

Texas After Violence Project, Visions After Violence

Interview with Geraldine Swain (Geri Tucker)

Interviewer: Alexa Garza

Narrator: Geraldine Swain (Geri Tucker)

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Summary: Alexa Garza interviews Geri Tucker (Geraldine Swain) about her 32 years of time served in prison in Texas, focusing on the day-to-day realities of prison life. Alexa and Geri were friends in the same prison and have shared experiences together. Examples are given of how interactions commonplace outside of prison are viewed as misconduct inside. Also notable is Tucker's legal action against the prison, resulting in a ban on male prison guards strip-searching female inmates or being in areas where female inmates are undressed.

ALEXA GARZA: [00:00:03] Geri, I want to thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today. I know that it's doing crazy with the— weather and everything. Let me close this light, hold on one second. That's better.

Thank you so much for meeting with me today.

GERI TUCKER: It's muggy out here.

GARZA: I know, but at least we're free.

TUCKER: It's better than freezing.

GARZA: Yeah, I just want to start by introducing yourself and we'll just go from there. Is that okay?

TUCKER: Okay, I'm Geraldine Swaim. Maiden name is Tucker. And that's what I go by now except legally. Everybody calls me Geri, or granny, or grandma. So, I'm here to talk to you, to tell you whatever you want to hear.

GARZA: Thank you so much, Geri. I just wanted to talk to you because you are one of my best friends. We did a lot of time together and looking back on my experience, Gerr, I think about and I look, and I wonder like how we did it. How by the grace of God did we do it? Because it was so long (laughs).

TUCKER: Two things I can say— It was a horrible experience, but it was a learning experience, and I made some lifelong friends. I mean, when we go through the fire like that, you can't— just move on. People are your friends, forever.

GARZA: Yeah. Are you in contact with any of the ladies there, still?

TUCKER: Yeah. I still write to Cali. I write to LuAnn, Bella. I sent Bella's daughter one of my blankets for her birthday. And Bella was able to have a video visit with her when she opened it. And her daughter opened it and wrapped herself in it. And I got the sweetest sweetest letter from Bella about how much that meant to her. That she got to see her daughter open her birthday present.

GARZA: That is awesome. What are your thoughts on the video visitation? You think it's a good thing that they have that now?

TUCKER: Well, it's not the same as in person, but it's better than nothing.

GARZA: Right. COVID has affected them in different ways, you know, like it's different. It's different.

TUCKER: Well you can, on a video visit, you can see what your family members—how they're living, where they live, what they're doing. Whereas in a visitation room, you just see them. But in contact visits, at least you get to hug.

GARZA: Yeah.

TUCKER: That's the hardest part of prison, is being away from your family. You can—we're women, we can cope with anything— but when you're away from your family, that's that's the hardest part. I missed all these babies growing up. My two oldest grandkids, Jason and Amber were born when I left. But I've got so many grandchildren now. I think, what, 15, 16, grandchildren. I'm even a great-great grandmother, now.

GARZA: Wow.

TUCKER: The great-greats I'm here for. I sent you pictures of great and great-greats. So ...

GARZA: I see you on Facebook. I see you— We talked, you send me pictures and—you're in Disney World, you are in the ocean. You are riding a bull (laughs), a mechanical bull!

TUCKER: Well, I have a half a bucket list. I went to a breast cancer benefit that— my oldest granddaughter works with cancer patients— and one of her friends— She said, "Grandma, leave my friends alone." You know me, I like guys. 32 years didn't change that. Hum ... He said— he kissed my hand and he said, "I just admire you so much." He said, my grandmother had so many regrets when she died and I told him, "I do not want to lay on my deathbed and say, I wish I had."

So, I'm doing it. I rode a mechanical bull. I've written a zip line. I rode the velocity coaster, which I thought I was going to die, hum... at Universal— And that is one fast roller coaster, but I recommend it to anybody who likes to ride roller coasters.

And I'm just doing what comes up to do. There is a Christian song out about a guy who is with his grandfather who is dying and his grandfather tells him, "live your life with no regrets," he said, "Go on New Year's Day and dip your feet in the ocean," and my oldest granddaughter took me to Galveston on New Year's Day and I waded in the water. So....

