

Interview with
EDNA FISCHER

November 16, 2019

**FUNDAMENTALIST MORMONS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

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EDNA FISCHER

Content Warning: Contains words that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful.

Edna Fischer was interviewed by Stephanie Griswold on November 16, 2019 in Temecula, California. She discusses her childhood in Hildale, Utah as part of the Short Creek Community, and leaving the FLDS church.

SG: Edna, do you mind telling us when and where you were born?

EF: So, I was born in July 1998 in Hildale, Utah. Yeah. I guess that's it.

SG: Yeah, so tell us about parents and siblings.

EF: So, I had, when I was born, I had just my mom and my dad. And then, when I was five months old, in December, my dad was assigned a second wife, Lola, and then she had a son in 2001, and my mom also had a daughter that year. But between that time, so in 1999 my mom had my younger sister who is just over a year younger than me, and then I ended up having ten younger siblings, I think. I have fourteen siblings total and three older than me, so I have eleven younger siblings. So –

SG: So it's fifteen?

EF: Fifteen total.

SG: With you?

EF: Yes.

SG: Yeah. Between – the two moms?

EF: Both, yes. Both the moms. But my other mom's oldest kid was born in 2001, but my younger sister that's just a year and half younger than me, when she was born, she was born exactly nine months after my second mom was married. And everybody just assumed she was her child and not my mom's child because she kind of raised her, because my mom worked all the time.

SG: Cool.

EF: [Laughter]

SG: Sorry that was not a good segue. So what are some of your earlier memories? Before a normal school starting –

EF: So, like when I was super small?

SG: Yeah.

EF: So I remember being at home and most of my earliest memories are with Meg and James, because they were the two babies when I was three-ish, I think. So I was three when they were born. And so that was some of my earliest memories. I mean, I have a few memories before that because I remember meeting Parley Harker¹ when I was, I had to have been very small 'cause he died the year after I was born, I think. But I remember him, when I was a baby, I remember I was sitting on his lap and he gave me a lollipop at the park, but that's probably one of my earliest memories. But other than that, I remember having the two babies that I would play with and we would, you know, play with our dolls in our playhouse, and toys in our house basically. And being at home pretty much when we were little, small, you know. And just playing in the sandbox or playing with our cousins and stuff like that.

SG: When did you start school?

EF: I started school when I was seven, I think?

SG: [Laughter]

EF: Yeah because the typical age for starting school was, like, eight in the church. Let me think. I don't really remember. I just remember I started. So, I went to the Alta Academy in town, and did my testing in the summertime to start first grade.

Well, I guess, back up a little bit. I did go to preschool and kindergarten with my sister and my Aunt Carla was the one that ran the preschool. And so I remember going to preschool and kindergarten, so I went to preschool with my little sister, Saralee, at first for a year. And then the next year I went to kindergarten with my big sister, who is a year older than me, for kindergarten. And then I think it was, two years later before I actually went to first grade. And I went and did the aptitude testing and stuff to see if I could start first grade. And I ended up starting first grade a year earlier than most kids would in the town. But, the year I started first grade was the year they closed down the academy and said everybody had to be homeschooled. And so, I was looking forward to going to school, and then they closed school down the year I was starting school, and I was really mad about that. [Laughter]

SG: And who ran the Alta Academy in town?

EF: In town? I don't really know who the principal was, but all I knew— as far I knew Warren Jeffs was the principal of Alta Academy, like, he was the one in charge of it I guess you could say. But I never actually went to school². I went to sibling's day with my

¹ Parley Harker was the bishop of the Beryl branch of the FLDS.

² Alta Academy

parents—not parents—siblings. With my big sister, she took me to school and my cousin took me to school once because she didn't have a little sister to take. And I really don't know who was in charge other than Warren Jeffs, at the school.

SG: What kind of classes did you have growing up? Not just in the first year but like—

EF: Like in preschool? Or in middle school? Or in first grade?

SG: Throughout your school at the homeschooling and the year you were at Alta.

EF: Oh, okay. So, my first year of homeschool, first grade, I did with my aunt [Kathryn], and I just had your classic math, spelling, phonics, reading. I finished my math book in a couple weeks after I started school. And I loved spelling and I also loved— because in our classroom, it was set-up with all of us in the same classroom, all the grades— so I loved proving I was better than everybody else. So, my cousin was in fourth grade and I was in first grade and it quickly got to where I could do all of his math and spelling for him, or tell him when he was wrong.

SG: [Laughter]

EF: [Laughter] And, I mean, that was first grade. And of course we had priesthood history but I didn't have to participate other than listening to priesthood history in first grade. So, I had to, you know, be quiet and respectful but I didn't have to take notes or do any tests or anything on it until I was honestly, fourth grade. But, after my first year we just did homeschool at home and Lola, who's my second mom, was the teacher of all of us kids. So, from my oldest sibling down to the preschoolers and the babies. She was the one that was everybody's teacher all at the same time.

SG: And what was the nature of priesthood history? Obviously, it's the church history of "The Work" but, was it just a teacher lecturing? Were there stories? Were there special speakers that would come visit the class and talk about priesthood history or—?

EF: Not so much visiting. But we always listened to— so every priesthood history lesson, a typical priesthood history class of the day would be: we had a priesthood history textbook which we had, we would print it off of our curriculum³. Then we had and— so we had the priesthood history textbook which had sort of, study points. Sort of like a math textbook you would have, right?

SG: Mhmm.

EF: And so then they would teach the lecture, and then you go to the textbook and go after that, but our lecture was just a tape of Warren Jeffs teaching priesthood history. And then you would, each tape had a lesson number or a name, and then you would go [to] that

³ The FLDS had created a school curriculum for faithful members, no other curriculums were approved.

part of the textbook and do that along with, usually we just took notes during the tape and then we would go over and review the textbook part of it. Honestly, like, every week? Or every couple lessons we had to have a test which was a written fill-in-the-blank test or multiple choice sometimes. But most of the time it was a fill-in-the-blank about priesthood history. I guess you could say it was sort of like a regular history class but it was just Priesthood History and it went clear back, Adam and Eve clear up to current day FLDS prophets and religion.

SG: What did you do outside of school? Like at home with friends or with family?

EF: When I was younger, we'd go to the park and hang out. There was a zoo⁴ in town we'd go to a lot before it closed down. I'd say the park and the zoo were the two main things, but then also we had a big yard so a lot of our cousins would come to our house to ride bikes and roller-skate because there was a big empty—it was supposed to be an add-on for a house, but it was about the size of a small hotel in the back of our yard and it was just concrete. And so, we would get together every summer, all of our cousins would get together, and we'd clean it out, sweep it out because it would get dirt in it. And then we'd have a big skate party with roller-skates for a day or two, and come over and skate until it died off every year, I guess. And that was always super, super fun. But most of the time, it was like at home we would just, our cousins would come over, and the parents would hang out in the house and make dinner or, you know, some type of food and just hangout. And then all the kids, it was go outside and play or go down in the basement and play in the toy room and leave the adults alone.

One game we played a lot when I was little, it was considered a wicked game because you weren't supposed to see each other naked or whatever, but [laughter] we would play doctor every once in a while, or EMTs, ambulance. We'd play, cops and robbers where we'd have, you know, some people would hide and then chase each other around, or like cowboys and Indians⁵. We played a lot of make-believe games, I guess. If we were playing ambulance, we would, you know, tie a kid to a board, put him on the wagon, and drive around the yard and stuff like that, and cowboys and Indians, we had a jail and we would go catch the Indians and lock them up. Because there was just, sort of taught in our history, also cowboys and Indians was just a thing with our religion as well as being in the west in general, I guess.

SG: Do you—can you explain a little bit more about what you mean of the notion of cowboys and Indians and how it fit into what you were taught?

EF: Oh yeah. Yeah, so when the pioneers came to settle in Utah, then their one biggest threat, when they were coming across the plains and when they were settling in Utah, was Indians, because the Indians would come and raid their camps or their homes or kill them all. Like [they] would come and trap them in their houses and burn them, or chase them out of town, or ruin their crops, or steal their animals. So, to deal with that then, they

⁴ FMJ Zoo. Named for Fred Jessop, an FLDS Bishop.

⁵ Referring to Native Americans.

would capture the Indians and either kill them or lock them up, or force them to work for them. And that was taught in priesthood history, how the saints were prosecuted [persecuted] and tortured by the Indians, and so they were, of course, they were the bad guys.

SG: What were—what was the nature of the chores that you had to do and how did it change as you got older? Like when you were a kid?

EF: So, when I was super young, then it was like, “You can help with the dishes” and it was a fun thing ‘cause then you were doing an adult thing when you were a little kid, and you help out. And sometimes you might be expected to pick up your toys and put them away as, like, a small child. But as I get older, then, you know I say like when I was maybe six? Or five? Then I got put on the dish chart, which was just our kitchen calendar and the parents would make a chart and they would put one person on each chore so one person had to wash dishes, and the next night that person had to dry the dishes and put them away, and the next night they got to sweep floor, and the next day they got to clear the table after— but this was for every meal. So for a full day we had one thing we had to do.

As I got older, then the chores changed a bit, and as we got more kids, it changed a bit because we had to make more dish jobs because there was more kids to do dishes. And so, it got to where it went from being wash, dry, clear, and sweep, became wash dishes, rinse dishes, dry dishes, put away dishes, clear the table, wash the table, vertical surfaces which was counter tops—not countertops, but cabinet doors, and then I think we had vacuum the living room because by then the living room was attached to the kitchen, but it was carpet so it needed [to be] vacuumed every day. Then there was windows because we had glass doors in the kitchen and they had to get cleaned *a lot* because little kids and [laughter] fingerprints were everywhere. Then there was wiping down counters and stuff, and then, just in general, walking around and cleaning up everything that wasn’t being cleaned was the chore you did if you— if you got done with your job, your assignment, you were expected to clean up, maybe if there was toys in the living room, or the cushions on the couch were messed up, or there was blankets in the living room on the couch or whatever, then you were just expected to work on that and clean whatever was not done yet until all the dishes were done and the house was clean.

SG: You said there was fifteen of you kids total, how many boys and how many girls?

EF: So there’s four boys and [laughter] eleven girls.⁶ So my mom had my oldest brother and then she had five girls, and then she waited for five years and had two more kids, which were both boys, and then she had a girl. But then my other mom, her first kid was a boy and then she had five girls and she hasn’t had kids since.

⁶Gracanne had nine kids: Warren, Rachel, Dianna, Edna (me), Saralee, Meg, Stephen, Carlston, and Maryanne. Lola had six kids: James, Vilate, Esther, Margaret, Susan, Merilyn.

SG: And was there a difference either by age or by mom or by gender of what they were expected to do at home? Did the boys have to do the same chores? Or did both moms' kids have to do the same—

EF: As far as dishes, like dish jobs, yes, they were all assigned equally, but then it was kind of a thing that Lola's kids, she would give them whatever she— whatever they wanted. My older siblings, especially the two oldest, Warren and Rachel, hated Lola. They hated her guts. They would do anything they could to get out of doing anything she told them to do. They would do things to make her mad or say she was the only one home and we were supposed to be doing dishes, Warren and Rachel would go out in the yard and just mess around instead of doing their job. And so she would go out there and tell them to do their job, and they would be like, "Nah, I'm not gonna do it." And so she would be like, "Well, go to your room until Father comes home," "You're not having dinner until you finish your chores," or "You're gonna go sit in timeout for an hour or you're gonna do—" One thing she loved to do was assign more chores, so, if it was my job to wipe the tables and I refused to do it or I had done it but I'd done a shitty job and she didn't think it was good enough, she'd be like, "Well, go do it again," and I'd be like, "Nah, I'm not doing that. The dishes are done." Then she'd be like, "Alright, you're gonna clean the tables and you're also gonna vacuum the living room," and I'd be like, "Hell no, I'm not doing either!" And so she'd be like, "Alright, you're gonna mop the kitchen," and it would just go on until finally she would get mad and either force me to do [it] or she would just be like, "Alright, go to your room and you're not having dinner," you know, "Go to your room until Dad gets home," and most of the time, he got home after dinner and then if that happened, then you probably just weren't going to eat. You know—

SG: Just to clarify—

EF: Yeah.

SG: You weren't actually cussing at her? At the time?

EF: Oh no! No! I would have never swore or cussed or anything, it's just I'm so used to swearing on a daily basis.

SG: [Laughter] Now.

EF: That I just don't, you know I can't even imagine my actual, like how I spoke back then. Because I'm like, "How did I convey my thoughts with what we were allowed to say back then?" And I figure a lot of it was like, if I was mad at Lola especially, she would always call me a "wet noodle" especially—

SG: [Laughter] Aw.

EF: — when she was forcing me to wash the tables because she would, you know, she would come in and she's like, "Oh! I'll help you because you don't know how to wash the tables," and so she'd take my hand with the rag and I'd be like, "I'm not doing this," and

so I would just go limp and she would [laughter] drag me around and wash the table as I just, you know, was limp. And she'd be like, "Stop being a wet noodle!" and I'd be like, "No! I'm not— I'm not doing it." And so, I would just say no to her; I'd be like, "No!" and she'd be like, "Stand up," and I'd be like, "No." And she's like, "Alright, go to your room," and I would just, "No." She'd let go of me and she'd be like, "Go to your room!" and I'd just sit on the floor, stay there because I didn't want to do what she told me to do. So she would eventually drag me to my room or just leave me, but yeah, she called me a "wet noodle" a lot because [laughter] I would just flop on the floor and not move if she wanted me to do something and I didn't want to do it.

SG: So you said that the second mother joined the family shortly after you were born. How old—

EF: Mhmm.

SG: —were your older siblings when she joined the family?

