CATES: You could tell me how long ago it was that you started working for him.

THOMAS: I don't know how long it's been but I worked for his mother and then after his mother died.

CATES: When did his mother pass away?

THOMAS: Man, I'm going to tell you, I don't know, I think she's been dead, if it ain't twenty years. It's twenty years, I know.

CATES: So you started working--

THOMAS: And see, after his mother died, he hired me.

CATES: Yes.

THOMAS: He hired me. He asked me would I stay on with him and I told him I would.

CATES: So actually you worked for his mother thirty-one years?

THOMAS: No, it was--altogether it was thirty-one years.

CATES: And what would you say was his favorite food? I meant, you said you primarily cooked for him, is that correct?

THOMAS: Well, he ate most anything I cooked; he never did say anything about it. He was a work person that he never did sit around. He liked everything I cooked.

CATES: I believe you told me he didn't like--

THOMAS: He didn't like asparagus, he told me that, here about, I don't know, sometime here last year. He said he never did like asparagus. But I thought he did. I thought he did. But he said he never did like it.

CATES: Had you ever fixed it for him before?

THOMAS: No, I just fixed it, you know, when they'd have company, and I thought he was eating it but he told me he never did like it.
CATES: Well, it seems that I think you told me yesterday maybe that he liked--

THOMAS: He loved to eat peas, black-eyed peas.

CATES: He liked those? And I think you mentioned that he liked onion casserole.

THOMAS: Yes. Oh, you must, were you there, didn't you come down here once? You never did come down here to eat. Yes, I fixed a onion casserole. They was good.

CATES: Yes.

THOMAS: He loved that and roast.

CATES: Well, did, how did you work this out because he was in Washington most of the time, was he not?

THOMAS: Well, you see, when he come home, that's what I was here cooking. I never did cook nothing much. I just cleaned house.

CATES: You cleaned house?

THOMAS: Kept the house clean and everything, you know.

CATES: Well, did you work for anybody else while you were working for him?

THOMAS: Sometime I'd go and help his brother, Mr. William, you know, Mr. William Russell and his wife. I just come over there it ain't been so long ago. He at home now.

CATES: He is, from Athens? I think you said he works in Athens.

THOMAS: Yes, sir, he do.

CATES: But anyway, you were on his payroll then from, well, since his mother died, is that right, so you didn't really work for anybody else?

THOMAS: No, you know get off in the evening, even now if I want to go with somebody wanted me (inaudible) like that but I never did, you know, take no regular job from anybody. I was just here. If I wants like I--like they want me this week I just go over this weekend and if they wants me next week I'll go over in the evening. I never did, you know, go in the morning no time much.

CATES: Well, when you first started working for Senator Russell, did you have a wooden stove or what kind of stove did you have to cook on?

THOMAS: We had a--we had a--I think they had done got an electric stove. His mother had a wooden stove. Used to, you know, they used to have the wood cut for the stove.
CATES: You feel like you can cook better on an electric stove or one of those wooden stove?

THOMAS: Oh, no, you can cook heap of things on an electric stove you couldn't cook on a wooden stove.

CATES: Just couldn't cook it on a wooden stove?

THOMAS: Cause you know a wood stove would get too hot, so I--he got a-- I think they had that electric stove before Mrs. Russell died, I believe they did. They did.

CATES: Well, when he came from Washington, did he usually bring house guests with him or did he come by himself?

THOMAS: No, he always brought Mr. Proctor; (Proctor Jones) would always come with him.

CATES: Was that one of his aides?

THOMAS: Well, that was one of his boys worked in his office with him.

CATES: I see. Well, when he was down here would he, let's see, he lives, or rather did live right across the road in that white house, is that right?

THOMAS: Yes.

CATES: Would he take long walks or did he exercise much?

THOMAS: Yes, sir, when he could, you know. Walk up to the cemetery and sometimes he'd ride up there, sometimes he'd walk.

CATES: You mean the cemetery behind his house?

THOMAS: Yes, sir.

CATES: Is that where he's buried?

THOMAS: Yes.

CATES: This is the first time I've been down there and I noticed this house across the road there. How many acres does he own?

THOMAS: Oh, my man, I can't tell you.

CATES: Can't tell me that?
THOMAS: No, you'll have to get some of his to get somebody else to tell you that. You'll have to get some of his people, his brothers to tell you that. I don't know.

CATES: Right. Well, somebody said that he owned some other property here in Winder, but you wouldn't know about that at Pea Hill or something?

THOMAS: No, sir. I don't know nothing about that.

CATES: You wouldn't know about that. Well, did anything ever amusing happen while you were working for him, anything funny like somebody telling me, and I don't know who this was, that you used to fuss at him a lot about the cat being in his lap and him feeding the cat while he was eating.

THOMAS: He used to have that cat, and that ain't the cat over there now, that cat got killed. He had a cat and any time he come in the house he'd let her in and I'd get and I'd just tell him, "You let that cat in the house, MR. R. B." and he'd look up at me, "That's your cat." I says, "Ain't my cat, it's yours." And he'd grin and he'd laugh. I said, "You one day and she's going to get up on this table." And she did get up on the table.

CATES: Did she eat much?