GARZA: That just gave me chills (laughs).

TUCKER: I'm doing the things that I think, ... will keep me from having regrets. I'm around for the— I'm going to be around for the birth of two great-grandbabies, ones a girl, one's a boy.

I'm just thankful to be alive because a lot of our friends have died. You know, Cindy Ray died. CJ died.

I can't imagine, you know, that's a horrible thing. When they take your body out. They put it in the observation room in the infirmary and everybody can see you just laying there, dead.

That would be horrible.

GARZA: Let's talk about that a little bit. Geri, you did 32 years. You saw a lot. You experienced a lot. I know that you used to tell me how you felt when the mail man would pat search you. You were part of that movement, weren't you?

TUCKER: Right.

GARZA: Can you describe it a little bit?

TUCKER: My crime was a domestic violence crime. I killed an abusive husband. To let the men pat search us was an invasion.

It was bad enough that men worked the unit and could see you running around in your t-shirt and panties– or those institutional gowns that we had to wear.

I had one male officer, one time, I told him, "You know, those curtains in the pipe chaser are there so you can't see down in the showers when we're in there." And he said to me, "I have to open it up because it's like watching for rabies." I said, "are you calling us rabid dogs," and he said, "if the shoe fits,"– and I filed a grievance, and from that moment on, I was "yes, ma'am," and he called me "Mrs. Swaim". He did not speak disrespectful at me again.

But– it was not fun and we did have one officer who was there from one of the newspaper interviews that I did and he made them stop asking me about my crime– they didn't want to talk about the lawsuit we filed. They wanted to talk about my crime– and he stopped that. He said if you want to ask her questions about the lawsuit, that's fine. But if not, you're going to have to leave.

GARZA: Because you won it! You won the lawsuit, men are no longer allowed to pat search female offenders. Now, before we left, they have to, have to what? knock on the door and announce, "male in the dorms," remember?

TUCKER: Right. But Carrie Fitzgerald, a lawyer from Dallas, was a man who took the case and there were 12 of us on the lawsuit– and some of them are still there. So as long as one person is still there, the men are not allowed to strip-search us. There is a specific procedure for pat searching, they can do that, but it's not– it's not objectionable. I mean policeman out here in the Free World would do that.

I'm a total supporter of law enforcement. I have to tell you that, straight up. I know a lot of people are not, but all this, "defund the police is stupid." You know, you and I both know that there are people who need to be in prison.

GARZA: Yes, ma'am.

TUCKER: There are people there who never need to get out, men and women.

GARZA: Yes, ma'am.

TUCKER: That's reality. But I don't— I'm not a death penalty proponent. I say, you know— you death penalty is all about revenge. Okay. Well, if you want revenge on somebody give him a life sentence where they can't get out of prison. That is revenge, when somebody's dead, they're gone. They don't care anymore. But if you have to spend the rest of your life in prison, that would be the ultimate punishment. It's a horrible place.

GARZA: Let's talk about that for a minute. I remember the dirty clothes. Do you remember the dirty clothes?

TUCKER: The dirty clothes?

GARZA: The dirty clothes, our uniforms. How they are—

TUCKER: Oh, well, I didn't have that problem. Somebody washed for me (laughs)

GARZA: Right, but how they would smell, if you didn't have— like if you went to get laundry. Remember?

TUCKER: Yeah, when you got a good set of clothes, you wanted to keep them. When you got a good gown, you wanted to keep them because you'd get stuff that was stained or no telling what was all over it. But fortunately, 'course it was against the rules, but I did keep two sets of clothes and my sheets.

GARZA: Right? Because it was— I mean who wants to sleep on, filthy soiled sheets.

TUCKER: Right. And no pillows. When I first got there though, we had cloth mattresses and pillows. Course, when I first got there, they had bunk beds.

That was challenging, but I was over 40 so I got a bottom bunk.

But you still had somebody sleeping up above you and the girl that that was on the top bunk really didn't care— and she was a big girl, when she got down the whole bed shifted in the cubicle— and she had always had contraband. She worked in the kitchen and she always stealing food— and back then could smoke— so we have butt cans in the cubicles and she always had stuff

under the cigarette ashes that we weren't supposed to have. And I was like— And I work in the Command building— and I was always scared I was going to lose my job.