EF: Warren was, I wanna say six? Because it was '98 and he was born in '92, so Warren was six, and Rachel was five? Or four? Maybe almost five? I think she was a few months before she was five, and Dianna was three.

Dianna [was] always fine with Lola. She, Dianna, was the mediator.⁷ She was the calm one that just wanted everybody to be happy and get along and not hate each other. And so, if she could, she would always— say I was doing the wet noodle and Lola was trying to get me to wash the tables and Dianna comes in and sees this, she would just come and do my job rather than seeing me get forced to do my job. She was, you know, "Let's just be friends and chill," and she was always, I guess, the reasonable one who just wanted everybody to get along and she hated conflict. She absolutely hated conflict.

She would, if— I would fight with Saralee, my little sister, I would fight with her and we would you know, fight and scratch and hit each other, whatever, but if I did the same thing— if I started a fight with Rach— with Dianna, she would just take it. She would just stand there and take the beating, like if I was hitting on her 'cause I wanted something, she wouldn't give it to me, but she also wouldn't fight back. She would just take it and you know, be the peacemaker. I'm not sure why, but that was just always her personality where she'd just, you know, take it. She would just stand there and let it go on rather than cause a conflict.

SG: So, after you told us about school and home, this was probably through—all the way through the late '90s and into the early 2000s. How was it changing in the community, like how did you experience changes in the community?

EF: Oh! So, when I was a kid, when I was super young, there was, as a child, I always remembered there being harvest festivals and Fourth of July celebrations and twenty-

⁷ We always called Dianna the peace-maker of the family.

fourth of July which is Pioneer Day in Utah. And the community was super close and, you know, we were like the community, we would come together and support each other, and we were just like, it was sort of like a big family. But they would do on the Fourth of July and the twenty-fourth of July and at the harvest festival, they had a full parade with a marching band and dance teams and all this stuff. But I'm not sure when it ended—when it stopped, just one year they were like, “Oh yeah! We're not doing the harvest festival this year, or the Fourth of July, and we're not doing Pioneer Day.” And when I was a kid, we always celebrated birthdays, but then as, in 2006 or 2007, then they were like, “Oh yeah, celebrating birthdays is evil because it's you taking the glory away from God and celebrating yourself and not God's will or not God's handiwork,” I guess. And so it wasn't allowed to receive presents on your birthdays. I remember getting presents when I was child for my birthday, and then by the time I was six, that just wasn't a thing, like you didn't get presents, and you didn't get presents for anniversaries or anything like that.

The sense of community—we were still a community and we were still all in the church and like a “family,” you could say, but it wasn't like—we wouldn't get together and have community events and hang out, you know, all together just for fun. If you were all gonna hang out, it was for the prophets' will or the church or some church project, like canning vegetables or working at the storehouse or the nut harvest. When I was twelve or thirteen, then that was after they had started the UO [United Order], and I would go work at the jeans factory and help them make jeans for the storehouse. And I worked at the pecan harvest, and the food processing plant, and I worked at the storehouse and stuff like that. But yeah, all the events just went away and it went from being focused on the community to being focused on the prophet's will and getting into Zion became the main focus of everybody in the community.

SG: So I wanna touch on a couple things you just said, and see what'd you like to share. Before the changes, what do you remember about harvest fest and being a little kid? What was kind of the best part?

EF: So, I think my most favorite thing about harvest fest is my grandma would go. So there was the old shingle mill at the Cottonwood park, and there was the old cabin that the very first settlers had built. And my grandma, every harvest fest, she would be in the cabin and she would be quilting, or you know, knitting something maybe, and she would sit in the old rocking chair and she would have the full dress-up like the old pioneers. She would get—all these kids would come, and our parents would let us go do whatever we wanted 'cause it was fine⁸—and so we'd go in there and sit around in a circle around her, and she'd tell us old stories about the pioneers and the Indians, and all the cool history and cool stories about our history, and why we were where we were and celebrating the harvest. And it was super cool to me, to go in there and all these people are watching *my* grandma tell everybody stories and she was just the coolest person in there.

And then I think my other favorite part was the band, the marching band. I absolutely loved watching the marching band. And on the Fourth of July they would march around

⁸ Because the community was so close, children were not closely supervised at events.

the meeting house, so they would do the parade and then they would— I remember them marching around the meetinghouse at least twice in my life but I'm not sure if that was just right before dusk, just before the fireworks or part of the parade. I'm not sure because I was just five, maybe? [Laughter] I remember my uncle David was a drummer in the band, and I just thought that was the coolest thing and all I wanted to do was— I wanted to be in the band when I got bigger. I was like, "I wanna be in the band. I wanna do this. It looks cool," you know. I was always so jealous of him 'cause he had his drums and I would go over to his house and see his drum set all set up and I was like, "This is the coolest thing I've ever seen!" But of course once the church got rid of the marching band, he had to just get rid of his drums and it just was frowned on after that, because I don't know why. Maybe it was worldly, I guess?

SG: Did you or any of your siblings get a chance to learn any instruments? I know that a common thing that people may have read in some of the memoirs about the FLDS is a lot of people weren't regularly taught instruments, but obviously people writing memoirs are typically from the quote-en-quote elite families?

EF: Yes, we did— we had a piano, and my other mom played piano and she was actually really good at it. Not an expert by any means, but she could play a few classical pieces, and she would, you know, play the piano just because. And she would play music that didn't have words, which later on in the church was looked down upon because it wasn't priesthood music. She would teach us piano lessons. She taught all of us piano lessons, but it was mandatory and so I personally hated it.

SG: [Laughter]

EF: Because she would make me do piano lessons and I *had* to do it every day. Every week I'd have to have a piano lesson with her and had to practice every day and just because I really didn't like *her* telling me what to do because I just didn't like her as much— I would still, she's still my mom and she still was my boss, but I didn't necessarily enjoy doing what she told me to do. Mostly because she was mean about it most of the time, or she would resort to sending me to my bed if I didn't do what she said, and so my strategy was just to avoid her in general. But yeah, she made us do piano lessons. But this didn't—we didn't start piano lessons until I was six? Until after I started school, maybe? I was probably older than six. I don't remember though. But I remember she would make us do piano lessons, and she would also teach other people piano lessons, like she would get paid to teach people piano lessons. So yeah, she taught us piano. I didn't like it, but we would have piano recitals at home and stuff like that, but we didn't— we never played other instruments.

She had. She played clarinet as well as piano. Not super well, she had done [it] in high school and college, and so she was good enough to do it in college, but she didn't really practice; but she still had her clarinet. I remember when she started teaching us piano, she pulled her clarinet out and she had to go buy new reeds for it because she hadn't used it in so long. And, she had to clean it and fix it up a bit to even use it, but she wouldn't necessarily let us play with her clarinet but we would sneak and take it out and set it up

and go outside and try playing it to annoy the neighbors, because the neighbor kids hated us for it, because we would just blow in it super hard and it would make a super high pitch, a really bad noise [laughter] —

SG: [Laughter]

EF: — and they hated it, so we would do that. She never really played it much. She showed us that she could play it a couple times, so that was cool, but she never taught anybody how to play. She mostly focused on piano.

SG: What is the definition of priesthood music? How did they determine what was priesthood music?

EF: This sounds kind of— a little bit wack, because they still used the Mormon hymn books, but we couldn't use hymn books that were after a certain date. We had to use certain versions, and there was one very specific version you could use that everybody in the church— if you were a real Mormon you had to have the one hymn book because the break-off Mormons, which was the mainstream Mormons but to us they were the not real Mormons, and they had changed the prophets hymn book and so, you couldn't use that hymn book.⁹ You had to use the original hymn book, and then we also— I know that the mainstream LDS still use the same, same music book, but it's the children book with the pastel colors. I'm not sure exactly what it's called, *Children of Zion*, or something?¹⁰ And it has all the drawings in it. We used that book all throughout my life, but there were certain songs in that book or there's drawings of a Black kid in the book—Black people in the book, and we either had to take those pages out of the book or color them over with marker or something, so that they weren't in the book. I remember when I was a child, I found a picture that was a white kid and a Black kid in the book and I was like, "Mom, what is this?" and she was like, "Yeah, we're gonna cover that up. You'll never see it again. That's not supposed to be in there." [Laughter] But we would still use most of the songs out of that book.

SG: The lessons about dealing with other races, was that something that you were taught in school? At home? At church meetings? Where was the main place that you learned it, or were you kind of learning it everywhere?

EF: It was kind of everywhere, but the main place I remember learning Black people and white people was in priesthood history with the Warren Jeffs teaching the priesthood history discourses. In one I remember very well, there's this lesson he's doing about the war in Heaven with all the spirits, right? So, white people are the people who fought for God and then the spirits who said, "No, we're not gonna fight for God and we don't want— we're gonna go with Satan," then they were the spirits who went to Hell and are eternal damnation— they're suffering eternal damnation, they will never be humans. They taught us that Black people were everybody who were on the fence that did not say

⁹ Any revisions after 1948 were banned. The 1948 edition was what the FLDS church used.

¹⁰ *Children's Songbook* published Dec. 1989 by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

they would fight for God or Satan, and they were cursed and that's why they're Black. That's what we believed as kids. That's what we were taught, and that's what we believed, full-heartedly believed that Black people were cursed and just bad people.¹¹

SG: But did you ever— I mean, I know that you were born in Hildale and you were in Hildale pretty much most of your life, but did you guys ever go into the store in St. George or something, encounter people of color? Or was it kind of a, “Hey, we never encountered it, so we never questioned what we were being taught?”

EF: I mean, we never really questioned it. I remember one time I was young and I was little enough that me and my sister were sitting in the cart at Costco, and you know, they pass out samples, and my mom stopped to get a sample from this lady. She was giving out chocolate popcorn and she was giving out regular popcorn as well, but she happened to be a Black woman and she was like, “Do you guys want some popcorn?” and we just stare at her and she's like, “It's okay. I know I'm Black, but you can have some chocolate popcorn. It's brown like me!” And I remember, I was like, “This lady's nice.” But of course I couldn't say anything because she's cursed and she just doesn't know it. Because that's what we were taught: that they're cursed and they can't do anything about it and they don't know that they're cursed. So, I remember this lady, I was treating her like she was poison, even though I did take the popcorn from her.

SG: [Laughter] ‘Cause you're a kid—

EF: [Laughter] Yeah, because I'm a child and it's chocolate popcorn, [laughter] of course. I remember when I went to the ER, having a Black nurse but not even really thinking about the fact that they were Black at the time.

The first time I remember talking to a Black person and not calling them a “nigger” or you know, yelling racial slurs at them and running away ‘cause they're evil was— there was somebody moved into town when I was ten, eleven, maybe? And they had adopted Black kids, and they would come to the park and play. And for a while, we would see them at the park and we would, if they were on the playset or if they came to the park and we were on the playset and they started walking towards the playset we would like, “Ew, Black people!” and run away. Of course, we weren't nice enough to say “Black people.” We, you know, racial slurs and all that, but we would just run away.

Then, I don't know how exactly it changed, but the first time I remember not running away from them was one day we were swinging on the tire swing and we were going pretty fast, you know, and somebody was just pushing us, one of the other kids was pushing us and one of these kids came over and he was like, “Hey! Get on the swing and I'll push you guys!” and we were like, “Hell yeah!” And so he pushed us around and we were like, “Oh wow! This kid is like, decent and he just wants to play.” And we ended up playing with them for a couple hours and they were like, “Yeah, we know that we're

¹¹ Largely based on the story of the war in heaven and 2 Nephi 5:21.

Black and people in town are really mean to us and you guys are the first kids that have been nice to us and not ran away.” And so for a while after that, then we would go to the park and they would be there and we would play with them, but if we saw anybody else come to the park, like plyg people, we would run away from the kids or they would run away so that we wouldn’t get in trouble for it. Our mom knew we were playing with them, but my mom didn’t care. Lola would’ve cared, but my mom didn’t care. As long as nobody found out about it, it was fine that we were playing together. That was the first time that I realized they’re people. There’s nothing wrong with them. They just were kids that wanted to play.

SG: What was your religious schedule? In a normal week, what was the religion part beside school?

EF: Instead of church and stuff like that?

SG: Yeah.

EF: We would have Saturday work meeting of course, which was generally, it was men were required and young boys, teenagers. I think it was if you were a deacon you had to go—

SG: And what is that?

EF: —because then you held the priesthood. I think, twelve. I’m not sure because I was too young to pay attention to that part of it, I guess. But I do remember my dad always had to go to work meeting on Saturdays and— sometimes, I don’t [know] why— they had Monday morning meetings as well for a long time. I don’t know why they stopped.

SG: How old were you— if you were participating in the work meetings or any of the projects or whatever?

EF: If my dad decided, he could take anybody to work meeting, but typically work meeting was for the men and if the women came, it was an honorary thing, I guess? ‘Cause if you got up and went to work meeting, you were more righteous or whatever, I guess? Like brownie points?

SG: [Laughter]

EF: I don’t know. I just know that Lola always insisted on going and my mom was like, “If I’m there, I’m there.”¹² She hardly ever went to work meeting, but she also had a job. She worked at the candy shop on Saturday mornings because of work meeting, and they had to prepare for that because after work meeting everybody would come get donuts, like the whole town. So they had to get up that early to make enough donuts for everybody in town to have donuts in the morning. And so she couldn’t really just go to work meeting—

¹² Lola was involved in church functions a lot more than my mom was.

SG: Right.