THOMAS: No, he called me to get him--to get her off. And then we laughed about that and he said, "Well, if the cat's gonna get up on the table, I'll just push her outdoors. But he would let her in and he'd say something to him, I know, he used to let her in, you know, when he'd come home from his office. He'd come home in the fall of the year and he'd go to his office and he'd come out to hone at night or either at dinner, to eat dinner, and the cat would be there on the porch and he'd just wander in, time he opened the door, the cat would just come on in.

CATES: Well, when he was away, you wouldn't let the cat in, is that right?

THOMAS: Well, like I always used to tell him, this cat hardly don't get in the house until you come home. He wouldn't do nothing but laugh.

CATES: My goodness.

THOMAS: But he sho was a good man.

CATES: He sure was. Somebody was saying that he always named the cat the same name. Is that right?

THOMAS: I don't know what he named that cat. I don't even know, I don't know what he called that cat.

CATES: How many cats did he have?
THOMAS: He didn't have but one and she had some little ole kittens but we always got rid of them.

CATES: Well, I meant over the years though, he had a number of cats, didn't he?

THOMAS: No, he never have had but one cat.

CATES: Just one cat?

THOMAS: And every time she had kittens, he'd do away with them, you know, give then to somebody.

CATES: Well, did he ever have any other kind of pets, animals, or a dog or anything like that?

THOMAS: No, he didn't have any while I was there. He loved the birds and things.

CATES: He would feed the birds?

THOMAS: He had a little; we got a little old bird feeder out there to give them some water, you know, just water--

CATES: Well, he didn't have, where did he live in Washington? He just lived in an apartment up there, didn't he?

THOMAS: I think he had an apartment up there somewhere. I never did go to Washington.

CATES: You never did go up there and cook for him or anything?

THOMAS: No, sir, no sir, no, sir. I stayed here. I never did go to Washington or anywhere. If he wanted me to go, I go, one time I was going up there, but I never did get the change to go.

CATES: I think I read somewhere in the paper that you were the only one that could really fuss at him.

THOMAS: I reckon it is. I didn't fuss at him, I just talked to him. I never did fuss at him. He didn't give no, he didn't give you no cause to fuss at him. He always read the paper all the time. If he wasn't reading the paper, he was looking at books, you know, reading books.

CATES: He never watched television?

THOMAS: Yes, he watched television. He's crazy about television. He'd watch it ever evening when he didn't have nothing to do after he got through reading the papers.

CATES: Did he have very many visitors down here?

THOMAS: Oh, you talking about (inaudible)
CATES: No, I meant really did. people drop in to see him much?

THOMAS: Yes, they would drop in to see him; some of his good friends would come to see him. Sometimes they'd eat dinner with him, sometimes he'd ask them for dinner. Usually if they'd come about dinnertime, he'd ask them.

CATES: How would you know how many to fix for?

THOMAS: Well, I--he--he would tell me like he's gonna have company like tomorrow, he'd tell me how many was coming and I'd just get a big old roast and if I didn't get no roast, I'd cook country-fried steak, you know. You eat country-fried steak, ain't you?

CATES: Oh, yes, I'm a native Georgian and I love that country-fried steak.

THOMAS: Country-fried steak and he liked that crust after you cooked it, you know, the brown to get it done and make the gravy over it.

CATES: What kind of gravy do they call that?

THOMAS: Brown gravy all I know.

CATES: Brown gravy, yes. And would you say that's one of his favorite dishes was the country-fried--

THOMAS: Yes, he loved that and roast. Well, Mr. R.B. wouldn't hardly, couldn't eat nothing.

CATES: How did you happen to call him Mr. R.B.?

THOMAS: I just always have called him Mr. R.B.

CATES: Were you the only one that called him that?

THOMAS: Nobody else called him that?

CATES: Seems like I read too where Fran Tarkenton was a friend of his, you know, the football player that used to play over at the University of Georgia, and I believe--

THOMAS: He loved those football games on television--

CATES: Yes, he watched--yes, he watched those a lot.

THOMAS: Yes, the ball games.

CATES: Would he actually eat in front of the TV set and watch the football games?
THOMAS: Sometime he would, most time he would, you know, when they was coming on, he'd look at it. (noise of train in background)

CATES: Did the train bother him?

THOMAS: No, the train didn't bother him. He wouldn't let the trains bother him.

CATES: I guess you get used to it.

THOMAS: Shut up in the house like over there, you couldn't hear that train, you could look out the window and see it.

CATES: Of course, we're much closer to the train track, I guess, than he would be. Does he, did he actually own this land, do you own the land?

THOMAS: No, sir, he owned the land,

CATES: He owned this land where this house is on?

THOMAS: Yes.

CATES: And so you just lived here rent-free. Would you mind telling me how much he paid you when you first started working for him?

THOMAS: Oh, he paid me, you know, things have went up, things was lower--

CATES: Yes.

THOMAS: But, I don't, he paid me $20.00--

CATES: $20.00 a week? Or $20.00 a month? $20.00 a week?

THOMAS: Yes. No. $20.00 a week, not on weekends. I used--I could a week, but he gave me $20.00 a week.

CATES: And that was thirty-one years ago. What was he paying you when he passed away?

