

Interview Mildred Carter Falls

11.09.1972 Chicago - tape recording by Laurraine Gorreau

Mildred speaking of early Gospel Playing, Pre Mahalia; when Mildred worked for Emma L. Jackson. Friendship with Gwen, „I just played for Emma Jackson, that’s all. And I liked California so well, I just stayed out there.

Laurraine Gorreau

How long you stayed out?

Mildred Falls

Over a year, end of 1945 (late 1945), I believe. I came back home in 1947, came back in 47 in September. And then, Emma had been passed a year or so, she came home and she passed. She was sick when she left California. So, when she came home, I told her, when she got ready to go home, I said: “Well, I think I’ll stay out there...”

Laurraine Gorreau

In California?

Mildred Falls

I had been married, came out of school and got married to young. I had personal problems. So I did, I worked out there, and I taught music and I met a young Minister, who’s on his feet now. Still doing fine. It was a good experience to me. When I came home, I worked myself, so I got sick. So I came home, and when I came home, I got in touch with Beatrice Lux (?). She say, “What you doing?” Well, I say, I just come back. “Where you been?” I been out of California. “I was wondering where you was, little baby!” She said: “Come on with me Sunday. I’ll come get you.” I said: “All right”. So we went out singing, various churches. And we traveling, to Rev. Ford... Bishop For Church on 45th. and Wabash, and Mahalia had a program over there that evening. She had „Blind Francis“ on the organ. And I can’t remember now who was on the piano, but whoever was, the whole thing was too loud for her, and she kept, you know, signalling.

Laurraine Gorreau

Was it Helen somebody?

Mildred Falls

I don't know, cant remember right now.

cut out - someone comes in - cut in - Mildred
scussing playing for Mahalia

Mildred Falls

She was an outstanding type of singer, an I don't care how hard you worked, it was something else that needed to be done, as far as she was concerned, to push her a little farther, cause she hat more. And she would so often you didn't know quite how to... You just did the best you could. Yo know. She never. In 25 years I was with her, she never sung on song the same way twice. NEVER! Even rehearsal, she'd do on thing and get on the stage and do another same night. Television, everything, was the same thing. Two things, waiting on her, and jut look at her mouth and listen... her lips. I'd be all ears and all fingers. Eyes, Ears and fingers, just listening. Cause I didn't know what she's to do next. I'm just wait-in, just waiting. Hands ready and everything, not even look at the piano. I can't look at the piano. I look for her, what she gon'next and she go on about her business, throw back her head, close her eyes and I say" Ohhhh". I do th best I could, cause I didn't know what she's going to do next, I didn't know.... And afterward, seh might say „That was pretty good“. (Laughing) That's as much as she's going to give me: „Pretty good“.

Laurraine Gorreau

She didn't want you to get to' satisfied - keep trying

(We both laughing)

Mildred Falls

Keep on trying. But as far as I know, I don't know anybody who could

perfectly play for her, I really don't. They say I could, but I don't believe I could. I really don't. I all sincerity, I don't believe. There was something else, that she was trying to convey and that's why I think she changed so much. Get on the stage and we had rehearsed a song in Bb flat, and we had our own signals. We rehearsed the song in Bb flat.

And we get on stage and she give me the signal to lower it some. I took it to A flat and she give me a signal to raise it up, from A flat, and I'm still playing, I don't stop.

I'm still playing. I stopped right in the middle of a chord, wherever it was and just change the chord and give her another key and she's getting ready and she say, NO, that's wrong... Raise it up... And I put it to C and I'm still playing, never stop, never stop, and she's not ready to sing yet. But I'll she gave me three keys, that quick. And we rehearsed it in Bb flat. I been through it ! (Laughs)

Laurraine Goreau

She waited, til she heard exactly

Mildred Falls

...what was in her ear. And once she heard it, she went on about her business and she'd the house won. She was a marvelous person, a marvelous person.

Laurraine Goreau

Celeste Scott travel'd around with you all sometimes, didn't she?

Mildred Falls

Yes, she did. Mmmh, Yes she did. She and Frye.

And Mahalia loved Frye. And whatever she could do for Freye, she'd try to do. Whatever she could do. Cause Freye was another way contribution to the Gospel Field. She stayed in his corner. She called her „Sister Treasurer“, because they had a Gospel Convention, you know... within the Convention. (the National Baptist convention). They'd hold this Gospel Convention. The Gospel get and have their own within that. And he (she??) called her "Sister Treasurer" and she would act as the Treasurer too. She'd collect the money and everything and we'd have our own program, so that was... Celeste would sing on those programs. It's been a marvelous life I can say...

Laurraine Gorreau

The Ladies of Song? No, she didn't have them together yet.

Mildred Falls

No, this was Celeste by herself. Celeste thought she couldn't sing - Mahalia encouraged Celeste, in the singing.

Laurraine Goreau

Where you with Mahalia the first year she was made the official soloist at the National Baptist Convention? What year was that?

Mildred Falls

1948 I believe. If I'm not mistaken, it was 1948. Cause I can remember in 1948 in February, we went to New Orleans for the Congress, not the whole Convention, the Congress. And that was when a young man was sitting in the audience and he was sitting on the pulpit. Rev. Boddie. And Mahalia's father walked in the church. And he said N.N. Adn Rev. Boddie hushed somebody. That's not Mahalia's daddy! And it was really her father. And that's the year, she was made official soloist, 1948. In February.

Laurraine Goreau

Did her father come on up the stage?

Mildred Falls

He sat down, but I think they got him up there.

Laurraine Goreau

Did Mahalia know he was coming?

Mildred Falls

m m - He just walked in on her.

Laurraine Goreau

A big surprise?

Mildred Falls

Yeah. She looked just like him, thouth, just like him.

Laurraine Goreau

Did she let out a whoop?