But she said, she'd tell me, "don't worry. I'll take the blame." So— [0

You know, there's just little things that are so frustrating.

I mean you live in a barbecue pit. That's what it is. Those little waste high brick walls are like a barbecue pit that you would barbecue a whole cow in.

GARZA: That's a good metaphor.

TUCKER: And, you know, the movie Giant? That's an old movie with Rock Hudson, and Elizabeth Taylor— They barbecued a steer in a barbecue pit that looked just like our cubicles. And I mean, I thought that from day one, but I think that's kind of funny now— but it wasn't funny then.

GARZA: Our cubicles, at Mountain View were, like Geri said, waist-high bricks... Maybe, three feet by six feet?

TUCKER: Yeah, that's about right.

GARZA: —and everything that we owned had to fit in a box which was a metal box soldered on the bottom of our metal bunk. And the box itself was maybe one and a half feet by two?

TUCKER: Well, no it was a little— I think it was 12 inches tall—

GARZA: 12 inches tall, two and a half—

TUCKER: Maybe two feet—

GARZA: Two feet long.

TUCKER: Yeah, it was really hard to get everything in there.

GARZA: Right? And we would get disciplinary cases. If we were not in compliance, right? I mean—

TUCKER: Right. And they would take your stuff, whether you paid money for it or not. They would take it.

GARZA: Yeah, and then for lockdown, we had to carry everything.

TUCKER: Well, I didn't because I was old. They had those blue laundry carts, and I could fill up my bags and put them in that, but— I still had, you know, I still had to take it all out, pack it up. Go down to the gym, unpack it, put it in a box, make it fit— which was smaller than our box on our bed— and then take it out of the box and put it on the table for the officer to go through it. Then pack it all up again and take it back to the dorm and pack it back in my box again. That was horrible.

GARZA: It was horrible— for someone like, younger, it was horrible for me to try to—

TUCKER: That's because you had to carry everything.

GARZA: I had to carry it. So— but even then, you having to— I mean Geri's right, we had to pack it and move it and shift it and push it and fit it in the box and then do it all in reverse in June, for a hot day. In a gown, we were made to wear gowns, so yeah—

TUCKER: They had to— because we filed that lawsuit— they had to put blankets up all around the screen down at the gym, so the men couldn't see it when we got strip-searched.

But you know, there were a lot of gay officers, too— and that was just almost as bad as men searching us.

GARZA: You bring up a great point. There are were a lot of officers—

TUCKER: Not that I have anything against that— your relationships are your business, not mine, but I like men. I didn't want them strip-searching me, but I prefer being around men, because women are mean to each other.

GARZA: — yeah.

TUCKER: You know, if you're not— if you're not my friend, you know— it's like my job— Okay, I worked in the chapel everybody wanted to work in the chapel. Why? I don't know. There's a lot of work. But they would send forms to write to the chaplain and tell him I was doing this and I was doing that— just to get me fired. Not that they wanted my job, but they saw, I was content with it and people don't like you to be content.

Unfortunately, look around you. It's that way out in the free world now.

GARZA: Yeah, no, you're right. You're right. How long were you in the chapel Geri?

TUCKER: Well eight years and one time, then two years. You know, different wardens have different policies about where you work, some wardens and let you just stay there,

if you're good at your job, which I was, but some mornings felt like you got too familiar with your bosses so you could only work like 18 months in a job and then you had to go somewhere else.

Just depended on who the warden was time.

GARZA: But in your time, your 32 years, I'm sure you had many jobs— like all over. I mean...

TUCKER: Well, at one time, one of the Sergeant's said, "why are you working two jobs?" When I was working in the, chapel— for the chaplain, he was off on Friday and Saturday. So on Friday maintenance would call me in to go down and put all the work orders for the week in their computer.

Because I couldn't work for him during the during the week because I worked in the chapel, but then I would go down there and do extra work for them on Friday.

And then I'd go to work on Saturday and Sunday, you know, there was always events— for the chapel. Yeah, you know, at Christmas time every volunteer group wants to bring you presents.

