Lindsey Walker:

It's just going to be, I'm going to transcribe our conversation.

Alreda Harvey:

Oh okay.

Lindsey Walker:

So you can get comfortable. So first of all, tell me about yourself.

Alreda Harvey:

Okay. I grew up in the country on a farm. We had to work very hard. We went over the hill behind the house there and we picked wild blackberries and strawberries and blueberries. And of course there were briars and stuff. We had to wear these overhauls type things to keep us from scratching us. And we had a garden and we had to help with that. And my mom milked cows and we had to go over the hill sometimes to get them. And then we worked very hard growing up. When the apples came in, we had a little apple orchard above the road where I lived and it was still part of my mom's farm. And we would have to go and get those in. And I remember my mom making apple butter from scratch. I mean she would get this apple peeler thing put it on the end of the table and peel the apples to make real good cinnamon apple butter. It was really good. And never bought much out of the store. There was a place nearby called Mill and at that time they would make buckwheat flour and she would make the best pancakes from buckwheat flowers. I mean she would make the batter overnight and let it sit and fix it the next morning. It was so good. And so that was pretty much my life growing up. And when I graduated at the age of 18, when I graduated high school, at that time I'd have enough of a rough living. So I went to Washington D.C. to work. And my first job ... Well actually at that time you had to take a government test. Some service tests. At that time I had not taken that. So I went to D.C. without a job, took the test on the typing steno, and I got a job at Interstate Commerce Commission in Washington D.C. about two weeks after I got up there. And then I was there for a while and then it kind of got boring. So I went to the Pentagon. And so that's where I worked for a year or so. A couple of years I guess. And I was there when President Kennedy got shot in Dallas, Texas. And of course, everything was dead. Everybody had to go home. And then I remember D.C. the traffic and everything. It was a snowy day. And so it was a light snow when we traveled home. And then let's see. After that, I bet I was working at the Pentagon and my husband, which was your Papa, was in the Marine Corps and he was stationed at Quantico which was not far from there. And so we met somewhere along the line. And then we eventually got married. And then we got transferred to Camp LeJeune, North Carolina. And that's where my- And that's where my first daughter, Carol, was born at Camp Lejeune. We were there a few months and then we got transferred to Barstow, California at the Marine Corps Supply Center there. And of course that was preparing him to go overseas. And so that's when my second daughter Debbie was born. Your mom. She was born at Barstow. And in the meantime it was such a funny thing at Barstow. I mean your mom was born there and all. But I remember working. I always worked at each place we went. I worked for the government. And so I got a job at Barstow and I remember I was running late. I was working at the administration building there and I was running late. And here I am flying in my convertible. I've got a convertible. '64 Ford convertible. It was brand new when I bought it. And I thought I was so hot. So I was just jamming on the radio. I was young. I can't even see the flashing lights behind me. And it was a cop pulling me over. A military police pulling me over. And he came up and of course he was young too. And he said, "You didn't hear me? You didn't see me?" And I said "No." In the meantime he had put on the siren. And so I said "Well I was just hurry to get to work." And all this kind of stuff. So he let me go and didn't give me a ticket or anything. So that was that. And then Papa, he got orders for Vietnam. Okinawa then Vietnam. And so I went out to California with one kid and came back with two. And I came back to Florida, close to my parents, my mom and my sisters. And then in the meantime, while he was in Okinawa his dad got bad sick. And of course he passed away during that time when he came back. Emergency leave and all. And in the meantime he got out to help his family. Help us and all. And then from there I got a job I think at Bradford with the Corps of Engineers. And then he had got a job there in the construction part in Bradford. And so from there we went to Fort Lee. We kind of traveled with the Corps of Engineers then at that time. We went to Fort Lee and he worked with the Corps. I worked for the Army Logistics Management Center at Fort Lee. And so at that time we lived in Colonial Heights and they didn't have a hospital there. So that's where Susanne was born in Petersburg. And then from there he got transferred to the Corps of Engineers in Norfolk. And I just quit my job and just came with him and eventually got a job at the Corps. And so that's what I said. The rest is history.