THOMAS: That's what he was paying me when he passed away.

CATES: Oh. You mean--

THOMAS: I didn't have nothing to do wait until he come home but go over there and look at the house or just go back over there sometimes and dust, I'd dust everywhere every week and just look around.
CATES: So you were really more or less just a kind of caretaker without having to cook or to do anything like that? How does he heat his house, or how did he heat his house over there? Did he have a furnace?

THOMAS: He had them little gas heaters, you know, electric gas heater.

CATES: Radiant heaters?

THOMAS: You know, they run by gas, but it has a--two of them run by gas--by gas, I mean electricity, you know, and the rest of them you had to light them.


THOMAS: In tanks, you know.

CATES: Propane gas, yes.

THOMAS: Just like these folks got now. You know this gas.

CATES: When did he have that gas system put in?

THOMAS: Oh, he been had that put in for years and years.

CATES: You live here by yourself?

THOMAS: Oh, I got--I got two daughters and one boy that live with me.

CATES: (to child) Hi, how are you doing? Fine. Come on in.

CHILD: All right.

THOMAS: Them are my grandchildren.

CATES: These are your grandchildren here?

THOMAS: Sit down, now.

CATES: Hi, how are you doing? Is this you grand--

THOMAS: That's my--that's my baby girl.

CATES: That's your baby girl.

THOMAS: Yes.
CATES: I was just talking to your mother here about Senator Russell and what I'm doing is trying to get her to tell me some stories about Senator Russell that other people wouldn't know anything about. You know, you read about in the papers what a great man he was and what all he did in the Congress or the Senate, rather, and we don't know anything about his personal life, a lot of people don't and that's what we are trying to do now is to get something that we can send over to the University of Georgia when historians want to write a history about Senator Russell, then they can know about his personal life down here in Winder, Georgia. Do you know any interesting stories about Senator Russell?

CHILD: No, sir.

CATES: You don't?

THOMAS: All I can say is he just good, that's all I can tell you. I sho do miss him.

CATES: Well, he was certainly. I guess you do. I was figuring, let's see, he died when, on the, 21st, didn't he? 21st of January and today is February the 10th. How did you find out about his death? Did somebody, a member of his family tell you?

THOMAS: Miss Ina, she called me, his sister.

CATES: That's his sister? Where does she live?

THOMAS: She was up there. She stay in Atlanta. She was up there with him, she'd been up there, well, she had been up there with him.

CATES: She was up in Washington at the Walter Reed Hospital, I believe, wasn't she?

THOMAS: Yes, she called me that, I think it was that Monday, might have been Tuesday morning. She told me that she didn't think he was going to live much more longer. That's all she said. Then when he died, it come on the radio.

CATES: And you hear it actually over the radio?

THOMAS: Yes.

CATES: Did she call you first?

THOMAS: She called, but he didn't die that day.

CATES: I see. So you heard it over the radio. What was your initial reaction? I mean, did you break down and cry.

THOMAS: No, sir. I just, you know, we couldn't, I couldn't cry because it hurt me so, I couldn't cry.
CATES: Well, I didn't, I don't mean to--

THOMAS: In a way, I hate to go over to the house but I go on.

CATES: You hate to go over there now? What do you think they are going to do with the house?

THOMAS: Oh, I tell you the truth. I don't know what they are going to do with it. I hadn't heard none of them say. They may keep it.

CATES: Probably eventually they might make a museum of it, don't you guess?

THOMAS: I don't know. They ain't never said what they are going to do.

CATES: Did--how many rooms in that house over there?

THOMAS: Let's see--one, two--there's six rooms, I think, upstairs.

CATES: Six rooms upstairs? Is his bedroom up there?

THOMAS: Now there's, let's see, living room, dining room, and hall and another bedroom downstairs and the kitchen--

CATES: Did he have what they call a den?

THOMAS: No, they didn't have no den. You know, back then when they built that house they had a parlor and--

CATES: Parlor?

THOMAS: You come out from the living room, that's the living and that's the parlor back in there.

CATES: Did he have an open fireplace? Did he like an open fireplace?

THOMAS: Yes, they had open, we had open, you know them grates, you know.

CATES: Grates?

THOMAS: Throw in coal.

CATES: Did he burn coal? Or logs?

THOMAS: They used to burn coal a long time ago, you know, before this gas come out.

CATES: But he didn't have any open fireplaces now did he?
THOMAS: He left two open when he put that gas in.

CATES: Yes.

THOMAS: He had two of them left.

CATES: Did he ever burn coal?

THOMAS: No, he never did burn anymore coal after they put they gas in, you know, because it was in some other rooms there that nobody didn't stay in much, never did have them fixed.

CATES: Well, did he usually spend his holidays, like Christmas and Thanksgiving over there? Well, how about describing, if you could, say a typical Thanksgiving. Would he have Thanksgiving by himself or would all the Russells come over.

THOMAS: Oh, sometimes his baby sister Miss Carolyn would come sometimes for Thanksgiving.

CATES: From Thomson? Was she from Thomson? (children talking in background)

THOMAS: I think she stay in Thomson, Georgia.

