

Max Peterson

Oral History Workshop | Spring 2021

Excerpts from the Real World History Collection (in order of appearance in blog piece)

1) Henry Breedlove (2015-2016)

[00:00:43]

Henry Breedlove: And I'll tell you another thing, too, it was a blessing, for me, we went to New York with y'all kids, young people and everything like that.

Student Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Henry Breedlove: It was, uh, to me, it made me feel special. I can't speak for the rest of them.

Student Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Henry Breedlove: But it made it, made me feel special, because, you know, here's some young people that would take time, that want to mingle with the elder peoples. Not just because they came from the South or nothing like that, or they're history or nothing like that. But it was, uh, I enjoyed it. And I hope maybe, maybe next time when y'all go again, maybe we can tag along again.

2) Rev. Irene Pierce (2014-2015)

[00:03:18]

Student #1: You have good memory, to remember all this. Dates.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Well, I just—. My voice is bothering me, and I can't talk. Well, I should—. How old do you think I am? How old am I?

Student #1: I have no clue. Hm, okay.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Well, you got my age there! How old am—?

Student #1: Okay. I'm going to have to—.

Rev. Irene Pierce: [Laughs] You got to add up what it is? Where do you go to school?

Student #2: Cesar Chavez. Cesar Chavez.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Hm?

Student #2: Cesar Chavez.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Well, you see, these hearing aids, this hearing aid I have is not working at all. Say it again.

Student #2: I said, Cesar Chavez.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Mm-hm. Okay. It take you that long to decide?

Student #1: Can you tell me? I don't want to guess the wrong number.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Come on now.

Student #1: You're sixteen.

Rev. Irene Pierce: What?

Student #1: You're sixteen.

Rev. Irene Pierce: I'm sixteen? [Laughs]

Student #1: [Laughs]

Rev. Irene Pierce: Thank you.

Student #1: See, I did a guess, so you have to tell me now.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Okay, you take the six, sixteen—

Student #1: [Laughs]

Rev. Irene Pierce: —multiply it by [pause] multiply sixteen by seven.

Student #1: Oh, jeez.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Okay, do it—. This is the way you do it. Okay—.

Student #1: Is this way I got?

Rev. Irene Pierce: No, no. You go by tens, okay? This is now 2014.

Student #1: Mm-hm.

Rev. Irene Pierce: And I was born in 1926. You just subtract—

Student #1: Yeah, that's what I did.

Rev. Irene Pierce: —1926 from 2014. And you get—. What do you get? What do you get? You don't want to say it?

Student #1: No.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Why not? I don't look it? [Laughs]

Student #1: No, you don't.

Rev. Irene Pierce: [Laughs] You want to compliment me? I don't act it?

Student #1: No.

Rev. Irene Pierce: What do you expect a person my age to be like?

Student #1: I don't know. I mean, that shows you kept yourself up or something. Like, I don't know.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Hm?

Student #1: I don't know. It just shows you're healthy, I guess.

Rev. Irene Pierce: [Pause] What would you imagine? How old am I?

Student #2: Eighty-eight.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Yes. Now, what would you imagine an eighty-eight-year-old doing?

Student #1: [Pause] Like during—? I don't know. At home, you know—.

Rev. Irene Pierce: What would you imagine?

Student #1: [Laughs]

Student #2: I don't know. You are real healthy for your age.

Student #1: Yeah, like—.

Student #2: Because a lot of, like, I don't know. They—.

Rev. Irene Pierce: What, don't you have a grandmother?

Student #2: Yeah.

Rev. Irene Pierce: She, but she's not eighty-eight. See, your grandmother—.

Student #2: She's like seventies, though. But she—.

Rev. Irene Pierce: [??] [0:39:58-0:39:59]

Student #2: She moves around and stuff.

Student #1: My grandmother don't tell us her age.

Rev. Irene Pierce: She won't tell you [her] age? Oh, well, God has blessed you to be, uh, whatever age that you are.

Student #1: Mm-hm.

Rev. Irene Pierce: Well, I have a, one of my granddaughters tells me, she said, "Grandma, you're just old that's all. You're just old." So, you know—.

