

Priscilla Teter: (Grace?) Teter.

Michael Kline: And you used to be?

PT: Biby.

MK: Biby.

PT: B-I-B-Y. Priscilla Biby.

MK: Where were you raised?

PT: Pardon?

MK: Where were you raised?

PT: Here. This is my home place.

MK: This is your...

PT: This is my home place. Yes.

MK: And your mother and dad? Who are they? Who are your parents?

PT: (Francis Marion?) Biby and Bessie Catherine Painter.

MK: Bessy?

PT: Catherine Painter.

MK: Painter-Biby.

PT: Right.

MK: And who were her people?

PT: Noah Painter and (Isabel Hedrick?). She was (Hedrick?) before she was married. That was my grandparents.

MK: Have they lived here a long time in the...

PT: My dad and mom.

MK: Had there been several generations of them?

PT: No, they were from down in Seneca. But my dad was raised over here in the garden right

back over there, and then they built this house when he was nine years old. And he moved here and he lived here all of his life.

MK: And how long had they lived over in the garden there? Was his dad born there?

PT: No.

MK: Who was his dad? Who was your grandfather?

PT: Joseph Wilson Biby. He was a schoolteacher from Doe Hill, and he met my grandmother, and they were married. I don't know where, but around here somewhere.

MK: Was there a lot of kids in your family?

PT: Six.

MK: Who were they?

PT: Joseph Biby, myself, and Bonnie Shirk, and Margaret Landis, Catherine McMillion, and Faye Kennedy.

MK: Lot of girls.

PT: Five girls, one boy.

MK: Have they got pretty well scattered now?

PT: The three are in Baltimore. My three sisters are in Baltimore, and then my brother is up here. And I live here, and then my sister is down in Fork. But we were in Baltimore – I worked 32 years at Martin Marietta in Baltimore, and Catherine worked 28 years at S.K.

MK: Then you all came back here?

PT: Well, when her husband retired, she came back a year before I did. And we lost my dad in [19]66, and then Catherine and I, we would work – we'd come home most every weekend. When my mom was here by herself, we would have someone stay with her. But then we would come back most every weekend, and then finally, when my husband retired – he worked 28 years at the County of Springfield Power Company, and he retired in, I guess, probably [19]72. And then I came home in February and he retired in October, because we had property here and my – we had a man here taking care of him. But he drank all of the time, so I'd just taken my retirement several months before my husband did, and I came home and done the feeding and stayed with my mom. And of course, Catherine and John had moved down there then. Well, then a couple years later – I don't remember just what year – his dad died, and he was from over at (Brannick?), [inaudible], and then when his dad died, well, his mom and his aunt came here and lived in the trailer there next to Catherine and John. And then his mom, God's sake, she was in the hospital a couple weeks, and then Catherine brought her home and she died. And then

they had (Pearl?) just still lived there alone by herself. But Catherine, when she was (sporadic?), she could have school. She came down to Maryland, where I was, and she was with me all of the time. She lived with me.

MK: How much younger was she?

PT: Ten years. And they went to move back up here. I moved back up here. And then my husband broke down with leukemia. But then she went with me to the hospital.

MK: When your husband was sick? Where was that in [inaudible]?

PT: Harrisonburg.

MK: Harrisonburg.

PT: She just stayed right there with me all the time

MK: How long was he sick?

PT: Forty days and nights at one time. But he really took bad in November in [19]79. But my mom was still living in – she stayed with my husband and I here. But before he came home, I went out to milk one morning, and I come back and my mom had turned the gas on, the stove, and had lit the oven. And she had sugar. She was diabetic. And she would take – I don't know what kind of spells they were, but she would completely pass out and you had no signs of it at all unless that you would see her eyes and they would get great big. So Catherine taking her down there and kept her, because I had to be out a lot. And then mommy went to the hospital, and, well, we lost her March 31st in [19]79. And then in November, my husband was starting to go downhill, but we didn't know he had leukemia. He went to work one day at the (kelly?) and he come home, and I ask him why that he was home and he said, well, he had a hernia. They found he had a hernia and wouldn't let him work. So he'd come home and, well, we'd taken him back to Cumberland, my sister and I, to have his operation. And we was going to stay down there with him, but they didn't operate on him. He had a foreign doctor. I never cared for him anyway, but my husband liked him, so that was all that counted. But we went down there, and I went up and I asked the nurse – when they didn't operate on him, I went up and asked the nurse, and she said, “Well, call his doctor.” And I called the doctor, and he said, “Your husband has leukemia, but for God sakes, don't tell him. I'll tell him my own self when the time comes.” This was over the phone. So I came on back. We came on back home, and then we went back later for his operation. But the guy from the (kelly?) that operated on him come out and talk to me, and he told me that he had known people living 17 years with it, but my husband didn't. He died the 27th of March and was buried just a year from the day that my mom died in '80.

MK: Hard times for you. Did you raise children?

PT: No. I have no children.

MK: [inaudible]

PT: Catherine had no children either.

MK: Aside from the past five years, then, it seems like you've been up here pretty well by yourself?