EF: —with everybody else. Sometimes she would get up at 3:00 in the morning, go to work at 4:00, and then work till 6:40, and then cruise over to work meeting, be there for the meeting, and then go right back to work when it was over. There was people that did that as well. Sundays, of course, we always had Sunday school in the morning which was at home typically at 9:00 or 10:00 I wanna say, and then church was at 2:00 every Sunday. And church, maybe, it was 1:00 to 5:00 or 2:00 to 6:00. I don't remember. I think it was 1:00 to 5:00, actually. But church was *always* four hours. It did not matter. It was always four hours or more depending on who, you know, was speaking that day. And sometimes if church was taking too long then the priesthood leaders who get up and cut off— Like, if they brought someone up from the audience to speak and this person was taking too long, they would cut them off and they would be like, “Alright, well, you know, you're—you've been talking long enough. We're gonna close the meeting now with a prayer and a song.”

Then every single day, besides going to church on Sundays and work meetings, every morning and every night we would have class and family prayer at home. So, class was in the morning, it was in the morning it was religious or not religious, Leroy Johnson sermons in the morning typically. And then at night it was Rulon Jeffs sermons. Sometimes we would read out of the *Bible* or the *Book of Mormon*, but usually the *Book of Mormon* and the *Bible*, or the *New Testament* was saved for Sunday morning meetings, for Sunday school. That was also when we would have sacrament, was [at] Sunday school.

SG: There was a couple other terms that you've mentioned a couple times that I just wanted to get, kind of, on the record how it was defined, at least in your experience, like how you understood. When you say, “Oh we had to, like our whole goal was to get to Zion.” What did the church mean by that at that time? Like when you were young?

EF: They told us because they started Zion in Texas, but for a long time nobody knew where Zion was. We were just told the prophet took the most faithful members of the church and they went to Zion, which was somewhere the Lord had appointed and it was the true holy, you know, Holy Land. So, if you're— like our one goal was to get to Zion, basically we did not need to do anything that did not contribute to that goal. So, we stopped celebrating birthdays because that was celebrating people and not God, and that wasn't contributing towards our goal of being 100 percent holy and pure people and vessels of the LLord, I guess you could say. They were like— they essentially cleansed the community. Kids couldn't have toys anymore, or dolls, because they bore the likeness of idols, I guess? They thought dolls were, what did they call it? Like when Moses came back from the mountain they were—

SG: Oh yeah.

EF: —worshipping the golden cow. It was basically that same theory, I guess. [It] was that dolls were that idol, the fake image or whatever, that was taking away from God. Toys were the same way. Any books that were not religious texts or educational texts, which all the education texts was also religion-based or written by Alta Academy or approved by the prophet. So, we had grammar books that were like your— they were regular grammar textbooks at one point, but then they had been edited and fixed to be compliant with the church and their views and their beliefs and just the culture in general.

SG: Like the hymn book, basically?

EF: Sort of.

SG: Saying where they're like—

EF: —where we couldn't use the new stuff. Yeah, yeah, like the children's books and stuff. We had to write our own children's book because we couldn't have store-bought children's books because those weren't [compliant] with the church. They didn't have the same values or they were made by wicked people or they taught the wrong things. Like, if there was a book that talked about dinosaurs or extinction or landing on the moon! Then that was evil.

SG: Essentially at this point, Zion was the Yearning for Zion Ranch in Eldorado, Texas.

You've mentioned the UO a couple times. What was the UO?

EF: The United Order. The UO, it came to be called— at first it was the United Order, and then it was all the people that didn't get in started calling it the UO. It was just a thing in town that it was "The UO." I remember being part of the United Order and I never called it "The UO" while I was in the United Order, but it became that, especially after I left. Then that was what it was more [strict], but that was— I think it was all Lyle [Jeffs] doing it, but there was revelations from Warren in prison saying that the Lord wanted his people, if you were actually worthy and holy and good enough to still be the Lord's servant then you would be called to live the United Order. But to do that first everybody had to have— they had to write a confession letter and then they had to have a one-on-one interview with the bishop and then if you were worthy or if you were deemed worthy by the bishop, then you would be baptized into the United Order at that point. Then you would be considered to be living the true God's holy way, I guess, like the Lord's will after that.

SG: So, there was a difference between Yearning for Zion and becoming a member of the UO?

EF: Oh yeah.

SG: It was two separate time periods and it was— but if the prophet was taking the most worthy to Zion, but they weren't living the United Order, did they ever bother to explain the difference?

EF: So, no, if you were in Zion, you were living the United Order.

SG: Okay.

EF: So, if you were taken to Zion or if you were worthy to go to Zion, that means you were living the United Order. So, that's what they told us when they told us we were going to start living the United Order in Short Creek, was that people that lived in Zion, on the ranch, had been living the United Order the entire time they were there, and that was how God wanted it; that's how you had to be to be in Zion. And so, all the people that were still in the Creek, what they told us was, "You're going to live the United Order to prepare for the lifting up and to prepare to go to Zion, because if you can't live the United Order with perfection then you cannot go to Zion."

SG: And so how did that change after Warren went to prison and after the raid of the ranch?

EF: So, I'm not sure how the United Order on the ranch changed,¹³ but Warren was in prison when the United Order— when they started telling us to live the United Order. This was in—

SG: When they started telling you in Short Creek?

EF: Yes, in Short Creek. Yeah. So, I didn't really know anything that was going on in Zion other than the raid¹⁴ and then when they told us because we needed to join the United Order that people in Zion had been living the United Order. That was, about as much as I knew about the ranch. So that was, you know, you didn't really know that much about it. So I don't remember what year it was that we started living the United Order. I wanna say it was seven years ago, because I'm pretty sure it was when my— right around the time my baby sister was born. Because when they started living the United Order, or after they started living the United Order, they basically said nobody could have sex or you couldn't do anything more than shake hands with anyone of a different gender, and even same-gender people. Like, a mom and her daughter weren't allowed to show affection, I guess? Like you weren't supposed to hug each other or sit too close or anything that was unnecessary or considered— what do I wanna say? Like selfish in a way? I'm not sure exactly how they put it, but if it felt like you were doing it for yourself, then you weren't supposed to do it.

SG: So up until then, it was totally normal for moms and dads to hug their kids and—

EF: Oh, yeah. Totally.

¹³ I never went to the YFZ [Yearning for Zion] Ranch.

¹⁴ Texas raid on YFZ Ranch, April 2008.

SG: All that?

EF: My dad would come home for lunch and he would walk in and kiss my second mom on the lips in front of all of us kids, but if both my moms were home, he would not— He didn't really show a lot of affection towards them in front of each other because that was sort of like their mutual agreement.

I know it wasn't the same in other families, but when my dad first married my second mom, then the first night they lived together then, of course my mom got kicked out of her room because she, you know, lived in my dad's room, or, no, she didn't get kicked out of her room, she slept in my dad's room and he slept in her room. In Lola's room. But, he came home— I think he had come home for lunch? And then she got home after he had for lunch and she saw Lola, or she was just home and they came out of the room and she, you know, she could smell that they had had sex and Lola had hickeys on her neck and he had hickeys, and she was so mad about it, and she just said [to] both of them straight-up, "If I ever see this again, then we're gonna have problems, you know. I don't mind that you have a second wife, but I'm not gonna have— we're not gonna do this in public— in front of each other because if we do, then we're just gonna end up fighting and I don't want to do that."

So, they kind of had a mutual agreement from the time that they got married that they would never fight in front of the kids. They never showed affection towards each other other than hugging and a quick kiss on the lips in front of each other. They would do it in front of us kids, you know, a kiss or a hug, more than they would in front of each other, but if they were in front of each other they were respectful towards each other. All my life, it was a thing that it was Lola's night, and then it was Mom's night, and then it was Dad's night alone, and then it was Lola's night, and then it was Mom's night. They did that through my entire childhood. It was just always that way. It didn't matter if she was pregnant, or if she had a baby. The only time it changed was if one of them was sick or if one of the kids was sick, then if my mom's child was sick she would be like, "Oh, my baby's sick, so either you sleep by yourself or Lola can sleep with you if you want, you know, it's up to you."

SG: But they were still, the parents were generally affectionate to the kids up until where they stopped—

EF: Oh, yes!

SG: —before the church told them to stop?

EF: When I was a little kid, my dad would come home from work and we would untie his boots and help take his boots off, and he would pick us up and hug us and tickle us and play games with us, and, you know, do the airplane and, you know, play kids' games. He would play with us kids and just have fun in general. He was a really fun dad when I was little. He was super kind and he would always, always, *always* tuck us in at night and

give us a kiss and tell us goodnight. Every single night, he would come and tuck me in bed and be like, “I love you, goodnight.” Give me a kiss, give him a kiss, and then he would go to bed, every single night of my childhood. And that was basically shunned overnight where you could shake your dad’s hand and that was it.

SG: Did your whole family get into the United Order?

EF: No. The night we were called up to go get our interviews for the United Order, we all, you know, packed up, got in the car, drove over there. And my dad, at the time, he was doing— for their baptismal font they had a water truck because the building they were doing it in, I don’t know why, but it couldn’t— they just didn’t have the means to have enough hot water in the building for the font because they had to keep it super clean and they didn’t, I guess, have a pool heater or anything.

SG: And is that the font at Uncle Fred’s old place?

EF: No, no, no. So, this was the font in what is now Water Canyon Middle School. It was in the classroom. It was in the area which is, it was two classrooms. They knocked the wall out and built the font and painted everything white and put white carpet down in the hallways. They had certain parts of the building blocked off that were part of this, you know, holy United Order baptismal font. They had dressing rooms, changing rooms, and a room where you could go— because you have to go in and get your special white dress from them, because it was just like you could use the white dress and you had to give it back once you changed out of it, ‘cause it was holy, I guess. You couldn’t even wear your own underwear to be baptized. You had to change out of everything, and then go in and be baptized and then when you came out, you would strip back down and get back in your clothes you came in and go out. When you came in you had to wear booties over your stockinged feet ‘cause your feet weren’t holy and they weren’t white and they couldn’t walk on the white carpet.

So, it’s now— the room where the baptismal font was is now the kindergarten and preschool rooms at Water Canyon [School]. When the school took Water Canyon back, they took all that out and put it back to its original condition, or better, you know, fixed it. You can’t even tell that it was ever there now. But, what my dad’s role in that, he helped them, I guess, engineer and come up with an insulated water tank out by his shop and they had big industrial water heaters that were, I’m not sure what they were for, but they were huge and they would fill-up this huge insulated tank with hot water, and then they would pump it into the water trucks and take it up to the font, and then dump it into the font, the hot water from the water truck. But they also used this hot water to build the white concrete ‘cause that was the original purpose of the insulated tank and everything was to build the white concrete of the YFZ, like the— Warren’s compound up there at the time.¹⁵

¹⁵ This has now been turned into the America’s Most Wanted hotel.

So, the night that we were called, my dad was out there, you know, filling the water truck and driving it up to the font. And he gets a call in the middle of doing this and they're like, "Hey, you gotta come in right now." He had to come home and wake all of us up and then take us over to the church and they were like, "You're gonna be too late if you don't get here within this many minutes, then you're not gonna be even interviewed for the United Order," even though he was the one that was filling up their baptismal font for them. He still, if he couldn't get there within X many minutes, he was wicked and not holy.

So, we got to the meeting house and we had to sit in one of the side rooms with everybody else that was waiting for their interviews, and we were just, had no idea what was going on other than that we were there and we were there for our confession, you know, interviews to make sure we were holy enough to live the United Order. All the interview consisted of, was going into the bishop's office and there was Lyle, and when I went in, my dad was there, and I know there was one other man but I do not remember who it was because I didn't—I was just so nervous and scared and I was a kid. I was like, not sure how old I was.

SG: And you're saying it was late at night?

EF: I think I was twelve. It was one in the morning.

SG: Oh, geez.

EF: Yeah. It was super early in the morning. We were all in bed when they called us. But yeah, so I was—I think I was twelve at the time. And I had already been baptized at the font because they had just, before they decided to do the United Order then they had—because they hadn't done baptisms in a while, so when I turned eight, I wasn't baptized. So, I got baptized when I was twelve up at Alta Academy, or what was Alta Academy, in the baptismal font, but this was before they did the United Order. Then when they called us in for the United Order, then we went in, we did our—I went in the office with Lyle and my dad and the one other guy, and all that happened is Lyle shook my hand and took my hand, and was like—I don't remember the exact wording but it was like basically, "Do you honor your father and your mother and follow the will of the prophet?" and all I did was mumble "Mhmm." That was it. I didn't say anything and he was like, "Huh? Repeat it," or whatever and I just nodded my head, "Yes." And he was like, "Alright," wrote something on a paper, and then we left, and I guess I got in because I was part of the United Order after that. And that night we ended up pulling up to the baptismal font and being baptized, but my little sister [Vilate] who was exactly eight, she had just turned eight that year. She went in and they decided she was not to be part of the United Order. She was the only one in my whole family [that didn't qualify], and she was the only eight-year-old. Everybody older than her and everybody younger than her was part of the United Order, and she was not.

SG: Including your parents and—

EF: Including her parents. My parents. All of her siblings. Everybody in the household was United Order except for her. She was eight. That meant that she could not eat anything from the storehouse. She could not wear anything from the storehouse, and that was what we were supposed to be living on at the time. We weren't supposed to buy things for ourself. We couldn't— we had to go shopping and turn it into the storehouse.