And so we had to distribute those and get them ready for the dorms and it was a lot of work, but it kept you busy. That's the main thing is to stay busy. I'm on Social Security now and I'm retired and I would love to have a job.

I don't want to lose my benefits, so I'm not, but it's really hard, not to be working. I like to work.

GARZA: Yes, you, you mentioned the Christmas gifts or the gifts that the groups would bring in, I heard, or— I don't know if this year, it was very limited, or last year was very limited compared to how it usually is.

TUCKER: Right, because of COVID stuff I guess.

GARZA: Yeah, it was a— it was such a treat to get those gifts every year.

TUCKER: Well, and, you know, I was telling somebody I think it was yesterday— that right now, with all the issues at the border. The governor has taken more funds from the prison budget for the border, which I understand, but people don't understand that people in prison have no recourse. You eat what they have— and I see I'm on the TIFA (Texas Inmate Families Association) website and I see that some of the men's units are getting two meals a day, that's not enough for men.

It's not enough for women— but because the food budget is the first thing they cut— the food budget, and the necessities.

As it was, you know, we only got— we get one roll of toilet paper, one week and then the next week, we get two rolls of toilet paper. Then the next week is one, then it's two. If you didn't go to commissary and are able to buy toilet paper, you were in trouble.

GARZA: Yes. Yeah. Toilet paper was a hot commodity there. It was a— remember when they used to we still have to get up at 2:00 in the morning. To go get it?

TUCKER: Right. We were glad to get it.

GARZA: Yeah, toilet paper, and— let's talk about commissary. For those who do not know, commissary has just basic necessity items and snacks, nothing healthy, but it got expensive—

TUCKER: They did have tuna—

GARZA: They had tuna, but it did get pretty pricey toward the end there.

TUCKER: Yeah. Well, if you don't get money, you're out of luck, because you have to eat what's in the chow hall and that is definitely not healthy.

GARZA: What chow hall food is— somewhat unappealing

TUCKER: Well, and the beef is soy. Now, the chicken is chicken, but it's only the thigh and the leg. At Thanksgiving and Christmas. We got turkey and ham. We did get a lot of pork though, because they raise pigs. The women raise pigs.

Remember how everybody, when we got watermelon they'd only serve it for breakfast and everybody would get up and go to breakfast so they can have some watermelon. [00:23:19]

GARZA: Why do you think they served at breakfast, Geri?

TUCKER: Huh?

GARZA: Why would you think they would serve it at breakfast— to discourage people from going?

TUCKER: Because— Well, not only that, they only got so much because we didn't grow it.

GARZA: Right and breakfast, for everyone, It was 3:30 in the morning. 3:30 to 4:00 in the morning, to get up to go eat some watermelon.

TUCKER: You need to get up at 3:30 and they start calling at four . And you just had to sit there and wait– and you couldn't wait in the day room. You couldn't go to the day room till after 7:00. So. You just sat in your cubicle with your little hands folded and waited until they called you– and when they had butter, people would get up and go, because they didn't always have butter. When I got there. They had bacon once a week, but that didn't last long.

GARZA: What is your experience with medical– was medical... Did you see–

TUCKER: Were you there when I fell in the chapel?

GARZA: I don't believe so.

TUCKER: Okay. Well, I fell off the steps– and my face was up against the back of the altar rail. I have five fractures in my back that to this day is very uncomfortable. I have a sacral, three lumbar and a thoracic. The sacral and the lumbar are pressure fractures, but the thoracic was shattered.

They came in the wheelchair to get me, but I had to walk back to the dorm. With fractures in my back– and still had to go to work the next day.

I finally, after about three months, got a back brace. One of those little elastic waist things that was better than nothing, but it didn't really help. And I'm, you know, I'm wondering– when you're in pain. 24 hours a day– I still can't stay on my feet. I don't complain about it because nobody wants to hear you complain. But it's pain every day. That's why I'm sitting down right now. I could be walking around and showing you the pool. If it wasn't for my family, I'd be totally lost. You know– you know, Jennifer has her website. Everything she was talking about– housing, and how hard it's been to find a place to live. And I thought, oh my God, what would I do without my family? Because I immediately came home to family.