CATES: I think--

THOMAS: At Christmastime, he would invite Mr--well, all of them that would come, you know, but I know Mr. William, he always generally come, Mr. William Russell and his wife, they would come over and Miss Carolyn, she would come.

CATES: Now, William Russell, is that his brother or his nephew?

THOMAS: Yes.

CATES: His brother. And so he would usually have maybe on Thanksgiving just his sister to come up and it'd just be--

THOMAS: Sometimes he didn't have nobody, just him and me, just me and him and Miss Ina.

CATES: Now, Ina, that's his sister?

THOMAS: Yes. Stacy, I call her Miss Ina, but most folks call her Mrs. Stacy, but I call, see, she was named after her mother--

CATES: Oh, she was? And your mother's name was Ina?

THOMAS: Yes, his mother's name was Ina.
CATES: His mother's name was Ina, right? So sometimes it would only by the three of you for Thanksgiving and then for Christmas you would have maybe more than that. Well, did he try to buy Christmas presents for all of his family at Christmas? They didn't exchange presents?

THOMAS: No, they would give him presents, he didn't try to buy no presents, I don't reckon, I didn't see him buying none.

CATES: Did he ever give you a Christmas present?

THOMAS: He give me a Christmas present.

CATES: You say he did?

THOMAS: Yes, sir, he always give me a Christmas present.

CATES: Would he pick it out himself or would it be money or what?

THOMAS: Well, he give me a little money.

CATES: A little money.

THOMAS: I hate to say this. I don't want it on that paper but he give me a little sometime. He never did, you know, he said he didn't know what to buy nobody for Christmas but he always give me a present.

CATES: But he wasn't very good at picking out Christmas presents, right?

THOMAS: No, he said he didn't--he didn't--wasn't so good at picking out presents for nobody.

CATES: Well, Modine, how did you take care of him? I know you cooked for him, and I know I saw this special on television and I guess you did to and what impressed me negatively was the effort that he had of breathing. You know, he just could hardly breathe. Didn't that worry you?

THOMAS: Yes, but he breathe pretty good, he just eat, when I got it done, he'd come on and eat. It didn't worry, it worried him--me but it didn't worry him too bad, it kind of worried him every morning to breathe a little, You know, you know when anybody got--

CATES: Emphysema?

THOMAS: That emphysema, you know how it is.

CATES: Did he have to keep oxygen over there?
THOMAS: No, he didn't keep no oxygen until he got, until here about here sometime here last year and he had some then. I don't know what he used. I never did see him use it but sometime he got, you know, he got so bad on it that he used it a lot. At times.

CATES: Well, did you ever see him at a point where he just couldn't, you know, breathe?.

THOMAS: I don't think so, (barely audible)

CATES: Well, when was it that he gave up cigar smoking? I understand that he used to smoke a lot of cigars.

THOMAS: Oh, he give up smoking before his mama died.

CATES: About twenty years ago, huh?

THOMAS: Yes, he give up that before his mama died.

CATES: Well, Modine, did you go to Atlanta with him when he was the governor or were you--you weren't working for them--

THOMAS: No, sir, I wasn't working for him when he was the governor. I wasn't working there at all.

CATES: Now you were working for his mother, though, right?

THOMAS: No, sir, I wasn't working for his mother when he was the governor. He got, well, he got out of the governor's place and got, you know, went to a senator and I wasn't--I wasn't working for her then. I would help her on Sunday, some--when her maid would be off, she would send for me to come and help her and I come up here on Sunday and help her cook dinner on Sunday some for her. I think it was once a month Lee would be off and she'd ask, she send for me to come and help her on Sunday.

CATES: Well, how did you feel about working for a person who was third in line to be President of the United States?

THOMAS: I felt all right.

CATES: Well, I meant, did you have any special feeling, I meant, did--did--were you impressed by his importance?

THOMAS: Who, about Mr--the Senator--Mr. R.B., oh, I just--I didn't--I just felt all right, it just made me feel happy. It makes you feel happy when you working for somebody, you know, who be, I mean, you know, like the President or the Senator. It just make you feel good.

CATES: Did any of your friends ever try to get you to introduce them to him or did they all know him.
THOMAS:  Most of my friends, most of my friends, knowed him, you know.

CATES:  Did he ever come over here and visit you in your house?

THOMAS:  No, sir, he didn't come--he come here one time, I think when he put the myrtle rose on he thought he had to look. Well, see he come over here when my boy got killed, he got over here. My boy got killed oil a Sunday, on a Saturday night and he come over here that Sunday, that Sunday evening talked to me.

CATES:  How long ago was that, Modine?

THOMAS:  My boy been dead about four--he got killed about four years ago. He got killed right up here by the train.

CATES:  Automobile accident?

THOMAS:  Yes, sir. Four--you heard about them three--didn't you hear about the three colored persons got killed and one white on one Saturday night in October--I think it was in October--October, November---it was October. I think it was the 30th. The 30th of October.

CATES:  About four years ago? Seems like I do remember that--

THOMAS:  Joe--one of them was named--the boy--one of the men was named Joe Brown, and my boy was named Richard--Richard Thomas.

CATES:  And the Senator was down here at that time.