If we wanted to go buy— say we were going to the park, and we wanted to go buy popsicles, we had to go buy popsicles, go to the storehouse, take them in the receiving door, set them down, walk out, come back, and if they were still there; we could take them. And if the storehouse decided we didn't need them, they could take it and then we didn't get popsicles. So, my little sister was completely exiled from the family and this— her *mom* fully supported it! Was like, “Yeah, Vilate, you can't eat dinner with us. You can have peanut butter because we bought this at the store and it didn't come from the storehouse, so you can have this and we're gonna eat our meal as a family and you're gonna go sit by yourself and eat your own meal.”¹⁶

And it went on for a couple days and *my* mom was like, “This is not happening. She is eight. She is a child. We are not excommunicating our own child. This is not happening.” And my mom was like, “If this keeps going on, I'm leaving.” She told my dad and she told my other mom. She said, “If this keeps happening, I'm leaving and I'm taking my kids.” So, they, you know, alright, she can eat with us, but then, if anybody else was at our house, then we would keep it all hush-hush that she was not in the United Order, because she couldn't go to church with us! Because you had to sign in and you had to have your pin number when you went to church. And she couldn't go to work projects with us, and she couldn't go do things in public with us because she wasn't in the United Order. So, we were not to be seen in public just hanging out with her, just because they decided she wasn't good enough.

SG: Can you explain the pin numbers and when that started and how that worked?

EF: My belief is that the pin numbers was just for their storehouse system when they first set-up, because they had the scanning system for the storehouse, so when they first opened the storehouse, you would go in and they had the whole, like a bunch of these little hand-held scanners, and you would pick it up and it would just be like, “Enter your pin.” So, you would put in your number that they gave you when you got baptized— they assigned you a pin number. Mine was 4070. When I got baptized, that was my pin number and so I would go in the storehouse, get the scanner, put in my pin number, and it would be like, “Edna Marie Jeffs.” My name. My account. I would go get whatever we were getting at the storehouse, scan what we got, and then when I was done, I would check out and we would leave. That is where the pin number started, I think.

Also, we had to make up a sheet with everybody's names and pin numbers every Sunday. We had to have a blank sheet and every Sunday we had to write in our names and pin numbers for whoever was at church. Every Sunday then one person had to stay home and

¹⁶ We had a small table for the kids and she had to sit alone at that table.

tend the kids. So, if that was me, then I wouldn't be on the—I would be on the sheet. So, the sheet had everybody in the family, but then you would mark present or not present, and then you had to turn it in when you got to church. At first, when they first started the United Order meetings, then they had a man at a podium with the paperwork that was taking down your name and your pin number when you first came into the church building, but I think that just got to be too much work for them. And so, they had everybody just do the paper with everybody's names and whether they were present or not. It had your pin number, your name, and then whether you were present or not that day on every single paper—on every, every Sunday you had to have that turned in. If I wasn't there, they just marked that I wasn't present and then they would have to write why I wasn't there. So if I wasn't there they would have to be like "babysitting," you know. I think it was just a way for them to keep track of people, I guess.

SG: Yeah. You've mentioned that your second mom went to college, that your dad had a shop, that your mom worked all the time—so what did each parent do for a living and what—And since your second mom was the stay-at-home technically, what did she go to college for?

EF: I am not sure what she went to college for. I do know she worked at a photography studio that my uncle owned before she got married, and she also would work other jobs. She took care of this—a woman in, I think—it was up in the Salt Lake area.¹⁷ I don't remember, her name was Oma and their family would take care of her because she was paralyzed from the neck down. I mean, she had minimal arm use and stuff. She could kind of brush her hair and stuff, but so they took care of her until she died. So, they would drive up there and stay for a week or two and take care of her, and then they would come home and then trade off with one of her other sisters.

So, she did that and she worked at a photography studio, but I'm not sure—she might not have went to college. She might've just went through twelfth grade? High school, I think? I might be wrong about the college. She might've just graduated twelfth grade? I know my mom and my dad both had high school diplomas. My mom got her diploma from the high school in town, and I think my dad graduated in town, too, at the Colorado City Unified [High School], but I'm not sure. So, my dad was a mechanic. That's what he did. A lot of work he would do for the church pro bono, or that was his—instead of paying tithing, he would do the prophet's vehicles or if they had equipment that needed fixed, he would go do that for them. You know, work for people for that and then he would just get paid by—it was—he was the co-owner of his own shop. Him and his brother owned it under the Forestwood name 'cause Forestwood was his dad's business, family business, and they were a cabinet shop. And so when my dad started his shop, it was in the same general commercial lot, and he had a shop there and he just called it "Forestwood Automotive." And so, it was like [the] same business, but then him and his brother co-owned it instead of his brother and his dad like the other part of the business.

¹⁷ Orem, UT

That's what he did for a living, but there were times when the whole Zion thing first started, then we were so broke. We were living off commodities and going shopping maybe once a month with maybe two hundred bucks just to get the bare minimum of what they could for us to eat, but we were mostly living on handouts and we also— this was before the United Order— there was a storehouse at the time, but it was just— it was up right next to the old Fred Jessop font sort of, but you still had to pay for it. The way that storehouse worked is you would go shopping and they would just write it down in a ledger so it was on your tab, and then you would pay back as much as you could whenever you got paid. So, our tab, say we wrote it down and then my dad went and fixed the prophet's vehicles and then that was considered payback for it. I think that's how it worked, but I was a kid so it might've been different, but I'm pretty sure that's how it was.

SG: From what— from what they have explained to you since then?

EF: From what I understand, yes. And, I do remember going shopping there and my mom writing a check also, so she obviously, they paid them actual money. But when she did write a check, if I remember right, it was to Fred Jessop and not to the storehouse. That was sort of how they did that, I guess.

SG: And at the time, Fred Jessop was still the bishop?

EF: He was the bishop, yeah.

SG: I have so many questions. [Laughter]

EF: [Laughter]

SG: So— oh! And then what did your mom do?

EF: Oh! So, mom— she worked at the gel plant. Before she married my dad, she worked at the cafeteria as a teenager, and then when she did marry my dad, I'm not sure if it was— I think it was before she— not before. I think it started after she married him. She worked at Forestwood Cabinet shop, but it might've been before she married him. I'm not sure. I haven't really asked her for clarification, but I know she worked at Forestwood for a while. Then after she married my dad, she worked at, I don't think she actually got another job until when my second mom was mar— was married to Dad, but she worked when I was a child. She worked at the candy shop which was the local— it was the cafeteria but owned by someone else. Just the local family restaurant. She worked at the candy shop in the mornings and then she would work at the gel plant, and sometimes she would work at the gel plant in the afternoons and the candy shop in the morning, or the candy shop in the afternoon and the gel plant in the morning. The gel plant was— it was the Chafing dish fuel for parties to keep dishes hot, so it was—

SG: Uh-huh.

EF: — the cans of alcohol gel and they— *on* the cans and on the boxes, it said they were made in California. And so the gel plant was always a big secret thing because the people that owned the business were contracting out their— their production to the FLDS people, but they also were still saying that they were building their product in California when they were actually doing it out of Hildale. I mean, they had, you know, a— I was talking about this to my mom the other day and she's like, "They obviously had a huge plant somewhere in California, but the one in Hildale was just a small one that had closed down," and they had transported all the equipment and everything to the Creek and then they would make— they did it from there. But everything was based out of California and so, it was contracted out for super cheap to the FLDS because they could pay people, you know, dirt cheap and get away with it.

SG: So, your— were all three of your parents from Short Creek?

EF: Yeah.

SG: And generationally from Short Creek?

EF: So, on my dad's side, my great-grandfather, his paternal side, was my great-grandfather, was Carl Emil Zola Fischer, and he immigrated from Denmark after he married his first wife. And they moved to California and they had their life in California, and then somewhere he decided to live polygamy, and so he took on more wives, and then he ended up moving to Short Creek. I think he lived in Salt Lake first, and then eventually ended up in Short Creek. And so, my grandfather was his son, and then my dad, and so my dad was born and raised in it, as was my mom was born in it, too. I'm not sure of her side of the family history as much. I do know that she was European sort of, the Cooke family was a European thing, and she at least has two generations back that were in America. And I think she has one ancestor that was on the Mayflower, but I haven't done a lot of research into that and it's kind of hard because I never knew her dad and I don't really have any of their family history, and my mom doesn't have a lot of it because her dad was gone for most of her adult life.

SG: Uh-huh.

EF: And—

SG: What about her— her mom?

EF: So, her mom still lives in the Creek, and her mom and my dad's mom are sisters from different mothers and the same dad, so they were Charles Zittings daughter's and Charles Zitting was a convert to the Mormon church. They were all— I'm pretty sure Charles Zitting converted to Mormonism and then eventually converted from Mormonism to Fundamentalist Mormonism, or I think he just stayed with the Woolleys when the split happened rather than following mainstream Mormonism. So, he was already a Mormon and then just was FLDS after that broke off.

SG: So, that leads me to my next question. Earlier when you were talking about living in the UO and kind of some of the things that you had to do, you identified yourself under a very different name than what we have talked about before. So once you were in the UO, why were you now identified as “Edna Jeffs” instead of Edna Fischer?

EF: Oh, that wasn’t the UO. So, that was when— so, I don’t— back in the ‘90s, then my dad’s dad got separated from his family. They told him, “You’re not righteous enough. You’re not good enough,” whatever, took his wives, married them to other people. They didn’t marry my dad’s mom, Grandma Meg. She was Mary at the time, Mary Zitting. She was just kind of, I guess, single for a while? Then eventually she was remarried to Rulon Jeffs and so that’s where “Jeffs” came from. And I’m not sure exactly when that came about, but we were told that because Erwin Fischer, who’s my grandfather, was not holy enough and was not priesthood enough, and I have heard from other people that knew a bit more about the history, older people. They have told me that the reason Erwin Fischer was separated from his family was because his business was an employee-owned business, so the entire family owned shares in the business. They all owned it. Nobody could sell it, nobody could get rid of it. The church couldn’t touch it essentially, and because of that, they took his family away from him and married them to other people. So Erwin was married to my other grandmother, Rachel, who was my dad’s other mom, and Rachel was taken and married to Dan Jessop, and Grandma Meg was married to Rulon Jeffs and so, because now she was legally— er not legally— but she was sealed by the priesthood to Rulon Jeffs. Now, we were all, my—

SG: Her children and all of the rest were—

EF: All her children were now Jeffs. So, now my dad was Warren Jeffs’ brother even though we were never included [phone vibrating] in the family, really [phone vibrating]. We were still considered [phone vibrating] part of that family.

SG: [Phone vibrating] Let me take this call.

EF: [Laughter]

SG: It’s your mom, and this thing turned—

[TAPE RECORDER SHUTS OFF.]

EF: Jeffs, right?

SG: Yeah.

EF: So, yeah, we were all just— after that we only got called “Fischer” after that at the doctor’s office because we were always told, “Your legal name according to the government, you’re Fischers,” because they don’t understand the priesthood and how it works and they don’t—

SG: Oh, that makes sense.

EF: —the priesthood, they're trying to make us less valid, I guess? Like we're the bad guys, and so when we went to the doctor it was always "Fischer" and at home it was "Jeffs." And if you were doing, say you were doing your schoolwork and you wrote— if I was to write "Edna Fischer" on my schoolwork; I would get in trouble with that. I would get in trouble. It would be like, "No, that's not your name. Fix it. Your name is Edna Jeffs." So, I would have to go in and fix it, or write that, even though I never really liked the Jeffs thing [laughter] that much. I always preferred "Fischer." My mom also always refused to call us "Jeffs." She's like, "No. We're Fischers. My kids are Fischers and I am not a 'Jeffs.' Plain and simple." She always called us Fischer, but then my other mom—the only time she would call us Fischer is if we were in trouble, then she would be like "Edna Marie Fischer."

SG: That was the sign—

EF: In a bad way, yeah. Like you were in trouble at that point. So yeah, that had nothing to do with the United Order and all that.

SG: Oh, okay.

EF: Nothing at all.

SG: Let's see. So, we've talked about a bunch of things.

EF: [Laughter]

SG: Let's kind of skip ahead to when you and your family, 'cause you mentioned before that your mom had threatened to leave when—

EF: I don't know if she meant leave the church—

SG: But she meant with that whole—

EF: But leave the United Order more.

SG: Okay.

EF: So yeah, "I'm not gonna live this if it's gonna exile this one child," you know? I feel like my mom was always a lot more sympathetic towards little kids, just have a lot more empathy towards them and was a lot nicer to them than Lola was. I don't know why, but Lola always seemed to be heartless towards her own kids except her oldest. Her oldest always got whatever he wanted, but she was still not nice to him and did not— she wasn't a really great mom to him. Even now, he's just now leaving and he hates her guts. He *hates* his mom. He's like— he'll say it straight up. He's like, "Mother Gracanne" or he

calls her “Pink Dirt” now. He’s like, “Pink Dirt is more my mom than my actual mom will ever be,” because she actually took care of him, you know, throughout his life.

SG: So, how did— so, obviously your mom was very opinionated even if she—

EF: Mhmm.

SG: —was still kind of covert about it. How did it go from a family that was 99 percent UO, to all of the sudden, your mom and you kids being out of the church completely?

EF: I mean honestly, plain and simple: they kicked my dad out, and that was the one thing that was the explosion that killed it all. When they started kicking people’s dads out, people aren’t gonna sit through that. Even if they were the most righteous and the most—

SG: Faithful.

EF: I wanna say— submissive to the church.

SG: Mm.

EF: They still weren’t gonna think that’s okay. Nobody would think that’s okay, you know? Your dad is this good faithful man, he’s been doing favors for the prophet your whole life, and working his ass off, and letting his family go hungry and broke, just so that he can do the prophet’s will. And then they stand up one day and are like, “You committed this whole list of sins, go home and you better be ready to leave by the time church is over. You can’t hug your kids goodbye. You can shake their hands. You can tell them goodbye. You can’t give them your number. You have to get a new phone. You have to leave. Goodbye. Get out. I don’t want you contacting them,” you know. That’s just not okay and that’s not gonna sit well with people.

SG: How old were you when your dad had to leave?