Lindsey Walker:

So then you raised mom, Suzanne and Carol all in Chesapeake. How old were they when-

Alreda Harvey:

Let's see. Suzanne was about three. So they've mostly been raised here. Yeah.

Lindsey Walker:

Gotcha. So why did you choose the career path that you took?

Alreda Harvey:

Oh. That was my passion in high school. I really love bookkeeping, shorthand. I was at the top of my class in both of those and typing. I've not still got the typewriter, that manual thing that I learned to type on. So that was the reason I took that path.

Lindsey Walker:

Good. So you said you grew up on a farm. What exactly did your parents do?

Alreda Harvey:

My mom just took care of us and made a living on the farm. My dad owned a saw mill business and he worked away a lot. And he had a mostly sawmill business in West Virginia. So he was away most of the time. Yeah.

Lindsey Walker:

So the area that you grew up in, you said it was the country? Explain that area more. What did you guys do for fun in that area or was it really just the farm?

Alreda Harvey:

Well actually that was no fun. Actually it wasn't. My parents, especially my dad, were very strict. He was very religious, very spiritual. He didn't believe us and we were wearing pants, we had to wear dresses. We couldn't wear pants because that was considered man's clothing. We couldn't wear shorts or pants. So the only place that we could go was church. We went to church Sunday morning, Sunday night, Wednesday night revivals, tent meetings, which your mom remembers going to tent meetings. And actually, that was a lot of fun. You go there and you have fun. It was good singing and all and you meet the guys. That's where you meet your guys at church. There were no movies around there but one time I slipped off from church. My dad wasn't at church and so I slipped off and went to the movies down in Stuart or area down here. And so my dad asked me who all was at church. And so then he knew I hadn't been had so he was very upset. But I remember the first movie I saw was Elvis GI Blues.

Lindsey Walker:

That's funny. So I know Elvis was your favorite-

Alreda Harvey:

Oh yes.

Lindsey Walker:

Growing up. Tell me about how that started and-

Alreda Harvey:

Teenagers have their idols when they're growing up. Not really idols because we shouldn't have idols. But you have a person that you enjoy singing. And I mean, he was the hot stuff back then. I mean everybody's going crazy. So I just loved his singing. I loved his singing more in his movies. Yeah. I had this little radio upstairs, because that house we lived in upstairs. I mean it was a real small house. And I'd have my music loud. HE was the hot stuff back then and everyone was going crazy. I loved his singing more than his moves. I had this radio upstairs in that house we lived in and I had my music loud and I played it loud and my mom said that's what wrecked her nerves.

Lindsey Walker:

Did you have any unexpected life events that happened while you were transitioning through life and anything out of the normal that most people don't go through?

AH:

There were a lot of medical things with my children. Your mom had an infection at 2, urine was yellow. We had her tested in richmond and they found out that her tube and bladder went at a different angle and she had to have kidney surgery. At that time we were living in colonial heights that was quite a ways for us to travel. This really nice lady that was a nurse she had a cute house her name was Penny. She invited us to stay at her house and she took care of her. She was so good i think your mom has a picture of her. Both her and her husband aloud for us to stay and cook and such it was really nice.

LW:

I know Kara had a burn, tell me about that?

AH:

We were in colonial heights. Papa and I feel guilty about that. I left the kids with him and I had to get my hair done. Well I thought I could trust him. He had all 3 kids at the stove and your mom and kara- i had called and asked if i should pick up something. I talked with Kara and she said we are making something special for you then I heard it all happen. She tipped over the pot on her. We rushed her on to MCV for a month.

LW:

Was it partial or full?