THOMAS:  Yes. My boy just had worked for him. He worked that Saturday for him and got killed that Saturday night, he worked that Saturday morning. He would help him a little bit around the house.

CATES:  Do you remember what the Senator said to you that night? I meant he tried to comfort you, didn't he?

THOMAS:  Well, he didn't know it--I didn't know it until that morning, it was about--it was that Sunday morning--that Sunday, about around about twelve or one o'clock. But, no, he didn't--he didn't even call me. He called here that Sunday in the evening sometime talked to me.

CATES:  Do you remember what he told you?

THOMAS:  Well, he just told me he didn't, I don't know--and I thought I'd remember--he just said to me--he said, "I hate it, Modine."

CATES:  Did he attend the funeral?
THOMAS: Well, he woulda went but, see, it was cold that day I had the funeral. He called and told me he would go but he'd better just stay in because he was, he was, so quick, you know, he took--he was so quick to take a cold.

CATES: Yes, yes.

THOMAS: I told him, well, that would be all right. I'd rather for him to stay in than to take a cold.

CATES: How many children do you have, Modine?

THOMAS: Oh, I got two girls and I had three boys, but that one got killed, I got two boys now, That's my boy staying at the trailer, that's my oldest boy.

CATES: I see. And did he work for Senator Russell?

THOMAS: No, he was down here to the poultry.

CATES: I see.

THOMAS: Down here, you know, around the poultry,

CATES: Well, can you think of any important people that ever came down to see Senator Russell during his lifetime while you were working with him and for him?

THOMAS: Oh, Mr. Thompson, I don't know what he go by. He stay in Atlanta and he one of Mr. R.B.’s good friends. He used to come to see him. Mr. Thompson, he old then.

CATES: Would that be Governor M. E. Thompson, you think?

THOMAS: Well, I don't know who--what he went by but his name, all I know he was just Mr. Thompson. He a good friend of Mr. R. B.

CATES: Did President Johnson or anybody like that ever come by and visit with Senator Russell?

THOMAS: No, sir. Not as I knows of, now. I couldn't tell you. He was, in in the evening when I leave there, I would, I don't know who come in the evening. But he'd talk to a lot of his friends on the telephone and everything.

CATES: Would Senator Russell talk to you much about what went on in Washington?

THOMAS: No, sir. He didn't talk to me none about what went on in Washington. I never did sit down and talk with him much, no more than at night when I got supper going, and he'd asked me
to come in there and sit in there and look at the television and I'd go in and look at television until he got ready to eat.

CATES: What were some of his favorite programs besides sports?

THOMAS: Well, he listened at the news, you know, and then if a ball game was on he'd sit there and look at it. And some of them was cowboy.

CATES: He liked cowboy movies?

THOMAS: Well, sometime they'd come on, he'd look, he'd tell them to just stay and look at it. He liked some cowboys but some of them he didn't. I wouldn't like that myself.

CATES: Right, right. How about comedies, did he like comedy programs like "I Love Lucy" or some of those programs?

THOMAS: I don't think he liked that so much.

CATES: He didn't?

THOMAS: No, sir.

CATES: Do you think he really liked to come down to Winder?

THOMAS: Yes, sir. He loved to come to Winder. He said he loved to come to Winder because this is his home place, you know, the one he was born at. I guess every chance he got he'd come.

CATES: How did he usually get here?

THOMAS: Oh, he come in the plane and he used, a long time ago he used to come on the train. When they got the planes, he'd come down in the plane.

CATES: Would they let him off right there at his house?

THOMAS: No, sir. You know when they build this airport--

CATES: No, I'm talking about on the train, you know, the train--

THOMAS: Oh, no, he go on up here in Winder and get off.

CATES: He'd get off in Winder? Where is the closest airport to Winder? Would that be in Athens?

THOMAS: Right down here. Right down the road here. They made an airport down here--down here below the Chapel Church, I guess you heard talk about the Chapel Church, on down the highway, see there.
CATES: And he'd come in by jet plane, would he?

THOMAS: I don't know what kind of plane he come in on He'd come in on a plane.

CATES: How long did it usually take him to come down from Washington?

THOMAS: About two, about two or three hours--

CATES: Two or three hours? But he--would you say that he liked living in Washington better than Winder or you think he liked maybe both living down here some--

THOMAS: I think he liked the both of them.

CATES: He liked both.

THOMAS: Oh, yes.

CATES: Did he eat grits? What did he eat for breakfast? Did he eat grits?

THOMAS: Well, whatever he wanted. Sometime grits and sometimes poached eggs and sometimes oatmeal.

CATES: Well, what did you generally fix him for breakfast? Or did he leave it up to you?

THOMAS: I would ask him and he'd tell me and I'd have it fixed. He say sometimes he wanted a poached egg and I'd fix it on toast with milk and sometimes he wanted scrambled eggs. Whatever he wanted fixed I'd fix it for him.

CATES: What time did he generally eat breakfast?

THOMAS: Well, he'd eat sometime around about 9:30 and sometimes 10:00 o'clock, you know, when you work so hard, he'd work so hard when he'd first get down here and he'd get up and stir around, most times it was about 9:30, when he ate.

CATES: And then when would he eat lunch?

THOMAS: Well, whenever I got it done and put it on the table and called him.

