and he was well known in prison, because several guys that he helped them with their writs, and whatever, appeals and what have you. They actually got off of death row, and some of them got out of prison. So I'm thinking maybe that they were—maybe this guy is just too damn smart, and he is helping people around here, we'll just go ahead on and give him the lethal injection, just to prove the fact that we can do this. And the other one, he wasn't so apt, he didn't—I don't think he hardly went to school too much or anything. But Charlie was a very apt guy, a very apt guy and he was helping people. He was helping people, but he was a friend of the warden's also.

He would call me and—My second husband, my last two kids father, would pay for the bill for him to call to the house. So he would talk to my daughter, we didn't have a daughter. But he had a daughter, Sherry, by another lady. But he would always talk to my daughter he felt like that was his daughter, over the telephone. She had never laid eyes on him before. If she did, she was a little kid, and she didn't remember him.

So everybody, we just kind of like were praying. I go, and then I was at a friend's house. I'll tell you how I discovered this, because, I'm thinking, We're talking on the phone and all. They're going to get a stay, they're going to give the stay. And I saw on TV, that he's fixing to go to death—they're fixing to kill him. So I rushed, and Bryan Horry, I'll never forget him, he was the new guys. And my son's had called me over, at this friends I was at, and said, "Momma." He said, "This news man says he want to see you." I see him, because I just seen Charlie on the television here. So he came to the house and picked me up, this news guy, and drove me back to the house. And we had a good talk and I'm standing there looking at the TV. And so, I'm standing there, and I says, "Maybe I should go on down there?" And my kids was prancing and going back and forth, and crying and—So I tell them, "Let's go. We're going down here to see this." So we jumped in the car. The car—Derrek was so rough on cars, nice blue Mustang. But in college, and whatever they—the door would fall off. We went to the funeral home to—and pulled up there, and all these people were out there. And I keep forgetting that the door is going to fall, and then BAM, real loud. People looked and jumped, and said what in the world is going on? So we get out, and he puts the door back on, and everything. There he is, there's Keith there. There on the porch right there.

So we went on down there and true enough it happened. And he looked at his watch, and we all looked at our watches. But like I said, he lights dimmed kind of like. And I said, not the them, I said, "Well, it must be over," because the lighted dimmed and then they went back up. By this time he kicked a chair he threw a chair, or something. And this officer says, "It's alright ya'll, it's going to be alright." People were very sympathetic. They were very, very, sympathetic. They was not mean to the point where, what they had

to do in there. But he requested that we not go in there to see him. Which, I wasn't going to let he boys go, no. I just can't let you do this, and everything.

But in all, it worked out, hopefully, for the good of someone else. I know it has made my boys stronger, better, to where they instills things in their little nephews, in their little grandchildren, and all. It has really made some prophetic men out of my sons, and that's the god's truth. I'm bragging on them, yes of course, but it's the truth. It is the god heaven's truth. It made them very, very strong, very, very strong. Keith never had—Keith was more like his father. He looks like me and he had my mentality of slow. And Derrek walks like his dad, looks like his dad. But this kid, here, was more like his dad, mentally, than Derrek could ever be. I don't care where Charlie went, Derrek wouldn't go. I don't want to—Derrek wouldn't go, and everything. Because he wanted—Derrek wanted his dad, 24/7 he wanted his father, at all time. Keith was kind of like, well he hung out with him more than Derrek, so he had a change to experience some of the things that Derrek didn't. But as far as the hurt on those children, if it had not been for god, thank you Jesus. If it had not been for god, I don't know what would've happened. I really don't know what would've happened, but we prayed, and we prayed and we talked positively. So they wouldn't have to try to avenge or revenge anything. And they didn't. I said, "You go to school, your daddy wants you to go to school." You know he went to school, I went to school, you to school. So they went A&M, and they did good over there. They graduated and did what they had to do. My oldest son, Derrek, he's a computer programmer. He can do anything with a computer that you want done to it; he can do it. Well, he had a few mishaps in his life, to where his career had stalled. My baby son, well he's not my baby son, but Keith, by Charlie he is. He has his own construction business, Brooks Paving 817-9090-1715. If you need any striping or paving, he's very good. He's been twenty years; his step father trained him, because he had a big construction business. They didn't come up rich, but they didn't come up without. And he would make them work. I remember one time, he had—my baby son on his son—son by my second husband, has this property down there which is a mechanic shop now, but it was a construction business. He had a bunch of rocks, brick out there. Guys, listen. And so they wanted money, they needed money for something. He never did just give them money.