AH:

She has one breast that has a lot of tissue that she had surgery on. Then on her stomach and legs. She was about 10. That was really bad because I had Susan and your mom and I was working at Fort Lee and that was hard. They told me I could take time off. But taking care of the other two and her in the hospital was hard.

LW:

Would you say your role as a parent changes when she got burned? How did your parenting style change?

AH:

There was a lot of guilt. We did what we had to do but we had a lot of guilt along with it

LW:

What were your financial responsibilities throughout the years?

AH:

I supported the family quite a bit. Dave was good when he had jobs but when he went into business he would lose jobs then it would be more or less me for putting food on the table. He had two or three good jobs- he built a prison in Maryland, on a steel mill, and he worked for Texaco and another when the kids were young. It has always been hard financially for some reason. I don't know why. He did have 2 or 3 good jobs but when he started going into business for himself that's when finances went down hill. He fell flat on his face each time. It must have been hard for him failing like that. So I was just glad I had a job to help out.

LW:

And then when all 3 of the kids grew up and started their own families how did your role change during that transition? When they moved all out what was that like for you? I wanted to ask you too. I feel like you've raised a lot of grandkids. How is that for you?

AH:

I don't feel like i've been alone until i've moved here. Actually it was very hard for me- them leaving the nest- but i had so many others coming in. I have taken care of all grandkids except for you all but we did take care of you when your mom went to Italy and you were right small at the time. Do you remember that?

LW:

No. So how was your relationship with your daughters when you were raising their children? Is that difficult for you?

AH:

When I was raising the kids? Yes it was… I remember Christopher he was so hyper and it was really bad. And I understand one of his kids was a lot worse than him so that was a lot. But with Christopher he was so hyper but i didn't have him by myself until Kara had decided to move to blacksburg. She wanted him to finish school here. Where he was at. And so I kept him for about 2 to 3 months by myself, him and stephen. So that was really hard. And then Jacob and Joseph they've been in and out of my house forever. Susan was living in my house alot when they- they were living there when the twins were born- Joseph and Joshua. I feel bad Joseph did not have a father figure and he wanted that so bad. His father never had anything to do with him. And Jacob’s dad was also never there for him.he missed his dad- his dad died when he was 16. So that was very hard. And then Susan did not have anybody to help her other than us. Rick would get Jacob on the weekend and me and Dave would meet him halfway and Jacob went there for the weekend. And then Susan was too young so she liked to go out with her friends then we took care of the kids. That was quite hard.

LW:

How was the expectation set? That's usually not like… yes grandparents are supposed to be involved but how was that expectation set to where you were actually raising them?

AH:

Um.. well i guess they were in the house - she was working and wanted to go out so sometimes she would ask and sometimes she wouldn’t.. So I mean I enjoyed the grandkids but when they live with you it's like you're raising two families.

LW:

I'm sure that was hard.

AH:

Yes.

LW:

So you said you grew up, papa was planning on getting sent to Vietnam- what other world events happened that you think influenced you and how you are today? You were working in the pentagon during Kennedy's assasination. Would you say those events that you grew up around- how do you think that influenced you- personality wise, financially, or parenting wise?

AH:

Well, I don't know. I don't want to seem like my life was blue and gloomy but I did have some good moments. When we were in the military that was my best moment I think. Besides having my kids- those were my best ones. I remember in the military we had friends and we'd go to the NCO club or go to the marine corp ball then we would go bowling- it was a lot of fun being in the military. We lived on base- being in the military it is so different because you are like a small community within yourself. It is just different but good.

LW:

Disciplining- how was your discipling style for raising your kids?

AH:

Actually, papa did all of that. That was very harsh. I told him one day “ya know, paul and debbie never spank their kids.” Papa was so into that switch thing and belt. And he said “that was the way i was raised. That is all I knew.” I was raised like that too. I got whipped alot. But i think because we were so strict and spanking and switching and all of that i just could not do that with my own kids. I never did much to my knowledge.

LW:

Something you are proud to be a part of or something you are proud of that has happened over your life span.