PT: Yes.

MK: Roger lives on a (buggy?)?

PT: He lives up there in my husband's home place.

MK: And he's been a lot of help, I guess.

PT: Yes, he has. I mean, over at – that lawyer there in (Elkinson?), and he said there was no two women could ever live in the same house together. Catherine says, "Oh, yes, I can." Of course, she said, "Me and (Bill?) has." We were all close, but not like we were – I called her that morning and told them to get out. It was time for them to get out, and she says, well, Aunt Pearl had a leak in her roof and she didn't want to leave. And so Roger took my sister-in-law somewhere, and he come back and he says, "Well, they'd better be getting out of there fast." And then he went up above the road, the [inaudible] my basement. And Catherine called and said, "Come and get him," but I couldn't understand why that John didn't take that car and get out there. I just can't understand. But those friends, or those neighbors that lived below there, they had some hogs or something, and John was out there on the porch asking if they got the hogs. And he just didn't seem like he was in any hurry, I guess, to leave, but if I'd only send Roger when he told me the water was getting up, but I think it was God's will, because they went out about three months before that and they all bought their cemetery lots. And, of course, she, Aunt Mary, was taken back to Lewisburg, and there is where Pearl was supposed to go. But I don't know what changed her mind, but they all three went up there and bought their cemetery lots at North Fork. And then there's just other little things that Catherine would say. She asked me to wash her rugs. She says, "I'm in no hurry for them. I may never put them down again anyway," and just little things like that.

MK: Do you think she knew?

PT: I really do. I really do. And then there was couple other little incidents. We was talking about going in a home. You know, of course, there was quite a bit of difference in John's and Catherine's ages, and she said, "Well, you'll never go in a home as long as I live, but if I'm not here I can't do anything about it." So that was another thing she had never said. But I really think [inaudible]. I really do.

MK: Was that a pattern all through her life?

PT: No.

MK: That she could be psychic about things?

PT: No. We were coming back from the hospital. I had broke my ankle in the 31st of July. She come up here. We were supposed to have a reunion that – there were along the 1st of August. And she came up here, and Tommy, my niece's little boy, came up, stayed with me in the summer and helped us. And he and I were waiting supper, and I get up. I said, "I have to go to the bathroom." And Catherine came up that evening, and she was going to go with me. We were going to go over to (Elpins?) and pick up the things we needed for the reunion. And I just get up and put my foot under that magazine rack, and I fell and broke my ankle. Well, John hadn't been gone from here 10 minutes, and she called for him to come back and take me to the hospital, and he came back and he took me to the hospital. And, well, the doctor says, "Well, I'm going to have to – due to the break of your ankle, you'll have to stay." And Catherine didn't want to come home, and I says, "Well, now, you can't come over and get Mr. and Mrs. (Eckhart?) up now," because they were where we stayed and we come to find that she has leukemia. And I said, "You go on home. I'll be all right." And he says, "Yes, you better get out," because he said, "I'm going to have to hurt her," and he says, "You better leave." So she left, and he put my foot in a cast. Then the next morning, she was there real early, and she stayed with me until I come home. And then I went down there and stayed with her. And then when there was something up here to be done, well, we'd come up here and do it, and then I'd go back down there. So, I stayed there with her until, well, just maybe a month or something like that before the flight came.

MK: Stayed with her?

PT: Yeah, I stayed down with Catherine and John. And, see, I was on a walker, and so I stayed there with them, and John would help me get in and out of the car. And he had a little Pepsi Cola box there that I – or milk box, I think it was – and he'd sat down on the step and then I was tall enough that I can sit down on that, and then he'd swing me around and that's the way he could get me up the steps. But John was really good to me. Yes, he was. I thought the world of him. And any time I wanted John to do a favor for me, if I'd want him to go to Petersburg for feed or something and I'd [inaudible] with him sometimes. Sometimes I wouldn't – depended on what Roger was doing. And I'd go down and stay with Catherine until they went and got my feed and brought it back, and John would do anything for me. They were really wonderful. Now Aunt Pearl, she was entirely different from John's mom. She was very shy. You know, she wouldn't sit down and hold a conversation or anything too much. But now John's mom, she was so full of life and loved to tell jokes. I know we went down there once, my husband and I, and Catherine had a wig. And she puts this wig on and puts an apron over her head, and she went out the back door and come around the front, knocked on the door, and wanted to see Mr. Teter. And, you know, [inaudible]. She really was dressed up and she got the biggest kick out of that, but she was really full of life, John's mom was. She took sick and she had strokes, and she just kept having little strokes and little strokes until they finally paralyzed her throat.

MK: She had lived with them for a while then, Catherine and John.

PT: No, she and Aunt Pearl lived together after John's dad died, and they lived over near Lewisburg, and, see, they came over here. And then after John's mom died, now, Aunt Pearl wouldn't go live with Catherine and John. She stayed in her own trailer and did her own work.

But had it been Aunt Mary – and Aunt Pearl didn't want to go anywhere. Now she would go back to Lewisburg, where she came from, but as far as visiting anyone else or going anywhere else, she did not want to go. We had been, I guess, three or four years that she hadn't been up here. But now, Aunt Mary, any time you wanted to go anywhere, she was ready to go, now, and just entirely different. Yeah.