EF: I was— thirteen, I think. Yeah, I was thirteen. I think it was in September when he left. Either August or September. Let me think. Wait, no. So, my sister was born in May—or April. I think it might’ve been in June when he left. I get it mixed up ‘cause I forget— I get mixed up the day that I left the church and the day that my dad left sometimes. I think he left in either late May or early June. Maybe mid-June.

SG: So summery time?

EF: Yeah, so it was like I was twelve turning thirteen in a month or something.

SG: How did it work that— ‘cause you said you were about twelve when you were interviewed and were admitted into the United Order—

EF: Yeah, so it was—

SG: So, how did it—

EF: Not even a year before when we joined the United Order.

SG: Yeah.

EF: Maybe I was eleven?

SG: Was there any explanation—

EF: But I don't think so—

SG: —that the church gave you for going within a year from, “Oh yeah, your father's righteous and going to be in the Order?”

EF: Oh yeah, there was an easy explanation. The prophet had a revelation and he had revealed to him that my dad did all these things. And the prophet is never wrong, and so obviously my dad did all these things that he'd never done before, and he was kicked out for it. He, my mom says he told her, and he was crying and cracking up and he was like, “They had a list of things that I did and the prophet's right so, you know, I must've done these without knowing,” but he's like, “I don't— I didn't do any of it. I didn't *do* anything that they're accusing me of,” but he still had to leave—

SG: But you can't—

EF: You can't say no!

SG: Yeah.

EF: You can't fight it because then you're wrong even more. You're wrong—

SG: Now you're calling the prophet a liar.

EF: Yeah, and now you're calling the prophet a liar, and now you're an apostate if you even question it, you know?

SG: Was he sent away permanently? Or was he sent away to repent? Or—?

EF: They all say— so it was like this revelation. They read it in church for other men. One day they got up in church and said, “The prophet's had a revelation and the following men are to go and repent from afar.” Then they read a whole list of probably twenty or thirty men. And it was like, “These men are going to go repent from afar, and all their families will be assigned to caretakers,” and yeah, that was it. You're no longer married to him 'cause he's no longer [in the] priesthood or in the church as of now. And you're not to contact them or think of them as your dad. You had to get rid of— you couldn't

have pictures up on the walls of him, or you weren't supposed to consider him your dad still. A lot of people would just go throw all their pictures away and stuff like that. We didn't. My mom didn't. She was like, "No. That's not happening." But yeah, they just—the prophet, you know, has called you to go repent from afar. Go home, pack your shit up, and be out by the time church is over. It's three or four hours.

SG: How did people deal with it as far as the—the legal aspect of breaking up marriages and families?

EF: You just didn't. Really. I mean that's the best answer I can give you. You just didn't deal with it. My mom and dad are still married, legally still married. He gives her 1200 bucks a month—not because he has to, but because he does. He's consistently given her money since he left.

SG: But is he still faithful to the church?

EF: Oh yeah. He—every time I call him, he bears his testimony that Warren Jeffs is the one and true prophet of God, and he will be, you know, he will get out of prison and he will be—and we will be lifted up. The righteous will be lifted up and go to heaven with the prophet, and it breaks his heart that I'm not there and that he can't save me. He full-heartedly believes in it and it's so sad to hear him because I'm just like, I know it's not true and it's fucked up that he believes that.

SG: Yeah.

EF: Because he's so hurt as well. He's hurting probably worse than the rest of us, because now we're all apostates and that's his fault, because if your kid apostitizes then that's your fault and you're a failure as a parent. You might as well go to hell at that point.

SG: But, as far as you know, he hasn't been brought back into the church?

EF: Oh, hell no. No. Nobody's ever gonna be brought back into the church. There's no communication from Warren Jeffs or anybody. All the people that think there's still faithful polygamists, like Lola, her caretaker is not even someone that was ever in a power of position. The most he's ever been is a caretaker who was just a man that's put in charge of making sure these families have what they need, and basically being there so that the families won't bother the bishop. This guy has just decided that he's in charge because he's their caretaker, and that the teachings are that you do what you're tea—what your caretaker says because he's your mouthpiece to God, just like your husband was before your husband was kicked out. So, now their mouthpiece to God is some rando that has no idea what he's doing except for, I guess, trying to be a good faithful priesthood leader to them, and they're all just lost.

SG: We were at the point where your dad gets sent away and he's kind of trying to understand what happened, or rationalize what happened, and he's saying goodbye, and obviously

you said, your mom refused to throw away the photos and all that kind of stuff, so what happens then?

EF: Like when he left? So, the night he left, he wasn't supposed to do this, but he would still— he still had communication with his brother Joseph, who had been kicked out in the 2000s. Joseph's— his baby was born about the same time as James and Meg, so in 2001, and he was kicked out before his baby was even a year old, because he was supposed to go repent. I don't know what happened with him or why he was kicked out, but he got kicked out and his wife was married to Willard Barlow and so all his kids were now Barlows. Then, in 2010, well, before 2010. I think about a year before that, or two years before that. He was, I don't know why, but they decided he was, he had repented sufficiently to please the prophet and God and he was brought back into town and back into the community. And we were so thrilled to have him back in our life, because he was just simply an awesome uncle and a great friend. He was a great guy. He had lived in Mesquite [Nevada] for all those years, and my dad has his mail key and would check his mail for him that whole time that he was living in Mesquite.

So, every month or so my dad would drive down to Mesquite to give him his mail and talk to him and do whatever they needed to do. I'm not sure what they did every time, but I remember going with my dad once or twice and seeing my Uncle Joe. And then he got brought back into the church, and he got a little apartment in town at a shop where he was working. The storehouse assigned him to live there, I guess, and told him to work there 'cause it was a storehouse— or church-owned shop. He was also a mechanic like my dad. And so he moved back to town, we're all happy he's getting to reunite with his older kids that remember him and his wife now has, I think, two or three kids that are Barlows. He gets to reunite with his kids, and then his oldest son, who's the same age as my oldest brother, Joseph Carl, gets to move in with his dad, which is awesome, you know, because they've been separated for so long. And so, Joseph Carl moves back in with his dad and then he's now Joe Carl Fischer instead of Joe Carl Barlow like he has been all these years. It's back to being Fischer. I don't why they didn't go to being Jessop because according to the church then Joseph, Uncle Joe, should've been a Jessop because his mom was married to—

SG: Dan?

EF: — Dan Jessop, yes. Before, I think before he was kicked out the first time, then they kind of started going by Jessop, but I'm not sure. I wasn't that old enough to know that part of it, I guess. So, Joseph Carl was living with his dad, working with his dad. It was great because we hadn't been part of their family in all that time they were married to Willard because it was just weird and we didn't like— we didn't know Willard's family. Willard was— he's abusive and controlling and just a terrible excuse for a husband. I've been told that every one of Beverly's kids that she had with Willard was not her choice to have kids with him. She didn't even want to marry him in the first place. All her kids hated him.

SG: Because she got assigned.

EF: Yeah, and so when their dad comes back, it's just awesome for them and they're all so happy about it and, you know, thrilled that their dad is in their life again. And then in 2010, Joe Carl is working, they were working on the border of California and Nevada, I believe. It might've been Arizona and Nevada— Arizona and California. I don't know exactly where it was, but they were swimming, which was against the church rules, but they had a rope swing in the river and they were jumping in the river and he drowned, and he was just in the water too long, and he died from it. They life-flighted him, they did CPR. He was pulled out relatively quickly from the river, but he still, he passed away. Because of this— so, his son passes away and the church is like, "Well, your son was swimming, which is evil and that means it's because he's been hanging out with you. It's your fault. You're out of the church now. Go away and repent." This is how they reacted. This is how they treat him because his kid dies in a freak accident.

Then he gets kicked out again, but my dad is still, you know, giving him his mail and talking to him and stuff. And so as my dad was leaving that night he gave my mom Joseph's number. He said, "Here's Joe's number. You know you're not supposed to have it, but if you need anything please call him. I know he will help you out. I know he's a good human— a good person. He's a good man and he will do whatever he can for me, so if you need something please call him." So, we had Joe's number and he's like, "But, you know, you can't call me of course." And then he left and we actually ended up with my mom after we got split up from living with Lola, when we were just living in our own apartment. Then we didn't have a vehicle when we got split up, and so my mom called Joe and said, "Hey, I got kicked out of my house. I don't have a car. I need to work," and Joe was like, "Oh, I'll figure something out," and he went and bought my mom an old Buick and parked it somewhere in the Creek and was like, "Alright, I parked it there. The title's inside of it. All you've got to do is sign it and it's your car." And that's just— what a good person he is, he would do anything for his family.

And so my mom got the car and then she told our caretaker about it, which meant that they decided that we couldn't keep the car. We had to consecrate it to the Lord. So that meant signing over the title to a church member. Somebody that was one of the apostles in the church, I guess, or one of the bishop's helpers. Then my mom got to register the car in *her* name 'cause she was driving it. She did have insurance, but it wasn't actually her car even though Joe had paid for it and gave it to her. She still turned around and turned it into the church so that she wouldn't be seen as going around the church and buying her own car.

SG: So, at what point does— 'cause you were still underage at the time—

EF: Oh, yeah.

SG: And so, at what point did your mom decide to leave with you guys? Like leave the church with you guys?

EF: So, that was when I was fifteen and that was two years after my dad left. After my dad left, we lived in our same house and we had— they assigned the— they told us, “Well, for right now your caretaker is the bishop,” who was John Wayman at the time, and so we were like, “Alright, cool. John Wayman is the caretaker, our caretaker.” And they gave us his phone number and were like, “If you need anything, you gotta call him,” and, of course, we’re a big family and the way my dad is, he’s not gonna beg for things, like he wore his boots clear until they had actual holes through the soles on the bottom, because he was just too fucking proud to ask the storehouse to buy him boots, because he would always just buy his own boots. He’d always done that and then the storehouse is like, “You can’t buy your own boots,” and for him to request the storehouse to buy him a certain brand of boots because he needed a certain brand of boots, and they still didn’t buy them. They were like, “Ope, you can wear Justin boots,” even though they made my dad, you know, they made his back hurt and his feet hurt and his legs hurt, everything. They were like, “This is what you get. Be grateful for what you get,” and left it at that basically.

My dad, before the United Order, he never wore denim in my life. I had never seen him wear denim pants, like denim jeans, he always wore Dickey’s. And then, along came the storehouse and the United Order. Denim is what the church had, so that’s what you get to wear. It was just the weirdest thing seeing my dad in denim jeans when I grew up seeing him wearing Dickey’s every single day of my life. It was just sad to see how they just didn’t care about people and they were like, “Well, you should be grateful because that’s what the Lord provided,” even though it was garbage. So, after my dad left, we needed— a lot of the kids needed shoes and we needed things to eat. We didn’t have food in general, and we would go up to the storehouse to get food and there just wasn’t supply there. There wasn’t food or they would limit you and only let you have one pound of beef when you would usually eat four pounds of beef in a week, like hamburger or whatever they had. We would— filling out special request chits for the storehouse for more food and clothes and shoes and things like this, and because our caretaker was the bishop, we would call him endlessly and be like, “We need you to fill out, sign our special request chits so we can take them to the storehouse,” and of course, he gets sick of that after day two and is like, “If you pray to God and he says it’s right, then I give you permission as your caretaker and your mouthpiece of God, then you can sign your own special [requisitions] and I will tell the storehouse that they should let you.” You know, this is— so we put our caretaker as John Wayman and then we had authority to sign it and sign our own special [requisitions], and then that just mean we could ask for whatever we wanted, because there was nobody stopping us at that point. I mean, of course we didn’t go overboard with it because we don’t wanna be seen as ungrateful or, you know, getting things— like providing for our wants and not our needs.

SG: Yeah.

EF: For a little while that’s how it was for, I don’t know how long, but, you know, John Wayman was our caretaker. It was great because we could basically get whatever we needed because he told my mom, you know, “If you pray to God and he tells you that it’s right, then you’re free to do this,” and so, you know, my mom’s like, “Well, if I want to

go buy ice cream, I pray to God. That's right. We're buying ice cream," you know, 'cause of my course my mom's stubborn and she's a boss and she's gonna do what she wants [laughter]. For a while that's how it was, and then after, I think it was only a couple weeks that we had John Wayman as our caretaker, and then they assigned Joseph Allred to be our caretaker. He lived— he lived kitty corner to us, to our backyard. His yard touched the corner of our yard sort of. So, he lived on the corner and then we lived on the center of the block on the other street.

So, we would walk over to his house for Sunday school and we would go with their family to church. And we didn't even know these people, we had never heard— we heard of them. We knew they were our neighbors, but we'd never talked to them or anything, and then we were expected to just be part of their family and come to Sunday dinners and Sunday school, and host Sunday dinner at our house maybe or Sunday school at our house, which never really happened because they had a huge family. They had a huge family. Their house was three times bigger than ours, so there's no way we could have had them at our house. And so they never really came to our house, but we were supposed to just, you know, be a part of their family now. And it was just so weird and awkward and it just— I never really just accepted that— I never accepted my dad leaving, you know, so I didn't accept this either. My mom was like, "Nah, I'll stay home and babysit." I don't think she ever even went over there for Sunday school. I would have to ask her, but I don't remember her being like, "Come on. Let's go to Sunday school." It was always Lola. She was always the righteous one, always the one worried about if she looked good enough to anybody, like to the prophet or to people. She was always super, wanted us to look good as a family, like we had to be the perfect model family, you know, righteous and all that.

SG: Before Warren went— before Warren Jeffs went to prison—

EF: Mhmm.

SG: — and before he went on the run, was it common for you guys to see him around outside of say Sunday meeting or times like that?

EF: Not necessarily.

SG: Or— or Rulon as well, before he passed?