AH:

Something to be proud of… my grandkid- is that good? I'm not just saying that I talk about you all the time.. I talk about Anthony and Jeremy and joseph. Let’s see… i know my sister indie may she would say “you live your life through your kids.” She said “you need to live your own life” and i think that is one thing i always did. I enjoyed being around my kids and grandkids.

LW:

Who do you look up to and why

AH:

I look up more spiritually I guess than anything else. When i was growing up we didn't have a tv and my dad would get the truck and listen to the radio and i think billy graham- he’s dead now. I would say him.

LW:

Why do you look up to him?

AH:

He was very spiritual and connected to god. Very faithful. I think the people i look up to would be the more spiritual people because that is where i am right now in my life. I like the spiritual part of my life right now. Where i'm at.

LW:

Would you say your spiritually has changed over your mlife?

AH:

I think it has in the last few months. I think after getting after that house over there helped a lot. I think being here is- it is freedom, it is a new start and a new life. I remember your mom when I first came here. We went to eat and she said “you've changed”. I think it is just hta i am happy. More Independent.

LW:

So tell me about your transition that is more recent? You moved out of your old house, explain how that whole process- you said you gained freedom

AH:

I think being in that house- that house- papa would smoke, watch westerns, it was falling apart, and it was just sad, i felt depressed i guess. Just being out of that environment has just helped me tremendously.

LW:

Explain this new environment.

AH:

I miss Dave and all but this new environment is like fresh, new, I have friends here and the other place it was like you know your neighbors from a distance but not really. We had good neighbors that one time with the Parishes. Then after that it hasn't been the same. So it’s just like being a lot there. I feel more at ease here. It is newer even though I miss dave. You know you can watch you want to adn go where you want and then we have parties here just with our group. We had a birthday party a few weeks ago which was really nice. My birthday’s coming up in a couple of weeks but Kara is coming into town too. She's going to a seminar or a conference in DC that she goes to every year for and so she's coming down here at the end of that on the 13th. That’s the day your mom comes back from her trip. She and I are going to go out for my birthday. Everybody else too but your mom will be too tired because she'll be back late on the 13th.

LW:

Okay so i got a lot of information which is good. There are a couple ones I want to circle back to. Your relationship with your siblings and how those relationships have changed throughout the years.

AH:

I think our relationship is good, especially with 2 or 3 of them. My favorite is Geneva- she's a character. Her and I worked together and now we live close and like to have fun. We both got in trouble alot. Then my older sister Deloris- she was more of the smart one. She was more reserved and all that. Then there was me and Geneva and Sylvia and Francis and bounce and jackie. I have 7 in all including myself. Indie may live in stafford. But she was- my mom and dad were married before they married and my mom had indie may and her dad is different than our dad. My dad’s first wife died in childbirth I think. I have a brother named Croy from them but I don't see him that much. But if i included him that would be 8. He didn't grow up with us. His grandparent raised him. Indie may have been raised by her grandparents too. So they weren't around that much but we still consider indie may and croy brother and sister. So actually though indie may Dave and I were always close with her and her husband because they had two kids that were a bit older than Kara and so we would go up to stafford- she’s lived there her whole life. We would go up there alot and when they were young. We would have a good time. And then but then our relationship has still been good over the years. With Deloris, when we were growing up we were not that close because she was kind of different from what Genevia and I were. We were kinda crazier, she was more reserved. Aunt Sylvia and she was younger than me. But I've been close with Bounce most of the time.

LW:

So getting into the medical stuff how would you say your health has changed as you've gotten older?

AH:

It's about the same except for arthritis which is affecting my walk- i have it in my arms so it's hard for me to live freely.

LW:

Do you have any other things going on? Hypertension?

AH:

I take medication for high blood pressure and cholesterol but it is not that high. I only take one pill and it's not a lot.

LW:

So you would say the only real health concern for you is your arthritis?

AH

Yes.