3) Jettie Brown (2017-2018)

[00:03:11]

Jettie Brown: And then we would have, we killed the hogs. Daddy would get someone; they'd go down to shoot the hogs. You always had to kill them, clean 'em up. And we would have a nice fresh ham. Have you ever had a fresh ham?

Student Interviewer: No.

Jettie Brown: You don't know about a fresh ham?

Student Interviewer: Mm-mm.

Jettie Brown: Where you come from?

Student Interviewer: I'm from DC.

Jettie Brown: [Incredulous tone] You don't know nothing about, nothing that I'm saying?

Student Interviewer: Sounds good, though! [Chuckles]

Jettie Brown: It was happy—! We was happy, cause we didn't know—! I was born there, in Blair! And the doctor—. I didn't go to the hospital; My mother had me in the house, in the little wooden house. So I didn't go to the hospital to be born, the doctor came and mother had me on the farm. I came through in the house, and so it was really—. It was a happy time, because we knew nothing else but the farm. Born on the farm! Raised on the farm! Lived on the farm! *Everything on the farm.* And [if] Daddy wanted to take us out, he would get in the wagon. And we would get in the wagon and visit my aunts, and that was on the farm. We had no car; We had no transportation. We walked to church, *a long ways* to church. And we were happy. Just jumping along—. Like I said, there's eight of us, initially it was five of us that started going—. And we were happy. It was my oldest sister—my sister named—my older sister's still living on the farm, right there where I was born at. Yeah, she came here for—. Because her daughter moved—you know, she had nine children, my sister did, my older sister—and she moved to Maryland. And my

older sister came up from the farm, and she said she wouldn't live nowhere else but on the farm. And we chatted and we laughed about the good old days.

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And so my farm life was beautiful, because I knew nothing else about *nothing else*. No television; No phones. And so, but we were happy—. The main thing I want to get you to know, young man: We were happy, with our money. One pair of shoes a year. Daddy could not afford, cause we only got a hundred dollars a year. Even though we didn't have a lot, I want you to know that—so [when] you're married, getting married and grow up—you don't have to buy a whole lot to make children happy, just love them! My parents loved us! So we didn't worry about—. And when dinnertime comes, and the hot biscuits, and the molasses—. Bet you don't know about that.

Student Interviewer: [Chuckles]

Jettie Brown: And we'd put some butter in and stir it up—. Oh my gracious! Mm. Oh where's my tissue? Oh my God. Oh my gracious, the butter, and the biscuits—oh, they were so good—hot biscuits taken out the oven. Did you know about that?

Student Interviewer: No.

Jettie Brown: Those were good days!

Student Interviewer: [Chuckles]

Jettie Brown: You missed it, beauty of life.

4) Clarence Haywood (2019-2020)

[00:03:35]

Clarence Haywood: You don't have to let circumstances determine your outcome. That's what I would like to leave with you.

Student Interviewer: Yeah.

Clarence Haywood: You know, just because the circumstances were not good at first, doesn't, don't let that write your story.

Student Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Clarence Haywood: Because you can do it. If anybody else has done it—. And that was my thing too: Well, did anybody else do this? Yeah? Well, I can do that too!

Student Interviewer: Yeah.

Clarence Haywood: There's nothing stopping me from doing it but me.

Student Interviewer: Right.

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Student Interviewer: [W]e're reaching, we've just reached one hour. So I want to ask, from your story what are some of the most important lessons that you feel it's important to know for a young person like myself?

Clarence Haywood: [Pause] Nobody owes you anything but respect and opportunity.

Student Interviewer: Right.

Clarence Haywood: They should respect you as a human being, not get in the way of your opportunities. [Pause] I think you have a chance to do great things, because DC has a lot of educational institutions to choose from. My first school was called Federal City College. It's now UDC [University of the District of Columbia]. It was put together by Marion Barry, and there's a law school there. There's a low-cost law school over

there, too. So if you want to be anything, including a lawyer, you can do it. All you have to do is apply yourself.

Student Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Clarence Haywood: Don't let one door closing be the last door you try.