CATES: What would he generally eat for lunch?

THOMAS: Well, whatever I fixed and I fixed peas and onions, that onion you called.

CATES: Onion casserole?
THOMAS: Casserole. Sometime I fixed that and sometime I'd cook a roast either or either fry country-fried steak. Whatever I cooked, he ate it; he didn't say a word. And I'll say it, he just one person that was pleased about his something to eat.

CATES: Well, now, if you fixed him a big lunch, would he eat left-overs for supper?

THOMAS: No, I fixed him something else at night. I wouldn't let him eat the same thing. No, sir. I wouldn't let him eat the same thing I fixed for dinner.

CATES: What time would he eat dinner at night, supper?

THOMAS: Well, sometimes he'd eat pretty early, sometimes he wouldn't. It's according to when I got over there and got it done.

CATES: And what time would he go to bed? You say he'd get up about 9:30 in the morning and eat breakfast--

THOMAS: Well, I don't know. Sometime he'd go to bed, I don't know, sometime he went to bed around about 9:30 or 10:00 o'clock, I reckon, I'd leave from over there. He'd be up when I leave. I couldn't tell you what time he--

CATES: So you'd come back over here by 10:00?

THOMAS: Well, I'd be mostly about 9:00. 9:00, something, sometime I stay--I wash the dishes, you see, and that would make it about 9:00.

CATES: Did you have a dishwasher?

THOMAS: Well, they had one and it played out and I never did--because I didn't care nothing about that dishwasher. Cause you had to wash the dishes to put them in there and then I'd just soon to wash them.

CATES: How about washing his clothes and ironing, did you do any of that?

THOMAS: No, sir. He sent out his clothes to the laundry.

CATES: Did he take starch in his shirts?

THOMAS: Well, he used to,] He told me he used to tell me to tell them not to put it. They got to the place, they quit putting starch in his shirts. I guess it rubbed his neck, you know. They starch them so they'll be stiff why somebody even put a little bit in there, you know, because like your shirt's ironed, they wouldn't be too much but they'd be ironed slick, you know.

CATES: Well, now, in his later years, was he able to get around over there and go upstairs?

THOMAS: Oh, yes. He never did quit going upstairs.
CATES: You say he never did quit going upstairs?

THOMAS: No, sir, No, sir, he never did quit going upstairs.

CATES: Well, now, was he born in that house over there?

THOMAS: No, sir, I don't think so. I don't know what house he was born at, I was born somewhere around here in Winder but I don't know what house it was. I heard them talking about it but I don't know. Some of the other family could tell you better than I could.

CATES: Well, now, you knew his father, did you not?

THOMAS: Oh, yes, sir, I knowed Mr. Judge.

CATES: What did you call him, Mr. Judge?

THOMAS: Yes, sir, I called him Mr. Judge. Yes, sir, that's what I called him. I was raised to call folks, you know, I wasn't raised to call anybody Judge or something like that. He had a good father too. His mother, oh, his mother was so good.

CATES: Well, tell me a little something about his mother.

THOMAS: Oh, she was just, she was just good. Oh, I don't know. I know that she was good to me.

CATES: Would you say Senator Russell was more like his father or more like his mother?

THOMAS: He was more like Mrs--he was more like Mrs. Russell, I think. Now some folks may say he like his father but he had, you know, he had more ways like Mrs. Russell. He favored Mrs. Russell. At time I'd tell him, "I believe, Mr. R.B., you so like your mama."

CATES: And he'd agree with you?

THOMAS: Yes. He said he was sort of like Mrs. Russell at times.

CATES: Would that please him?

THOMAS: Yes, sir. He was nice, he was a good man. That's all I can say.

CATES: Well, tell me something about his father.

THOMAS: I don't know anything about his father.

CATES: Don't know anything about his father?
THOMAS: No, sir, I didn't, you know, talk with him much about anything. I didn't know him like I did Mr. R.B. I know about Mr. R.B. I know he was good. I can tell anybody that.

CATES: Did he, what church did he go to?

THOMAS: I don't know. I can't name the church he went to.

CATES: Did he go here in Winder?

THOMAS: Yes, he went to Winder to church, went to one out yonder too they said. You know, I wasn't, I can't tell you about where he went out yonder in Washington but when he was up here in Winder.

CATES: Did he teach Sunday school or was he active in Sunday school?

THOMAS: No, he wouldn't get there for no Sunday school. He went to church.

CATES: He wouldn't?

THOMAS: I guess he went to Sunday school enough when he was little, I reckon.

CATES: He was a Methodist, was he not?

THOMAS: Yes, sir, I think he was a Methodist. I think, now, I ain't going to be for sure.

CATES: Was he an elder in the church?

THOMAS: I couldn't tell you. All I know he just went. Oh, I'm sorry.

CATES: That's all right. That's OK. Is this your other daughter?

THOMAS: Yes, sir.

CATES: How are you doing?

GIRL: Fine.

CATES: I'm just talking to your mother here about Senator Russell and I don't know if she told you I was coming down here today and we are going to put some of the things that she tells us over at the University of Georgia over at the Russell Memorial so historians and researchers in the future will know something about the personal aspect of Senator Russell. So that's what we are doing right now. Have you got anything you'd like to say about the Senator?