I have total sympathy for the women and men who come out and have nobody.

GARZA: Yeah, what kind of support did you get when you were released– after 32 years. Did they?

TUCKER: Everybody was there.

GARZA: No, but did TDC prepare you for this?

TUCKER: My mother died in 2005. So–

GARZA: Were you able to take a class? I'm sorry to interrupt. Were you able to take a class before being released after 32 years?

TUCKER: No, I didn't have to. I had got an FI1.

GARZA: So what is an FI1?

TUCKER: That's when they release you within forty five working days of the date that you got it.

GARZA: So you're doing 32 years and all of a sudden you get this date and you feel like you're going home in 45 days. No preparation. No training. No.

TUCKER: You see how I'm holding this phone right now. Yes, that's exactly how I did it to talk on it. I had no clue how to use this phone. I still make a lot of mistakes, but at least I'm able to— I couldn't have got on the zoom without your help.

GARZA: Would you have liked to have a class to teach to you computer skills? Prior to leaving?

TUCKER: Right— you know, I think I could get a secretary's job even now if I had computer skills, but— I went to college at Mountain View— however, they wouldn't let me take the computer classes because I was too old. They said, when I got out I'd be on Social Security and didn't need to work.

Yes, you do.

But yeah, I can only do little things on the computer. I do have a tablet, and I'm on that a lot. I do pay my bills and do my banking on my tablet.

GARZA: Who showed you about banking and paying your bills, your family?

TUCKER: My genius grandson.

I have a— my oldest grandson is a Marine. And he's home, now. He works for oil companies as a consultant. And he is computer savvy, so he helps me. I said, "Jason fix this. Please fix this," and he can usually fix it for me. I haven't messed it up too bad. But I have— he's a Marine, another grandson is in the Navy and my youngest daughter's oldest son is in the Army. He graduated in December from boot camp and he's now in, Arizona. He's going to school in Arizona. So.

GARZA: Wow.

TUCKER: We're a military family.

GARZA: Well, I'm just so proud and happy that you're able to interact with them and just be home because I think I cried more when you got your set-off than my own. I just didn't—

TUCKER: It's devastating for people. Just— my feeling was, if you're going to tell me I can't go, just don't even bother to call me in. Why talk to me? You can look and see what I've done. I got my bachelor's degree. I did absolutely everything the parole board wanted me to do and didn't have— I had two minor cases in 32 years— and they were both for Contraband, for helping somebody else out.

Which I knew I wasn't supposed to do but I did anyway, you can't sit in a room with 30 other women and eat ice cream knowing that some of these women will never be able to go to the store and buy ice cream. You have to share it.

GARZA: Yeah, you're right.

TUCKER: That's very sad to me, that Texas doesn't give them some kind of— allowance to be able to go and buy a treat. And then they tell you can't— If you have money, you can't buy them a treat. Well, that doesn't make any sense. You can't put a price on kindness.

GARZA: That's a really good point. Just speaking of the rules, of the policy set in place, that is called "trafficking and trading". So if your neighbor was starving and hadn't eaten, or the food in the chow hall was horrible, you could not give them a piece of bread. You cannot share anything that you had. If you were not eligible or able to go to the store, correct?

TUCKER: Right.

GARZA: And when some— when we did it, we had to do it at a— behind a wall, hidden. So the officer couldn't see, because we would get disciplinary cases for that.

TUCKER: Yeah, and they wanted the— it was really bad, the younger officers— the new ones— just love to catch you giving somebody something.

I think often TDC officers should have mental tests. See what their mental health is because— power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. And they have absolute power over women and men in prison.

They can do whatever they want. Now sometimes if you have a good Disciplinary Captain, you can go to them and tell them what's going on. But sometimes it doesn't do any good it.

I just remember one sergeant who was very disrespectful to chapel volunteers— and I reported him and he didn't work the chapel again

I had one officer tell me, "If you file a grievance, we know something is really wrong because you never file grievances." And they would listen to me. But that doesn't work for everybody, you know, not everybody can get authority to listen to them.

GARZA: Do you think they came with time, since you were there for so long?