MK: You said a while ago you thought that it was meant to be, that they might have had some –

PT: I really do. And then there was some other little incident, but right now I can't think of it that Catherine had said to me. But I just can't think of it right now.

MK: Does that make it easier for you to accept what happened?

PT: Well, it'll never be easy. But I think that's the way God planned it. I really do.

MK: Do you think you'll ever get over the sadness involved with your sister's and family's death?

PT: I think eventually.

MK: This might sound like an unusual question, but because of the kind of work that I do, we sometimes have to ask unusual questions, but is there anything that you're afraid might happen if you were to let go of the sadness involved with their death [inaudible]?

PT: No. Some days I'm better than others, but it'll take a while.

MK: Do you think that that sadness, perhaps, has some kind of a valuable purpose or useful function for a person?

PT: Well, at first, the first death we ever had in our family was my dad, and we was close as Catherine and I, and I lost 50 pounds when he died. It took a long time to get over that, although I was fortunate I was working, and my bosses were very, very good to me. And they would come and talk to...

MK: What do you think is standing in the way of your getting over the sadness involved with their deaths right now?

PT: It was just the love I had for him.

MK: So you loved him a lot, huh?

PT: Yes, I did. I never kept a meal down. I'd eat and vomit. That's what I did all the time. I lost 50 pounds. I went from 180 to 130 when my dad died.

MK: Yeah. Did you eventually get over the sadness of your father's death?

PT: Yes. Well, then there was my mother and my husband a year apart, and now Catherine.

MK: That's a lot of sorrow in a pretty short space of time, isn't it?

PT: Indeed, it is.

MK: How do you feel about your life now with so many loved ones and close relatives that are gone?

PT: Well, there isn't much I can do about it, only just take a day at a time. But I think with Helen here close to me, I will eventually get over it, but it'll take a time. But she will be a big help to me.

MK: Do you feel any changes taking place? Do you feel like there's been any type of improvement in the way that you feel in the last couple of months?

PT: Yeah. I'm not this way all the time, but I found the hardest thing that I had to do since Catherine died was to go to Harrisonburg, because she was with me there all of the time. We was there with mom together. We was there with Brook together. And she was there with me, and it was the hardest day I ever had when I had to go to (my ankle?). I don't think I have to go back anymore now. And then this lady, Ms. (Eckhart?), where we stayed, it was just like home. It was a older man and his wife, and they rent these houses there at the hospital. And then when people are from a distance, you know, some of the family has to stay. Well, they take the family in, and there's where we were when mommy was sick and where my husband was sick, and then Catherine stayed there when I had my ankle broken. And I didn't want them to let Ms. (Eckhart?) know it, but she found it in the paper and she called me, because she's very sick now, too. They discovered she has leukemia, and she's very sick. But she really taken it hard when she found out about Catherine. But I had prepared to go see her. I'd taken her some steak and some eggs and things, and I had prepared to go see her. I'd taken a couple nerve pills. And when I got there, she wasn't home, but I left it in the doorway for her. And then I called her that night, because I thought she might be back in the hospital again, and she said no. They had gone out to eat. But then I had a letter from her just the other day telling me that she's very sick again with that leukemia, and I just don't look for her to – from what my husband went through, I think she's going through the same thing right now with that weakness and all, and I just don't look for her to make it too long.

MK: What are some of your other recollections about the flood?

PT: Well, I know it kept raining and kept raining. Catherine always called me four or five times a day and I'd call her, and I told them to get out. But my sister-in-law was here, and she wanted to go up to her house, and you couldn't get up to her house. And she had Roger to take her somewhere. I don't know where they went. And then I was here by myself, and, course, I knew it was raining, but I didn't realize that it was going to be a flood. And then my nephew had moved up here from Pennsylvania, and he had put all of his furniture in my garage on a Sunday. And I went out and I discovered that the rain, it was running in my garage. Well, I was out there trying to bail water out. And then the first thing I knew, when it starts to come down here by this

big rock, then I get – one time before, I had water in my basement only. And then when that water came in, well, I just went down in the basement so I'd get away from my sister-in-law, because she had me drove crazy. And I was down there bailing water when Linda and (Lindsay?) came to me, and that was the first ones that had gotten to me since the flood. And so she came and stayed with me for four days and nights. She stayed here with me. And then those two boys came up from Pennsylvania, and they stayed here with us until my sisters and then came. Well, in fact, they was here a little over a week. Eight or 10 days, they were here, and that meant a lot to us. But then when Roger came, I was just going up to see if Debbie had heard anything about Roger, and just as I was getting ready to go, Roger came out there. And that water was really going down this road, and he got on the tractor and he worked out there and turned that water. I don't know. What did you do, Roger, to that?

Unknown Male Speaker: Well, I just opened the [inaudible] up and took the guard out and put it down there in them holes, turn the water back down the culvert.

PT: And he worked on that, well...

[end of transcript]