GIRL: No, no.

CATES: No?
THOMAS: She just, they just went over there to see him.

CATES: They just went over there to see him occasionally?

THOMAS: Yes, sir.

CATES: Did they ever work over there helping you clean the table or anything?

THOMAS: No, sir. They never did work over there.

CATES: Well, how long has your family lived in Winder?

THOMAS: I been here pretty good while. I don't know how many years I been here.

CATES: Were you born here?

THOMAS: I was born down here at Statham.

CATES: Statham?

THOMAS: Yes. My family, my daddy and mother are dead. My mama died when I was 5 1/2 years old.

CATES: And they worked for the Russell's, did they?

THOMAS: No.

CATES: They did not?

THOMAS: We were staying at Pendergrass when my mama died and we didn't move back from Pendergrass down here until my daddy did. I married down here.

CATES: Did your husband work for the Russell's?

THOMAS: Yes, he worked for Mr. William Russell when he was farming, you know. Mr. William used to farm way years ago.

CATES: Did he work for him up until his death or is he dead?

THOMAS: Oh--

CATES: Your husband?
THOMAS: No, sir, he didn't work for Mr. William until he died but, you know, he farmed a lot with him and worked the crops for him and my husband was working up here at a plant when he died.

CATES: Well, do you, did you, you'd say that you really liked working for Senator Russell, didn't you?

THOMAS: Yes.

CATES: What did you like most about working for him?

THOMAS: Well, I liked everything because he never did, he never did say nothing to me, I mean he never did say nothing. Whatever I done, it was all right.

CATES: Did he ever praise you for doing a good job?

THOMAS: Oh, yes, he used to tell me, "Sho was good," when I cooked meals for him. "Sho was good." Yes, he praised me. I, you know, he never, you know, he didn't know nothing about cooking, cleaning, or nothing. Look like it pleased him everything I done.

CATES: Did you ever see him get mad at anybody?

THOMAS: No, I didn't see him get mad at nobody.

CATES: Never did get mad with anybody, huh?

THOMAS: No, I never seen him mad with anybody. Same thing when I see'd him, same thing when he died.

CATES: When was the last time you saw him alive?

THOMAS: Oh, he was down here in November. He went back some time in November. I don't know what, I don't know what the day, I don't, I didn't even look. It was the, you know, it hadn't been about a month. He down here in November. But he went back, it was sometimes that month but I don't know what day of the month it was.

CATES: So he wasn't down here for Christmas then?

THOMAS: No, no, he wasn't down here at all for Christmas.

CATES: What was the last thing he said to you before he left? Do you remember his last words?

THOMAS: He never said nothing to me that day he left. He called me two weeks before Christmas, asked me how was everything--he always generally called me and asked me how was everything and all how all of them doing and I'd tell him. I told him everything was all right and all. And I told him I hadn't even decorated the house, well I hadn't decorated, I hadn't put up the
Christmas tree when he called me. It was about, I think it was two weeks before Christmas. And he was asking me how was everything and all. But I just knowed he was coming home. I had, I had that Christmas tree was so pretty.

CATES: You decorated it by yourself? Did you always decorate it? Every Christmas?

THOMAS: It was a--it was a bought Christmas tree but, see, I decorated it, put some lights round it and all snow stuff, you know, and silver stuff. It was hanging down just like a--like it was a freeze-on, you see these freeze on trees.

CATES: Right.

THOMAS: And I had bought a blinking, one of them blinking stars sit right up on top of it, sho was pretty.

CATES: And he never did see that though, did he?

THOMAS: No, sir, he never did see it.

CATES: And you'd go out and just buy this and charge it to his account, would you?

THOMAS: No, his sister, you know.

CATES: She'd do it?

THOMAS: She bought, she helped me, I went, I just told her, she do it, she'd keep an account on it for him, this lady would bring it, she done it but I went up there with, her and told her--decorate it and got me some stuff up there to decorate it. He always happy but I wanted some more.

CATES: You really wanted to make it pretty this time?

THOMAS: I--it sho was pretty.

CATES: Well, you say he would call you about every two weeks then, is that right?

THOMAS: No, sir, he called me two weeks before Christmas and I talked with him.

CATES: Did you have a key to his house then and would you go over there while he was away?

THOMAS: Oh, yes, I'd go over there every morning about nine and look around.

CATES: Did, he send you a Christmas present last Christmas?

THOMAS: No, he didn't send me nothing this last, past Christmas. No, sir, he didn't send me nothing. I guess he might have forgotten.
CATES: Well, he may have been in the hospital. I'm not really sure when he went in the hospital then.

THOMAS: Might have forgot it. He might have forgot it. He might have just going give it to me when he come home. I guess he just, I don't know--

CATES: What would you say was the happiest time you were working for him? What period of time?

THOMAS: My happiest time?

CATES: Your happiest time, yes.

THOMAS: My happiest time was always when he'd be at home. I'll be glad, I be I was glad when he come home because I knowed. My happiest time was always, you know, I just been, I was just happy with him. If he left I was happy, if he come home I was happy. He was just a person, you just, you know, I just--I just had my work, what I cooked--what I cooked it was all right and what I done was all right. You know, some people, you work for them and you do what you do and they don't appreciate it and have something to say about it. But he never did say nothing about me, he never did say nothing about it. He was always bragging on my work.