Student Interviewer: Right.

Clarence Haywood: [Chuckles] That has always been my philosophy.

Student Interviewer: Yeah.

Clarence Haywood: So, one door closes, knock on another one.

Student Interviewer: Find another one, yeah.

Clarence Haywood: If you get knocked down, get back up. Because there's going to be some rough times. It's just how life works. So if you can't find opportunities in one place, you look somewhere else. You're going to get discouraged, but pick yourself up.

Student Interviewer: Right.

Clarence Haywood: You know, get with like-minded people. If anybody else has achieved in an area, you should believe that you can do it too. Don't, don't think there's anything that you can't do. Just keep trying.

Student Interviewer: Alright. Well, thank you very much—

Clarence Haywood: Mm-hm.

Student Interviewer: —for sitting down for this interview. It was great to hear all about your story. Alright.

5) Sarah Ann Hardy (2017-2018)

[00:02:26]

Student Interviewer: So we talked about, you know, a lot of the things about your journey; What advice would you give to me or just future generations on taking risks, uh, like you did, at a young age?

Sarah Ann Hardy: Well, since you're—. I mean, I tried to, um, give this—. Well, you are my granddaughter; You're sixteen years old; You have a great head on your shoulder; You have the common sense of a thirty-year-old—.

Student Interviewer: [Chuckles] Thanks.

Sarah Ann Hardy: You really do, you have a good common sense. And that's with a S-E-N-S-E. So my advice to a sixteen-year-old with thirty-year-old common sense, is to complete your education, go as far as you can, and—with an open mind—and try to enjoy the ride that you're on. Because sixteen becomes twenty, twenty becomes twenty-eight, twenty-eight becomes forty; That's how fast time goes. Time flies. You don't realize how fast it flies, but it does fly. So along the, sixteen 'til you get to be thirty, enjoy the ride; get your education; learn as much as you can; and, treat people the way you want to be treated; honor God, and God will honor you. That's my advice to my granddaughter.

Student Interviewer: Thank you, Grandma. So, I know those were some lessons that you learned, probably because of your journey, right?

Sarah Ann Hardy: Oh yeah.

Student Interviewer: Are there any more things that you would like to say?

Sarah Ann Hardy: Well, I'd like to say you're doing a fantastic job and I'm so proud of you, and I want you to keep up the good work.

Student Interviewer: Thank you!

Sarah Ann Hardy: And I don't want you to let *anything* get in your way—

Student Interviewer: Okay.

Sarah Ann Hardy: —of being all you can be.

Student Interviewer: Thank you!

Sarah Ann Hardy: And I mean *all* you can be.

Student Interviewer: [Chuckles] Well, thank you Grandma.

Sarah Ann Hardy: You're so welcome!

6) Kathy Senior (2015-2016)

[00:02:09]

Student Interviewer: So, through your journey, through your migration, what do you feel, as an individual, how do you feel about, uh, about where it's taken you? And also, how it ties into the greater movement? How do you see yourself, as a person taking this immense journey, from escaping from such a hostile environment and coming to a new place where you knew virtually nobody? How do you feel that, how do you feel about your role in history?

Kathy Senior: Mm-hm. Well, one thing that jumps out as you were speaking that, is I came from racism, to racism.

Student Interviewer: Right.

Kathy Senior: And I am currently living in the midst of racism and white supremacy.

Student Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Kathy Senior: So [in] that timeframe and that gap, even though there have been many doors opened, many privileges afforded—. And we've worked hard, because we wanted things to be different for you, for young people. We want you to appreciate the suffering that has gone into this. [Pause] But the struggle is still here, and that is a, that's heartbreaking. I'm getting older now, I can't march up and down Pennsylvania Avenue—

Student Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Kathy Senior: —and run around in the Capitol Building. [Laughs]

Student Interviewer: [Laughs]

Kathy Senior: But it don't, we're not getting a lot of young people who are willing to do that either, and *that cannot be*.

Student Interviewer: Mm-hm.

Kathy Senior: So the struggle, for me, is that with my walker, my rollator, I got to still get out there and march [to] some extent.