EF: So, yeah. Rulon, I saw him a lot more than I ever saw Warren, because my dad worked on his vehicles, and my dad would work on his vehicles and we used to go up to Rulon's house for Sunday school once in a while, it was family thing. And before Warren came into leadership then, yes, it was a lot more like— we would go to Rulon Jeffs' house on Sundays sometimes and have dinner with our grandma and our aunts who were also married to Rulon Jeffs. And we'd go up there on Sunday for dinner and sometimes we'd go on their activities, like Sunday drive. I don't really remember this much. I remember seeing Rulon Jeffs in his office and I remember once, the last time I remember going to see Rulon Jeffs, then Warren was there. Warren was sitting in his chair, a desk, you

know, office chair, desk, whatever. And there was this, sort of like a big popcorn tub, but it had a wooden lid with a rope on it and it was clear full of the lollipops you get at the Doctor's office that have the Doctor's brand on them, but instead of a brand they just said "Keep Sweet" on them, and so it was a "Keep Sweet" sucker.

SG: So, they obviously had them custom made?

EF: Oh, yeah—

SG: For this?

EF: — definitely. Then I also remember Rulon Jeffs was sitting back in his La-Z-Boy, and I might've just made this up in my imagination as a kid, but I remember him having "Keep Sweet" on the bottom of his shoes. And it's a super weird memory 'cause I would've been four at the time and so, I'm not sure if that's just something that I imagined in my head, or if it was something that was actually there, but I very vividly remember the lollipop on a string that they gave me and it was a "Keep Sweet" sucker. And I remember Rulon Jeffs gave it to me and was like, "Here's you a sucker. It's a 'Keep Sweet' sucker, and it's sweet so you can keep sweet."

SG: Mhmm.

EF: And then gave it to us 'cause we were little kids—

SG: Mhmm.

EF: — and so that was really cool to me as a kid, you know, to go up there and get a sucker from the prophet, and it was just cool that you got to see the prophet, like, "Oh my god!" you know? Exciting—

SG: Even though technically he was your step-grandpa?

EF: Yeah!

SG: [Laughter] Kind of?

EF: That's the thing is—

SG: He was everybody's step-grandpa?

EF: He was never really my grandpa, so the only actual grandfather figure I *ever* had growing up was the person that my grandma ended up getting assigned to, so Mom's mom.

SG: Mhmm.

EF: So, her dad got— he left the church. He got sent to jail. His wives all got reassigned and so Caroline, my mom's mom, got reassigned to Richard Cooke, and so Richard Cooke was— Dick Cooke everybody called him— he was the only actual grandfather figure I ever had. And even then, my only memories of him are— he would call us all, all us little kids, we'd also go over to Grandma's house. All the time. But Grandma's house was— there was several grandmas that lived there because they all got reassigned. It was like all my mom's mom— all Jack Cooke's wives were assigned to Richard Cooke, and they all lived in this house, but they all had their own rooms and there were their own, own spaces— but *every single day* there would be lunch and dinner served for whoever was there. It didn't matter who was there. There would be probably thirty people there on any given night that were kids and grandkids of all these women that lived in the house and they would come for dinner and— or we would just go over to Grandma's house all day and then they'd be like, "Alright, dinner's ready," and you would come and eat. But then I remember Dick Cooke, sometimes, he would come outside or he would send a kid outside and be like, "Tell everyone to come in and get ice cream," 'cause he always, always, always had this giant deep freezer and it was always full of push-pops, the orange push-pops, and he would pass those out to all the little kids. And that was like, oh my god, that was the coolest thing ever, and then he would also let us watch *Winnie the Pooh* in his office with him, and so he had a TV in his room that he would let people— let all the kids watch *Winnie the Pooh* on, and that was really cool as a kid, because that was shunned in the church and so we got to go over there and watch *movies* at grandpa's house was so cool—

SG: Yeah.

EF: — you know, because it was just something that wasn't— didn't happen.

SG: Was your biological grandfather and Dick Cooke, were they related?

EF: I think they were somehow, I believe they were somehow related.

SG: But not closely.

EF: But I'm not sure how.

SG: Okay.

EF: I would have to ask my mom. I've had people explain to me how they were related, but I think it's, it goes back like two generations they have the same grandfather or something.

SG: Yeah, so they're not super closely related.

EF: Yeah, so they're not brothers, I don't think, but I again, I'm not 100 percent sure because I was never close to Dick or anything like that. It was like, we would go over there, I only remember hanging out in his office two or three times in my life. And I remember him giving us ice cream a lot, that was a common thing. But, it wasn't like we'd just hang out

with him. He was just a, y'know, he was a grumpy old man. And he would let you watch TV in his room, but other than that, I didn't really have much to do with him.

And most of the time when I came over to Grandma's house, I was in Grandma's room reading 'cause she would always give me books to read, so I would. She would give me novels and actual, like, fun books to read because she was a teacher and so she loved teaching people to read. And she's actually the person, she taught me to read when I was, like, five. I went over one day and I was looking at books and I was like, "Grandma, what does this say?" and so she told me what it said and it was just like, it was the big really thick volume of Dick and Jane books. And so I started with that book, and by the end of that day I had read the entire book and I could read the entire book again. And after that, I don't remember ever having trouble learning how to read anything new after that. Like that was just, she taught me how to read this one book, then I knew how to read. And she was always super proud of that, she was so thrilled because, when I was in first grade then she came over to my aunt's house and did aptitude tests for everybody, because she used to do that for the public school. So she did aptitude tests and she was doing the spelling test and she was absolutely thrilled because I was reading and spelling with a seventh and eighth grade level when I was in first grade. And she was totally thrilled because she's the one that taught me how to read. And she was like, "This is awesome!" So she'd always brag about that to people, she'd be like, "Yeah, I taught her how to read and she's so smart now." And so she was always super happy about that.

SG: So, let's get to, you're fifteen or about fifteen— —

EF: Oh, yeah, I never finished [laughter].

SG: [Laughter]

EF: So, yeah, so we were assigned to Allred, right? Joseph Allred was our caretaker and then, I don't know why they decided this, but I think it was because, so my aunt Erna, her husband got sent away, a while after my dad. And so I guess they decided that it would be smart to move her into our house so they could use her house, which was a pretty big house for someone at the time, because she had five kids and a five bedroom house, and it was a really nice house. And I guess the storehouse decided that she needed to let someone else, y'know the bishop had better needs for that house. So they moved her into our house and my mom let her move into the top, we just all kind of agreed that it would be better for her to just live in the upstairs of our house. Our house had, it had the very upstairs, the upstairs had two bedrooms, a master bedroom, which was huge. The master bedroom was the size of a regular people's living room, I guess, it was big enough that at one point we had all eleven of our girls, or all ten of our girls because we didn't have eleven girls at the time, but we had ten girls living in this one room. We had our bunk beds set up in there and it was still enough room to walk around, it was a little bit crowded, but it was by no means, it wasn't super crowded, y'know. It was just full, but it was a huge bedroom, it was twice as big as a regular sized bedroom.

And so there was this one big room and it had a bathroom in it, and then there was a bathroom in the hall, and then the two bedrooms upstairs. And so we decided that it would be smart to let my aunt move into the upstairs except for that her boys would have the two bedrooms, but our boys would also have to share a room with some of her boys. So all the boys lived upstairs and then Erna lived in the one bedroom. No, no, Erna lived in the bedroom and her boys lived in one bedroom and her girls lived in the other room, I think. It's a little foggy sometimes, but, no, no, I remember. Our boys moved into the basement. There was a bedroom in the basement, they moved down there and Erna moved into the top floor, so the three bedrooms. Even though we had seventeen people at the time because we had the two moms and the fifteen kids living at home. And so we all just crowded into the rest of the house. And that meant living in the basement and downstairs. And Lola moved into my dad's old room, which was a master; it was like a grandma suite off the side of the kitchen. It used to be the garage; they converted it, the people that had lived there before us had converted it into a grandma apartment for their grandma. And then, of course, they moved out and we moved in and it was Dad's room. But Lola moved into that room when Erna moved in.

And then it was always a nightmare living with Erna, because it just sucked. You can't live together like that. I think the biggest problem was she had never lived polygamy, and we thought that it would just work that way like polygamy, like how it worked for us 'cause we had two moms and we all got along and we understood that Lola's kids were to be bossed around as much by Gracanne as they were by Lola or by, the grownup children who were in charge; anybody thirteen or twelve or older was in charge of the kids. And so when Erna moved in, and she'd been a single mom her entire life, like her and her husband were the ones in charge, we tried correcting her children or punishing them for things, or telling them what to do at all, then she would get super butt-hurt about it, angry about it, but then she also would turn around and correct all of our kids——

SG: And when you say single mom, you mean that she was an only wife——

EF: Like she was, yeah, she was an only wife, she had her own house and she was the one in charge, and her husband worked all the time, so she was the boss. And so I was thirteen-fourteen and I was considered one of the big kids, I was a caretaker, so we had as you got older you were a caretaker and you were in charge of one of the little kids or two of the little kids, depending, and that way we always made sure, that was how we made sure the kids were being taken care of properly, y'know. 'Cause it's a lot of children to watch. And so, I was one of the big kids and then also my three older siblings were the big kids, too. We were in charge of all the rest of the kids in the house.

And then Erna moves in and we tell her little kids what to do and we just expect her older kids, that are our age, to step up and be the big kids and be in charge. But then their kids are like, "Oh my God, they're telling us what to do and they're not our boss," and all this stuff. But then Aunt Erna would also, it was like just because we all weren't used to living together and they would also be bossing us around, when we were like, "No, we're the big kids and we're in charge, not you, we get to be in charge of the kids." And then she also, they would also try to, it was just always a huge conflict, the whole thing was

sorta like a shit show. And there was no dads in the picture. And we'd all had our lives torn apart at this point. And so it was just so much tension and anger and pettiness all the time, and it just was a bad, bad situation to be in. 'Cause, I mean, you're supposed to be being priesthood and loving each other and keeping sweet, and that's impossible when you all can't live together, y'know. It just doesn't work like that.

And then when we finally, when we got split up from Lola and us and for them and us, was— So my mom worked still. At this point she wasn't working at the gel plant or the candy shop 'cause those had both closed down, and so at this time she — from before the United Order started, she had been working as a caregiver for the state. So she would take care of autistic kids and go clean their house, and just in general take care of them and help them out for the state; she got paid for it.

And so this is what my mom did, and she'd take us to work with her sometimes 'cause she was friends with the people she worked for and they were fine with it. If the one lady she worked for had three completely disabled kids, and so mom would bring us to work and we could help her out. So I could feed the one kid that was fifteen and had to sit in a highchair and eat like a baby, y'know. And I could feed him just fine because I'd taken care of babies before and that left my mom to take care of the other two kids, that were mobile and could walk around and run off if they weren't watched very carefully. And so that's, my mom would take us to work with her.

And so, one day I was at work with my mom and we just get a phone call, I don't remember who called, but they're like, "Mom, Rachel and Aunt Erna are fighting and Lola's fighting with them and it's, it's not good." And it was just like a shit show goin' on. And so my mom left me there with this lady's three kids and was like, "I have to go take care of this, I'll be back." And I also had my baby sister Maryanne at the time with me. I don't know how old she was, but she was still very small. So it was like, "I'll be right back, take care of the baby; take care of these guys. I'll come back as fast as I can." And so she left and she was gone for a while and I couldn't get a hold of her at all.

And then when she finally did come back, she just came back and she was like, "So Aunt Erna's moving out and we're moving out. We're not in the United Order anymore because Rachel was fighting and we aren't living together, we're not being holy or whatever." I don't exactly remember how they worded it or whatever, but we're not living in a holy manner or whatever. We're not being good enough to be part of the United Order anymore and Lola is, and so us kids have the choice. I can either stay with Lola and be part of the United Order— so basically my mom was like, "I don't want to be in the United Order," at this point because it was like they gave her a choice I guess, I'm not sure exactly how it happened.

So my mom was, she picked me up and she just, she says to me, she's like,, "I'm giving you the choice, you can either live with Lola and be in the United Order, or you can move with me and we're not going to be in the United Order." And I didn't even have to think about it; before she could finish saying it, I said, "I'm staying with you." 'Cause I wasn't about to live with Lola; I didn't like her to begin with. But my older sister Dianna

decided to stay and my oldest brother decided to stay with Lola in the United Order. And my sister Rachel, —she told us later the only reason she did it was because she had went to talk to the Bishop and he told her that her assignment from God was to move with Mom and keep us on the straight and narrow, essentially to keep us in the church and make sure we weren't leaving and trying to repent still.

And so Mom gave me and Saralee and Dianna and Rachel and Warren the choice, to choose. Saralee was, I wanna say, twelve? No, she was probably thirteen by then, anyway. She gave us the choice, she did not give Meg the choice. She's like, "Meg, you're too young to choose for yourself, you're definitely not staying with Lola."

And so, that day we got moved into, we were told, we would be moved into our own house or apartment by the bishop, but instead they— so the moving crew would come pack all our stuff up and they're like, "You're having your own house." 'Cause Mom was like, "I'm not moving out of this house unless you move me into somewhere on my own and not living with other people after this." And they're like, "Alright, we'll move you into your own apartment." And so, they loaded all our stuff into the trailer and left, and then they came and got Mom and were like, "Alright, follow us. We're gonna show you where your new house is." And I don't know if you've been to Donia Jessop's house.

SG: Mhmm, I know where it is.

EF: Yeah, so they moved us into a single bedroom in that house — in the basement. And so, we get there and all our beds are all in there and all our stuff is there and they're like, "There's this basement down at the end of the house where you can put all your extra stuff that doesn't fit in your room. But, here's your new apartment." It's a fuckin' bedroom.