TUCKER: Well, somewhat– but when I first got there, they put me on the night shift, cleaning the kitchen. I was there for six weeks, then I got a job change on the night shift, working for the lieutenant in the command building. I did paperwork for the whole unit. And then after the Texas 7 did their little escape act, we couldn't work in the command building like that. We couldn't see that kind of paperwork.

But I think from the beginning I was pretty well trusted. I asked the lieutenant one time. I said, "what would you do if I got a major case?" And she said, I would throw the book at you, because you know better.

So, you know, they knew my background. All you had to do was look in the computer and they did that all the time. You know that, they look people up, see what they've done, what they did and why they did it and see all the records that they had on them, you know. They knew everything about you.

GARZA: That is true.

TUCKER: Except for what was in your heart.

GARZA: How– looking back on it, Geri, the 32 years, it's a lifetime for some, looking back on it– Like as you sit there, next to a pool, with the wind in your face and the freedom that you have– What are your thoughts? Is it abstract? Do you, do you– Does it seem real? Like– I feel really removed from it for some reason.

TUCKER: Well, I have a little problem in crowds, like they have Mardi Gras in Galveston this weekend. I would like to have gone, but I felt like that would just be overwhelming for me.

It's just, I don't like really crowded stores. I don't shop at HEB because it's real crowded. I shop at the Kroger because– it's a little more expensive, so– there's not as many people. I value my privacy.

I'm just very blessed to still be alive. I'll be 80 years old in August. A lot of people are not fortunate enough to get that far.

And I may be old and fat ugly but I'm fun.

GARZA: You are amazing. You are amazing. You– yeah, I see the vivacious life and I'm like, wow, you are really enjoying it and I'm so grateful that we are able to do it out here. Not in there. It was tough during– it was tough for all of us.

TUCKER: Well it was really hard for you. You're young. You had your whole life ahead of you and it just screwed it up. You know. Now you're doing okay. I don't mean to do—

GARZA: No, no I understand.

TUCKER: But you missed your late teens and early 20s. And— you know, having no responsibilities. Just having fun.

That's so sad to me to watch those girls come from the Youth Offender program directly to prison. And their children.

And all they're going to learn is bad habits.

GARZA: That's true. There's no—

TUCKER: You were fortunate enough and smart enough to make friends who did not do that.

Didn't plot and plan and go underhanded it and do the wrong thing. The people you hung out with did the right thing.

And you did the right thing. You went to school. You got your braille.

You worked hard at it— and everything, you have you earned?

GARZA: Yeah, that's true. The— Geri brings up a great point, there are an element of— certain people behave a certain way.

Belinda. We love Belinda, but Belinda was able to get things, right?

[tech interruption 00:39:02]

GARZA: It's okay. We were just talking about like people like Belinda, who— I love the Belinda. You love Belinda. But Belinda, could get things. If.. Belinda was the person that you went to, I mean, there were certain people had to do certain things— Like, for example, Geri said that someone washed her clothes for her— that was considered a case. You know.

TUCKER: A big one.

GARZA: A big one, because someone was performing a service for you. Therefore, you were— that's not how the system is designed to work. And when we like— physically, Geri couldn't do the washing, because the clothes were like— you know, so her paying somebody to do that with commissary or whatever have you, it was against the rules. So there were certain

elements and things that we had to do to survive. So, that's what you mean, when you pick up bad habits and things, especially if that's all you know. Right?

TUCKER: Well, and people who— like at Christmas time, people would put in an order for turkey or ham or whatever, and the kitchen girls would wrap it up and bring it to them. That was a big No-No. But you're so hungry for real food. I can understand it.

GARZA: It definitely, it definitely is not what you see on TV. It's not Orange is the New Black. It is not anything like that. It's hard time.

Wouldn't you agree? Geri?

TUCKER: What?

Oh, yeah, it's hard out here at times, but it's better than hard in there. At least you have recourses out here. You can fix it and there you couldn't fix it. If it's something bad happened, it just happened.

And I don't know. I know the girls are having a really hard time. I'm sure the men are too, but I don't have any contact with any men. The only people I have contact with— one friend. Wrote me a letter, her mother died, and her son died. And there's nothing she can do about it, and she has cancer.

GARZA: Wow.