CATES: Did you worry about him when he was in Washington and wasn't eating your cooking?

THOMAS: Yes, I thought about him a lot of times. I told him I thought about-- but he used to go out and eat but I guess after he got in the hospital he couldn't eat what he want, I reckon, I don't know.

CATES: Did he have someone to cook for him up in Washington or do you know?

THOMAS: No, sir, I don't know, I don't know nothing about that.

CATES: Did you say he invited you to come up there and cook for him?

THOMAS: He asked me a time or two to go back with him and stay a while with him. And I told him, "Well, I'll go up there in a month." I just kept putting him off, I'd say, "I'll go next time. I'll go next time."

CATES: You never did go up there?

THOMAS: No, sir, but I was intending to go with him if he had a come home, had a lived to got back home and went back I was going up there.

CATES: So this last time you were going back up there?

THOMAS: Yes, if he had a come home but you-know, he died.
CATES: Well, you wouldn't want to have left your family, would you?

THOMAS: Oh, they wouldn't have cared. I don't--they--I had--I had told them I may go back with Mr. R.B. when he come back. They said, "Well. That's all they said.

CATES: Who would you say was Senator Russell's closest friend?

THOMAS: Man, he had so many friends, I couldn't tell you. He just had so many friends I couldn't tell you. I think everybody.

CATES: Everybody was his friend.

THOMAS: That knowed him.

CATES: He was a real friendly man?

THOMAS: Yes. He sure was.

CATES: And he never complained?

THOMAS: No, he didn't complain.

CATES: Did he have a favorite story or did he tell jokes much? Did he ever tell you a joke? No?

THOMAS: No, he never did tell me a joke. I never did hear him tell no joke much.

CATES: You said he read a lot---excuse me, go ahead.

THOMAS: He never did tell no jokes much. I didn't hear him. He might have told other people, but I didn't hear him. He always--he always read the paper most of the time, you know.

CATES: Well--

THOMAS: Books, like that. I guess he had to be a senator like he was. That man, he had a good education. He had a lot of sense, didn't he?

CATES: He sure did from what I understand reading in the paper.

THOMAS: Least he had--he couldn't have been a senator like he was.

CATES: You know, some people have book sense but they don't have common sense. But he had common sense.

THOMAS: Good constitution. He had good constitution. And I know I couldn't have done it, carrying on what he carried on, everything in Washington.
CATES: Did--was he ever worried, could you tell? I meant, you know, when you are around somebody you can tell if they are worried or not. He never seemed to be worried?

THOMAS: He never did look like he was worried. He never did look like he was worried.

CATES: Did he have trouble sleeping ever?

THOMAS: He would sleep. No, he ain't somebody couldn't sleep.

CATES: Modine, would you mind telling me what your age is?

THOMAS: Well, I'm fifty-four years old.

CATES: Fifty-four years old and you've got how many children, did you say?

THOMAS: I got two girls and two boys.

CATES: And one boy that is deceased?

THOMAS: I had five.

CATES: You had five. And how many grandchildren do you have?

THOMAS: Let me see. Two, three, three girls and one boy, that's four. I got six grandchildren.

CATES: Six grandchildren? They all live in this area, do they?

THOMAS: No, there's two of them in Atlanta.

CATES: Do you think the world is a better place in which to live because of Senator Russell and his position in the Senate?

THOMAS: Well, I don't know. I don't know about how it going to come out now. I don't know how the Senate is going to come out up there in Washington now. He kept down a whole lot of stuff for them. Everybody knewed that. What he did was, I don't know, he just had a lot of sense, all I can tell you, he just had a lot of sense.

CATES: Well, now, we might just, you know, call this interview to a close unless you think of something else that you might like to tell me about the Senator that would help future historians, you know, these researchers that are going to be coming to the University of Georgia in the future, they are going to be taking these interviews and reading them and looking at them i hopes to get a clearer insight into the personality of Senator Russell. Can you think of anything else you might want to say about the Senator?

THOMAS: No, no sir. I can't think of nothing else.
CATES: In the thirty-one years that you worked for him, any humorous thing that happened? Any unusual thing that happened to him that you have first-hand knowledge of?

THOMAS: I can't think of nothing. No, I can't think of nothing else. That's all I--all I know. He just was good, all I tell anybody that.

CATES: He was good and he was easy to please.

THOMAS: Sho was.

CATES: Never did complain. And you are going to miss him?

THOMAS: Yes.

CATES: You miss him already?

THOMAS: I miss him now.

CATES: You really hate to go over there into the house, huh?

THOMAS: You just think about it. I think about my boy what's gone sometimes.

CATES: You just have to drive those thoughts out of your mind, huh?

THOMAS: Yes--

CATES: And keep going on, huh?

THOMAS: Yes.

CATES: Well, Modine, thank you very much and if you happen to think of anything else, I'll be glad to come back down here and talk to you about it and I really appreciate your time.

THOMAS: Yes. If I think of anything I'll let you know.