They had to work; they had to work. And he had them cleaning bricks for a penny. And they sat there all day long and they were cleaning those bricks, stack them up, because he was going to use them for something else. So they worked. He even had a garden down there. They had to go pick up and get the watermelons; he had to get the okra, which stings in the okra patch. They had to work for their living, so they work for their living now. All my children work for a living. No-one sits around for you to hand them anything. Grandchildren, different story, you give up your last dime, and you know it. Great-grandchildren are even worse. But that what we do.

LORINS: Inaudible. Closing question, closing—

KELLER: Well, I think besides we need to do the tape marker toward the end. You know say that this is tape 1, whose in the room or who.

LORINS: I did that.

KELLER: I'm good. Did you have a question.

LORINS: I think we're coming to the end of the tape. So—

EASLEY: Yes.

LORINS: Do you have any closing thoughts about—

EASLEY: Yes. I would like to say to the people of America and of the world, hold no vengeance. "Vengeance is mine, thus sayeth the Lord." See what good can come out of tragedies. And I think we'll be able to make it in this world a little bit better if we be more kinder to one another. And for god's sake, prove it beyond, beyond the shadow of a doubt. Not reasonable doubt, because my reasonable doubt could be different than yours. Shadow of a doubt you got—you just done, done that. And I just say that, hold your heads up and we'll pray and something good will come out of all of it.

Even though, they're still doing people that way, killing them. I think it's a lady, god bless your family Miss. That they're trying to put—and I think that is the most awful thing in the world, to lay a person down, a live person down and kill them, because you think this is going to deter something. There's more murder now than there's ever been, ever been. Every day. So it don't deter anything. People not afraid of dying the way you think they're going to be, because you take another humans life. And I wish I could say that quote that Malcolm X said, How do you—when you—how do you—When you kill a person, how do you kill a person to deter killing?" That's two—that three—that's two people that are already dead, and it's still going on. What do you do? You pray. I just say pray. I truly believe in what the lord Jesus Christ had done, because he kept me in my sane mind. I thought I was going to lose it, because I knew I had to stay strong, because of my children. That was their dad, its wasn't my dad. It was just my husband, which I enjoyed being married to him. Death did us part ya'll. We didn't get no divorce. Death did us part. I just—my final word is just say, don't take vengeance from it, because that's not going to help us do anything. We'll look at this like maybe it's going to be a focal point on down the line where we'll make a different law as to how we take a person's life, even in the prison system. You don't want to take no one's life period. And to Gregory's family, I am so very, very sorry that this had to come up in your life. I'm so sorry. We had no idea and we hold no nothing but sorrow for you and your family, girl. I am so sorry. I know you're children lost their father too. This was not intentionally done, honey, believe it or not. So god bless you and your family too, and thank you all very much.

LORINS:

Thank you Ms. Easley

EASLEY:

For having to speak on Charlie Jr., because as I say he was a really nice fellow. He was a nice guy and to see someone—him die, we all got to die, but it's how you die, that just really devastates you and all that. So everybody bye, bye, have a good day. I'm fitting to get out of the fog.

LORINS:

Thank you Ms. Easley for your time, and thank you.

EASLEY: You're welcome. You're quite welcome. It's been a pleasure.

[END OF TAPE 1]

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]