SG: But that wasn't, Donia didn't live there—

EF: No, no, no. At the time it was a, yeah, it's where Donia lives now, sorry about that. So, it was, at the time everybody called it the mad cow house—

SG: [Laughter] Okay.

EF: Because it was the house that— I don't remember his name, I think it's Daniel Harker. He's married to my cousin, but we were never friends with him at all. But he was put in charge of this house, and basically what it was, is all the single old women that didn't really have anywhere to live or anybody to take care of them, he was their caretaker, and they lived in this house and they all had their own bedrooms. And so there's, I think, at least fifteen bedrooms in this house. And so all these old women lived there, and they all had their own bedrooms and had their own thing goin' on. And then there was two or three, maybe four girls that lived there, teenage girls that were considered rebellious and so they got moved into this house so all these old women could watch over them and make sure they're keeping in line. And then there was Sherry who lived in the basement, and she had two kids, and she used to be married to Nap Jessop. She eventually moved

back with him now, so she was, I think she was with him now. But, she was not in the United Order. So all the people in this house were not in the United Order, is basically what it was.

And so we got moved in and so Sherry lived, so there was only three bedrooms with actual people living there when we moved in. And so, there was the one bedroom was Kandi and her son. Kandi is my cousin. And then there was Sherry and her two kids. And then us in this house, in the basement. And all the old women never came downstairs to the basement. They just, they left us alone as long as we weren't trying to be kids. Like, if we went outside and tried playing, then they would all come bitch at Mom about it and all be like, "Your kids are doing all this stuff, they shouldn't be doing this and they're not supposed to play with this stuff." And Mom basically would just tell them, "Leave them alone and I'll take care of them. They're my kids." Kudos to her. She didn't let them walk all over her, which was awesome.

And the night we moved into this house, then Dan is showin' us around the house, like he's in charge of the house. And so he shows us our room; he's like, "Alright this is where you're gonna live." And then he walks to the next door which was Sherry's bedroom and he knocked on the door and nobody answered, and so he tried the doorknob and it was locked, and so he fuckin', he picks the door and opens it and is like, "This is Sherry's room." And Mom's like, "That's her room, I don't need to see it and it's not any of your business to open her door when it's locked. It's locked for a reason." And he just looked at her like he was super offended by this, y'know, some woman telling him where he should be, like putting him in his place very clearly. And Mom's like, "I don't care about anybody else's bedrooms in this house. It's none of your business, and it's none of my business. Leave them alone." And so, after that he kinda knew that Mom wasn't fucking with him and she never put up with his shit.

He would try coming in and just, he told us we couldn't get a new doorknob because that way he couldn't check and make sure we weren't doing anything wicked. And of course we got new doorknobs, promptly. And put it on our door with a key so nobody could come in. And they got mad at us for that and we were like, "There's no way we're fixin' it. If you don't want us to have this stuff in your house, then move us into our own house."

Eventually they moved us into our own place, which was a trailer house over on Central Street. And that was super nice living in our trailer house. But then a couple months later then we realized our neighbors are moving and we're like, "Oh, this is cool, our neighbors are moving and we're getting new neighbors." And so all of us kids run over and climb up on the fence to watch the neighbors, and we realize it's Lola moving in on the other side of the fence. And we're like, "Well, this is an interesting development." And so of course all of us kids were super thrilled because, y'know, Lola's kids, and we get to see our brothers and sisters now. But Lola was super pissed about it. And they would get super mad when we'd get up on the fence, or if we got up on the fence and started talking to the kids and the adults saw it, then they would take the kids inside. And so within a couple days of them moving into that house, the kids were locked in all the

time and they never got to go outside because, of course we're not going to stay in the house all the time. Mom is not like a total bitch to us, so we get to do what we want.

And so after a little while of them living there, then, of course, we had to move out of that house and into another house where Lola didn't live. So, that was when we finally got moved into our own apartment. I mean, the trailer was nice 'cause, it was a trailer house that we lived in. And it was nice living there because it was like our place, and it had a fence around the whole yard and we could just do whatever we wanted in the yard, y'know. And it had a nice big yard, even though it had no, it was all dirt and a concrete basement for a house to be built, but there was nothing there, it was just empty. But just having a yard that was fenced in and no judgement was like a God-send. 'Cause, we were out of the way of everybody that could try judging us or telling us what to do or seeing us, y'know, do our thing.

But then after that, we got moved into one of the quad houses. We moved into the upstairs apartment and it was super tiny. So, me and Meg, and Saralee shared one room; and then my mom and the boys shared the other room. And then there was— it wasn't an actual bedroom, it was just, somebody had, so in the quad houses there was the two sides, then there was a stairwell up the center part, and then there was a sort of a storage closet at the top of the stairwell upstairs, and downstairs it was meant to be shared for both units— but whoever had lived in there before us had framed in that, that little closet and turned it into their own room inside the house so the other house had no access to it. So it was like an extra bedroom in our house. And so that was my sister's bedroom. Rachel's bedroom before she moved out. So Rachel lived in there.

And we would watch movies, like when we lived in the trailer we would go to the library and get movies from the library and watch them and download them, we'd rip them from the DVD and put them on our computer so we could watch them later. Of course we didn't realize that we were breaking the law because, "We are above the law and the law doesn't apply to us." And just that we'd never dealt with anything like that before. So we'd get music CDs from the library and download the music for ourselves, and DVDs, and whatever we wanted from the library, and watch movies. And it's funny, because the first time I watched a movie, my sister Rachel came home and was like, "Oh my God, I watched this video at Julia's house," because Julia was our friend and she was y'know, she did whatever she wanted; she didn't care. And she lived by herself too, with her kids, because her husband was sent away to repent, or he just, I don't know what the whole case was with her husband, but yeah, they didn't live together. I think he was in the United Order and she wasn't, but anyway, we were friends.¹⁸

And so, Rachel comes home from babysitting Julia's kids, and she's like, "Yeah, I saw this play," because that's what we called the home videos we had with the plays that the families in town would make. And so she's like, "I saw this really cool play at Julia's house. And it's these seven brothers and they go and get married to these seven girls, and it's really cool, and they have cool songs and they dance, and it's just super cool." And

¹⁸ She wasn't part of the UO but he was.

so, she had to show us this video she saw. And she didn't know it was a movie. It was *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*. She didn't realize that it was an apostate or gentile movie because it's super conservative. Hell, they wear long johns in the movie. So, to her, it was just some new play that somebody had put on, like maybe the Canadian part of the church or something. She'd never seen it before, and so she was super excited and wanted us to watch it. And so we watched it and I was like, "Yeah, this is, y'know, really cool."

And then, from that point she would go with us to the library and get movies, and we would all watch movies together. And sometimes we would drive around in the van and listen to the XM radio, like Disney radio and we would listen to just the regular radio. And I never let her, she would get super mad if we'd listen to the radio at home, for some reason that was crossing the line, but if we were in the car, it was okay to listen to the radio.

SG: Okay.

EF: Yeah, and so I would sit in our bathroom for hours at night with the radio turned down as low as it could possibly be turned down without being off, and I'd have it clear up to my ear, and I would listen to the radio. I would listen to talk shows, like the public news, public broadcasts, and stuff like that. And so that was, that was what I'd do. I didn't let her know about it. But we would also watch movies, like we watched *Titanic* and, I mean a bunch of movies, even movies that were considered evil.

And then one day, whatever the fuck happened, Rachel decides that we're going too far over the line, we're gonna be apostates and this is when she breaks the news to us that the whole reason she didn't leave with Lola was because she was supposed to be keeping us in line. And she's like, "Well, you guys are not trying to come back to the United Order, you're not trying to repent, you're just gonna drag me down with you, so I'm leaving. I'm gonna go live with our Aunt. And you can do your thing. You can not live the United Order, if you wanna stay here and do your thing." And before she left, she deleted all the movies we had, and tried taking our radios and throwing them in the trash, and all this stuff. And we're like, "Dude. Leave us alone." But I hated her at that point already, because she was always trying to micromanage me. And Mom would go to work and she would be the one in charge, and she wouldn't let me— so Mom would tell me, "Yeah, you can watch movies while I'm at work." So I'd go to watch movies and Rachel'd be like, "No! You're not watching movies while Mom's at work." And I'd be like, "Well, let me call Mom and she'll tell you that she told me I could watch movies." And she'd be like, "No, I have the phone, I'm in charge, you're not calling Mom. I'm not letting you take the phone. You're doing what I say." And so she'd micromanage us all the time.

And so I hated it, I was depressed before she moved out and I was just so done with her. I just hated her at that point. Because she was always like, she, we started watching movies and listening to music and we would go to Goodwill in Page [Arizona]. When we were in Page, we'd go to doctors in Page because of insurance. Because Arizona insurance, that was the closest specialist. So we'd go to Page for the doctor; and we'd go to Goodwill

and get jeans and t-shirts, and we'd wear them when we were in Page, or when we were in Springdale [Utah], or somewhere where we knew people that we didn't know wouldn't be. Or that people we knew wouldn't be in these places, so we'd go there and wear whatever we wanted, and even she would do it with us. And she was fine with it. And it got to where we could listen to the radio in our room and she didn't care.

And then all of the sudden, one day she decides that we're going too far and starts trying to restrict us from all these things that we'd been doing for weeks, or months even. And all the sudden it's like, "No, you're not my boss, I'm basically an adult now, I'm fifteen. Leave me alone." And so I hated her at this point because she was just such an ass. She was just horrible to us. And then she moved out. And then shortly after that was when we actually, finally left the church.

And I think my mom says that she finally left¹⁹ because me and Saralee, mostly Saralee, would sneak out and go drinking, or go skinny dipping, or go hang out with boys. Saralee had a friend [Asenath Barlow] that lived down the road from us, and her mom was also a non-member. And her mom was on the path to leaving, same as us, like they'd watch movies, they'd listen to music. And there was another family that lived, this other lady [Violet Dockstader], she had two daughters that were close to our age, so we would all go watch movies at Julia's house, because Julia was an adult and she would let us watch movies, and she didn't care if she got caught because she just really didn't care if people knew, I guess, or she just didn't care what people were gonna do.

And so we would all, we were all teenagers and we'd hang out. Then it started, y'know, we'd sneak out at night. Or just go out and go for a walk in the middle of the night. Which was completely unheard of, because you didn't go out of your house at night unless you absolutely had to before this. And so for us to be like, "Mom, we're gonna go walk down the street," at, like, ten at night was completely unheard of. But basically, we just started being rebellious. And so my mom was like, "Well, we're gonna leave." And she decided to leave and everything, and then the bishop called her and was like, "Hey, you're kicked out of the church. You need to go repent." And my mom was like, "No, I don't need to because I'm leaving. Y'know, I'm out." So we left. And of course, my mom had to figure everything out before she left. And so, by the time she had, she already had everything figured out before they actually called her and were like, "Hey, we're kicking you out for trying to leave." She already had everything planned out. She had it figured out, somewhere for us to stay.

But, a week before we actually left, we drove to Snowflake, Arizona because my Aunt lived there, and there was a church there that they were like, "Yeah, we'll help you get a house to live in and we'll help you figure out, y'know. We would love to help you out and help you get settled and on your feet here." And so, we went down to Snowflake for a weekend, I wanna say, for a couple days, I think it was a whole week actually. And so, we were in Snowflake and we were hangin' out and havin' a fun time. That's the first

¹⁹ My mom has since told me that she left when she did because she was waiting for Dianna to be 18. She didn't want Dianna to hate her if she left while Dianna was underage.

time we went out in public in a t-shirt and jeans, other than just going swimming at the Virgin river and stuff. This was the first time we just hung out for days in jeans and a t-shirt. And of course I was still wearing my underwear; I couldn't stand how jeans felt without my underwear, my long underwear, of course. And so, I was wearing long sleeves, long pants for the first couple days, and then after that I just quit wearing my underwear and went without it, and it was fine. But it was just so nice. We went to a fall festival there; and hayrides, and face painting, and singing, and candy, and just doing whatever we wanted at this festival, and it was just so much fun.

And my mom looked for a house in Snowflake and she tried to find a house and job or something, but it just didn't work out in Snowflake. And then there was Roger Hoole helped us get into contact with a woman [Linda Cummings] in Wyoming who ran SAFV,²⁰ which is a women's shelter. And they had a grant from, a personal grant from someone and they wanted to help women, y'know, help the women's shelter. And so these women at the shelter got hold of the person that was giving the grant and said, "Hey, we have this FLDS woman and she's tryin' to leave the church and she has no, she needs help, she couldn't possibly take care of herself and her kids right now."

And the guy, the grant, paid for our rent and our power and our utilities for an entire year after we moved there. And so, they got sent to an apartment [with] no out-of-pocket costs, so we went and stayed in a women's shelter while they got all the furniture for our apartment and got us all the stuff we needed. And then we moved into our apartment, and that was when we finally left. And then, we started school a week later and it's you could say the rest is history, because, I mean we've just been moving up since then. But that was when we finally left, and it was just such a relief to finally be out of there.²¹ The night we left, it hurt like hell to leave. We were packing our stuff and we just waited, like we had been packing our stuff to leave for a good month before we actually left. And we were just putting boxes under our beds and in that little room where nobody went, because the bed in that room was just a box frame and a mattress on top of five-gallon buckets. And so, it was super easy to pack stuff and hide it under the bed. And we could do that in all our rooms really. And so, we were packing for a good month before we actually left, and getting everything ready. And so, then just the night that we decided to leave we waited till dark, then we just started packing everything up.