TUCKER: So, nothing she can do.

And I asked— she's at the hospital unit close by me, now. I asked my parole officer if I could go see her and he said no, I'm not family, so.

GARZA: Let me ask you— What about parole, Geri. How is that working out? Have you—

TUCKER: People are amazed? I report once a year. I have a home visit once a year. And he said, he would call me every once in a while just to see if I was still alive. I thought that was funny.

GARZA: So you did 32 years, got released, you know, you're on parole and you see them once a year (laughs).

TUCKER: Well, I am— When I first got out, of course we were living in Smithville then— and I saw my parole officer at the police station across the street once a week. I was on a monitor, for I guess it was, what? 15 months?

But after a year– well in the beginning, I had to make a schedule for everything that I did and it had to be stuff that– like I was going to the gym and I had to have a letter from a doctor saying that the gym was good for me.

I joined the local Cowboy Church, and I had to have a letter from the pastor. Saying that I was coming to church.

I had to– and then we're only certain things I could do. I could go to the grocery store. But everything in Smithville was walking distance.

Now there's everything, you can imagine around here from furniture to food and clothes, but the traffic is horrendous. And it scares me. So I don't go far. I do have my own car now. I bought her car, my daughter's car. And it's a big car. It's an old car, but it's a big car. It's an Escalade. And if anybody hits me, I won't die, but–

GARZA: How was it getting your license after being gone for so long?

TUCKER: That was funny, I've never had to parallel park in my life ever and I had to parallel park before I could do anything else. That was hilarious. I've practiced with my son-in-law's car and he has a little Acura...and I practiced with that and I took my test in that. And the lady was very patient with me, but it was funny. It was really funny. I guess I did it right or she wouldn't have given me my license. She told me I was too cautious.

GARZA: It's a good trait to have! It's a good trait to have after all this so...

TUCKER: Well, my grandson said, "if you go too slow, you're in the way and that causes accidents." So, I go the speed limit. Now, people pass me– I'm going 70, 75 and they're going 90, but I'm not going to go over 75 and get pulled over. I'm not. I don't really– having an officer walk up to my car, with his hand on his gun, would not thrill me.

GARZA: I don't blame you.

TUCKER: You know, I can't say that I have pleasant memories of being arrested, because they were not nice to me at all. But they– one of the detectives, I remember said, "you hate me, don't you?" I said, "no, I don't hate you. You just think you're doing your job." Notice the word "think".

Because it was unnecessary for them to talk to me the way they did. But I guess, you know, that's part of the job.

Not very (unintelligible) as a police officer. So I know that there's good and there's bad. But that's anywhere. Look at prison.

GARZA: True, true. Which brings me to my last question– What is a good memory, one of many? I'm sure that you've had, while we were there. If you can share it,

TUCKER: Oh gosh, to pick out a good memory?

GARZA: A funny one or something.

TUCKER: I'll tell you what, what really touched me the most was– I was running the sound system for one of our major Christmas programs that we had.

And one of the girls who I was really close to, Christy. You remember, Christy. She had the lead in one of these songs and I remember her standing up there and I started crying– like I would– I was running sound system and I start crying like I would if she was my own kid.

And you know, they're there were people that meant a lot to me. You still mean a lot to me.

They're people, I'm able to set aside, that will suck the life out of you if you let them, and some of them are free.

People who post a lot of negative stuff on Facebook. I just kind of scroll through it.

Be glad you're home. Be glad you're free. Say, "thank you. God," and move on.

But don't forget your sisters that you left behind. I can't do that. And of course, this friend, you know, she walked up to me the day that I walked out Mountain View and she said, "it's going to be all right," and it was– and we've been friends a whole time.]

GARZA: Yeah, I'm just glad that the friendship has evolved past the gates, you know, we're sitting here and we're gonna get together very soon. You look beautiful. I'm so happy to see you.

TUCKER: Come swimmin'!

GARZA: I'm going to come swimming in your pool, but I just want to thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today and just to share a little bit about your experience, because I truly believe you were someone that I thought of who did a lot of time and still came out, like– you have a heart of gold and I admire you so much for that. So I thank you very, very much, but do not hang up. I'm just going to stop the recording.