And Lola came by and was like, "I can't believe you're leaving. This is so bad and horrible and you guys are goin' to hell." And my brother [Warren] and older sisters [Rachel and Dianna] came and tried getting us to sign the kids over, so that they wouldn't be damned for eternity, and tried blaming my mom and talking her into signing over her kids. And then her sister came over and was like, "You're killing your kids; you're takin' them to hell," and all this. "I can't believe you'd do something like this to your kids." And her mom came over, and Grandma was really the coolest person that came over that night, because she came and she gave my mom a box of recipes and little notes and stuff, and she's like, "I know you're doing what you believe to be right, and I trust your

²⁰ SAFV Task Force, Uinta County, Wyoming

²¹ I was depressed and using sleeping pills so I could sleep for most of the day before we left.

decisions, and I trust your choices, and I will always love you.” She’s like, “I love you and I always will.” And she’s like, “I would leave, but I’m just too deeply rooted here. And I’m not young enough to leave on my own and take care of myself, so I’m so glad you’re doing what you have to do, and have a good life.” She was like no judgement given. And she was just so kind to us all and she was just like, “I love you guys and goodbye, I guess.”

SG: And that was your Grandma Meg?

EF: Yeah. No, no, no, Grandma Caroline.

SG: Caroline.

EF: I hadn’t seen Grandma Meg in years, because she went to Zion because she was married to Rulon Jeffs, and so she’s never been a huge part of my life ever.

SG: And your Grandmother Caroline is your mom’s biological mom.

EF: Yeah. And she’s the one grandma that’s always been in my life. And Lola’s mom was always in our life, when they lived at Dick’s house, Caroline and Eva, Lola’s mom, shared a bedroom. And so, when I was a kid and we’d go over there, we’d hang out with both of them the same amount because they shared a bedroom. And so, it was always like they were our grandmas —

SG: Do you still see your Grandma Caroline?

EF: I haven’t seen her since her birthday last year. On her birthday, we went and we just knocked on the door. My mom planned this out and her brother, Doug, planned it together. We got a bunch of her grandkids together and her children, it was mostly just Mom and Doug, and then Doug’s kids and us, and we went over and just knocked on her door on her birthday, and said Grandma we wanna, er, just told Katie, because Katie is the one who lives with her. And we said, “Katie, we wanna sing Grandma ‘Happy Birthday.’ Can you have her come to the front door?” And Katie’s like, “Well, she has a window in her room, so go around to the other side of the house and you can sing to her there.” And so, she stood up and she watched us as we sang “Happy Birthday” to her and said, “Love you, Grandma,” and all that. And then we just left, we didn’t press to go in or anything, but we let her know that we were there and y’know, it was her birthday and she deserved it. But yeah, she was just nothing but supportive the night we left.

And Lola, when she first came over and tried getting us to sign the kids over, and of course Mom was like, “Ha, ha, ha. Y’know, God gave the kids to me. If he would’ve wanted them to be your kids, he would’ve gave them to you. I’m not giving them up.” And they tried getting me to go, they’re like, “You’re old enough to choose.” And I’m like, “Hell no. I don’t like you guys. Not enough to stay here.” And so, she just got mad and left the house. And so, we packed up the car that my Uncle Joe had bought. We packed up all the stuff that we didn’t want to keep, or the stuff that we wanted Lola to

keep, I guess, and we just left the keys in the car and left a note for Lola that was like, “All this stuff is yours, or you can turn it in to the storehouse, or whatever.” Like, all of our kitchen stuff and dishes, and just all the different things that we just didn’t need or want really to take with us. And all our plyg clothes, of course.

And then after we got all our stuff packed up, like our van was all packed up and we were ready, in our seats ready to leave, then we drove over to where Lola was living and she came out and her and all her kids came out, said goodbye to us. And they tried talking Meg into staying. And Mom was like, “No, she’s not staying. Obviously, she’s like, twelve, thirteen. She’s not staying.” And so, my mom, I think, yeah, I was sixteen when we left. And so, my Mom was like, “Meg’s not staying. She’s thirteen, she has no authority to choose in this matter.” And so, Rachel and Lola got her a blank notebook and they both wrote along letter in the front of the book that was like, “We know it’s not your fault and you can still stay faithful if you read your scriptures and say your prayer every day. And stay faithful to the prophet. Don’t lose faith in the prophet and Warren Jeffs, the prophet and all this. If you keep your testimony strong and you try, truly try, then you can, as soon as you’re eighteen, you can come back to the church and be taken back into the fold. And you can still be lifted up with the prophet.” And they gave her this notebook and were like, “Yeah, you can write your journal in here²² and write everything, because we know it’s not your fault and you can’t do anything about it, and, you’re forced to leave and your mom’s so evil and everything.”—

SG: So they only tried that with Meg.

EF: Meg.

SG: And not with the younger ones?

EF: Well, they told the younger kids, “Y’know, it’s not your fault and you can still come back if you decide to.” They didn’t go as hardcore as they did with Meg because, I mean, Stephen and Carl are like eleven and nine, so what the fuck were they gonna do? Well, no, because Meg was thirteen, that means they were eight and seven at the time, because Stephen is five years younger than Meg. So they were super little, so none of that would have worked, and Maryanne was three.

SG: Yeah.

EF: I think. But anyway,—

SG: Did they try with Saralee?

EF: Saralee was never even an option to try, she was the one that rebelled the most. I never went out drinking, I never snuck out and went skinny dipping with boys, or even went

²² Saralee and I took the notebook from Meg and hid it for a few years. When we gave it back, she thanked us for hiding it. It made her really sad to read it before we took it.

and hung out with boys. And she had done all of that with her friend that lived down the road, her and Senie [Asenath] would go out all the time. And so, I never did all the fun [things] with those friends with them, but I never went and did all the things that they did. And she would tell me, I was always her confidant. Like she would come home and she'd be like, "Yeah, I went skinny dipping with all these boys and we saw their, y'know, I saw them naked." And I was like, "Oh my God, you're so wicked, but damn that's cool." Y'know, kinda jealous because I didn't have the guts to do that. I was kind of more reserved, I guess, like I was fine with staying home. And so, her and I would, we went from being enemies as kids, I mean not actually, but we went from fighting as kids to bonding stronger than anyone I've ever, ever known. And so, even now we're still each other's confidants and we disclose literally everything to each other and talked, y'know we can talk about anything to each other and nothing is off limits or too weird to talk about.

But, yeah, when we left, Lola didn't even try with Saralee because she basically told them to fuck off when they did come over. They're like, "Why're you wearin' pants?" and she's like, "Because I want to." And they're like, "Well, you should wear a dress because, so you can go to Zion." She's like, "I don't wanna go to Zion. I don't wanna be priesthood anymore, I wanna leave." And so they were like, "Oh, okay," y'know and basically, they just gave up. And when Rachel did live with us, she knew that me and Saralee were on purpose listening to the radio and watching movies and all this wicked stuff. And so, I guess in their mind, Meg was the innocent one because she didn't have a choice, because she was the one that Mom did not give a choice to. And so they were like, "Yeah, you're the one that can't make her choice and can't decide." And Meg was the one that took it the hardest for sure. 'Cause Stephen and Carl and Maryanne were just too young to comprehend the whole scale of it or be affected as much. I mean, of course they lost their friends. But Carl doesn't really remember Lola's kids at all. Maryanne doesn't even [remember] her dad at all. So, Carl and Stephen remember goin' and hanging out with Lola's kids maybe two or three times after we split, after we moved apart from each other. But they were never close with any of her kids or anything like that, or even with Dianna. Once we split up families, then we were never close with them again.

And so, Meg was the one that was young enough to be torn from her best friend, because James is her all time, he's her best friend. They are basically twins, like they're, he was born in May and she was born in October the same year, and so they grew up together and they've always been close, super close. And so, when we split up and moved away from Lola, then y'know, she was super sad and it broke her heart. And so, us leaving really, really, sucked for her because she really didn't have anyone, because she wasn't close to me or Saralee. I mean we were our own friend, y'know. And then there's Meg, and then five years younger it's Stephen. And so she really is stuck with nobody to rely on. So, once we moved, then me and Saralee sorta realized that and tried to take care of her as much as we can, but it's still not the same as having a close sibling like you had for your entire life before that.

SG: So what are you doing now?

EF: So, I joined the Navy a year ago. Before that I worked in fast food, and then I worked construction, and went to college for a little bit, for like a semester. And I really didn't like any of those, so now I'm in the Navy and I'm an Electronics Technician, and I've been in school for the past year and I'm finally, finally done with school and actually gonna be going to my ship in a couple weeks.

SG: So I asked you that because when you were talking about your special request paperwork, you used a word that I recognized as military terminology, and I was wondering if your use right now in this interview of the word "chit" for your special request—

EF: 100 percent military, yeah, yes.

SG: So that's not what you guys called—

EF: No, it was a special request, was what we called it.

SG: So it was just like a—

EF: It was just a special request; you'd fill out a special request—

SG: Like a form.

EF: Yeah, but for me now any form of paperwork is a chit, so.

SG: That's just the terminology that you have—

EF: Yes.—

SG: acquired in the last year.

EF: Any piece of paper that I need to acquire or use is a chit. So [laughter]

SG: [Laughter]

EF: Yeah, I don't even notice I'm doing that sometimes.

SG: So I wanted to clarify that for posterity.

EF: Yes, it was not, yes, yes, it was not a religion thing, so. I think it was just a special request. You would just fill out a special request in the storehouse. But of course I automatically add chit because that's my life now. [Laughter]

SG: [Laughter] Yeah, so is there anything else that you think would be important to include in what we talked about today?

EF: I think one cool thing to mention would be that James just left. He started coming to our house and hanging out in the last year, and him and Meg have reconnected and it's so cool because he's leaving. It sucks for him because his mom just kicked him out, like two days ago, told them that he's an apostate now and he has to get out. But him and Meg are just as close now as they ever were, and they've only been hanging out for the past ten, eleven months. And they haven't seen each other for seven years between that. And even though it went from when they were, y'know, twelve or eleven the last time they seen each other, they're eighteen now and they're still best friends and they're still super close and it's just super nice to see that. I guess the younger kids are leaving now, and not staying there, eventually, I feel like eventually everyone is gonna leave.

Or like Lola's kids, just because Lola, she's super attached to her kids but she also used to like — when she'd get overwhelmed with them she would just dump them off on us. So, when her babies were little she'd be like, "Oh, this baby won't stop, crying because it's a baby, but I'm super stressed about it and I'm tired and I'm sick of dealing with it. Here take my baby, I'm going to take a nap²³. I'm not taking care of it." So Lola kind of does that, she's super attached to them and so she tolerated James coming over to our house for the last year. But now, she decided that he's been doing it too much even though she gave him warning, and so now he has to get out. But I honestly think that as her kids leave, as more of her kids leave, she'll either leave or she will just get to where she realizes that she's all alone and she has to just accept the fact that her kids are apostates and still communicate with them, because that's exactly what her mom did. Because her mom had apostate sons, like way back before I was ever born and apostate, y'know, daughters and sisters. And her mom would still, if they came and saw her, like came to her house, she would still go out and hang out with them and stuff. And so that's just my hope, I guess, is that they leave and get out.

And I think [it's] also important to note is that my dad is still, he still believes he is on his repentance mission and that he's going to be called back into the church and the United Order eventually. Even though the church has literally dissolved and there is no, basically no church now. But it's still, he still believes in that hope. He keeps that hope because I think it's just the only thing he has left to hold onto, because he's a failure as a dad because half his kids have apostates, or are apostates now. And in the church, they always taught that if your kids were to apostatize from the church, then you might as well have, what do they call it, have a yoke hung around your neck and be sunk in a lake of fire and brimstone, said it would be better to be in a lake of fire and brimstone than to have your kids [be] apostates. So, it's kind of like him going back to be faithful in the church is his only hope he has left, I think. But all I can do is hope that he will leave.

Even though he still talks to me if I call him, he doesn't make any effort to reach out to me, but if I make an effort to reach out to him, he will still tell me he loves me and that he's proud of me, but he doesn't agree with the fact that I'm in the military at all. I called him before I left to told him, "Dad, I'm joining the Navy." And he's like, "The Navy?"

²³ Lola had Postpartum depression and refused medication due to revelations saying that members of the United Order could not use "mind altering drugs."

Why?" And I'm like, "Because I want to and it's gonna be cool." And he's like, "Oh. Well, just remember whatever you do, y'know, that, remember to pray and give God the credit for everything." And I'm like, "Alright, not sure I'm gonna do that, but I will keep you in my mind and I still love you very much." So yeah, he still, he lives on his own. My oldest sister lived with him for a while, a little while back, last year for a little bit. Or earlier this year, I think. But, that didn't work out; she moved out and she lives with Lola again. Rachel has lived with Lola on and off ever since she moved out of our house. She lived with one of our aunts for a little while, then she lived with my dad for a while. But she consistently goes back to Lola. Even though Rachel absolutely hates Lola.

SG: Are Rachel and Lola still part of the United Order or feel as though that they are living the United Order?

EF: The United Order doesn't exist anymore, but I guarantee you they're still living by all the crazy revelations and all that. It's like part of the United Order.

SG: They're still trying to live—

EF: Yes. They're still trying to live the United Order—

SG: Even though like—

EF: — like whatever was taught of the United Order—

SG: Even though the structure isn't there.

EF: — even though it's gone, they're still gonna live by the principles and the rules and all that.

SG: Alright, well, thank you this was lovely. And the end.

[END OF RECORDING. END OF INTERVIEW.]

Addendum [added by narrator during editing]

Vocabulary:

Nut Harvest (Pecan Harvest) - Members of the church would go to a pecan orchard in Hurricane, UT and pick up nuts from the ground for the church.

Plyg - short for polygamist, refers to members of the FLDS or things that were a part of the FLDS beliefs. [In related oral histories, it may be spelled as “polyg.”]

Storehouse - A place where members of the FLDS Church donated all their belongings and then received back what they needed from the church.