Mildred Falls

MM-HM. But it was after Rev. Boddie had said; "That's Mahalias Daddy!" (Laughing) to the audience. And she said "Ohhhhh!" She didn't know he was coming. She had a fit, you know. That was in her church at Mount Moriah. They were having a meeting there.

Laurraine interrupts...

Mildred Falls

No, not a planning session, you know. They have what the people call now symposiums. They have a like panel discussions and like that. They would have a Parish Church in New Orleans.

Then at night they would go downtown to... would you call it? Yeah, to „Municipal Auditorium“. At night, they would have the big meetings. But during the day, several days during the week, they would have symposiums, panel discussions, this was similar to that. That's where we were this particular night, at one of this plaeces, cause theywere meeting everywhere, all over...

Laurraine Goreau

And happend that in Mount Moriah?

Mildred Falls

Happend to be at Mount Moriah. Right around the corner from aunt Duke's house, on... I think they called it General Scott Street. I think that the name. I get them mixed up, but I think that's what they called it.

And didn't he have a- didnt he have ! Her daddy was so proud of her. And he told me that, one thing he said to me, he told me he was so proud that I was with his daughter. And that anything he could do, he was on his feet to me. Anything he could do far as I was concerned, he would try to do... "Cause you and my daughter make a good team." He always said that.

(Europe 1952)

Laurraine Goreau

It must be pretty exciting when you found out you where going to Europe that first time.

Mildred Falls

I was sick all tha year and I didn't know. And Mahalias aunt Hannah would call me, to see how I was feeling, but Big Alice would come. Mahalia had to keep on traveling.

Laurraine Goreau

Who was playing for her while you were sick?

Mildred Falls

Alex Bradford. He was playing for her, while I was sick in 1952.

But Big Alice would come by in Mahalias car, with Ted the driver, Mahalias Driver and would take me out riding to help me get back on my feet. So Mahalia come back after a lon trip and she said, call up and said: „How you feel?“ “I feel pretty good.“ “I was just thinking, we might come by and pick you up.“ I said okay, All right.“

Louise Weaver and Bessie... Whats the girl's name from New Orleans?

- Laurraine Goreau

...her aunt Bessie?

- Mildred Falls

No, Bessie the singer

- Oh, Bessie Griffin

Yeah, Bessie Griffin, Louise Weaver, Leanna Smothers, Emma Bell, Music studio there were all together, and Ernestine Washington from New York.

R..Ros.. What's her name? And what's was her name used to play for Mahalia, when she went to New York? Aleen Clark, What's her name, anyway, she wasn't playing for Mahalia then. I can't think of her name. All came by, it was just a lot of them in cars. We went out to Washington Park, way out near the lake. And we were just talking.

Laurraine Goreau

Did you eat dinner?

Mildred Falls

No, we just went out on the lake. Some of them went and got chicken, you know and things to eat. We had a nice time. I just can't call the girl's name, one used to play for her. Lives in Buffalo now.

(Definitely Rosalie McKenny, she's from Buffalo)

Mahalia said "How are you?" I said, "I'm doing pretty good".

I get up a little while go back to bed. During the day, I get up out the bed. I like to died in 1952. I was broken down. Anyway, like now, I don't feel too good now, but I'll get up again.

- (Note, Mildred has been, and is in bed for this interview!)

If you don't overtire yourself.

YEAH, that's what I'll have to watch from now on, anyway. Everybody went off.

Laughing and kidding and sniggering . We have a good time. Allen Clark had on a bathing suit and we went in the water. And we was laughing at him. We just had a good time. And Mahalia said: "Well, I was wondering how you feel, because you can go to Europe if you can get yourself together. I'm going to Europe in October." I didn't go back to bed! No, I didn't go back to bed. I got well that night. I was ready to go back home and pack my clothes.

Laurraine Goreau

Best medicine you could have found

Mildred Falls

Then we got ready to go to Europe, **Mahalia** was sick!

We left her in the „United States“ (ship) and we went to Europe on the ship and she flew over there... but honey, I was going !

Laurraine Goreau

At that first trip? I thought she went on the United States?

Mildred Falls

I went. Bess Berman went. Harry Leneska went. But she didn't go. She had the flu.

Laurraine Goreau

Oh, she had to fly! She didn't go that first time on the ship.

Mildred Falls

She flew...

Laurraine Goreau

And Harry Leneska?

Mildred Falls

and Harry Leneska, Bess Berman and me.

Laurraine Goreau

And who was on the Organ?

Mildred Falls

...on the United States. Nobody.

Laurraine Goreau

Oh, nobody, at this you just..

- Lorraine Goreau

Where did she meet you all?

Mildred Falls

In Paris. That's why in her book they called her „The Angel of peace“, because there were two people empresarios hadn't spoken to each other in years. And they both met her at the airport and she had such a way about herself, that they both fell in love with her. And one couldn't do any more for her than the other one, and that way, they had to come into peace.

That was Hugues Panassie and Charles Delaunay. That's who that was. So, it's been a very nice think I've enjoyed being with her. I'm just so sorry about the girl.

Lorraine Goreau

Where in South America did you all go? That seems to be the least-discussed trip of all... Who went so South America?

Mildred Falls

Gwen, probably.. I didn't. That's because I.... Gwen, Gwen and Edward. I didn't go. I was sick, very sick. Mahalia didn't trust me. Last time I told her, I couldn't walk so good. Mahalia didn't trust me anymore. And she had just about said: "Well, you getting well now, girl". So we began to kind of talk about- you know- as I said, we had our own understanding, and I don't care how says Mahalia fired me, seh never did ! If she had of fired me, she wouldn't have left me anything, right? She didn't, she just knew I wasn't able.

In fact, she would call me at night, after people was I wasn't traveling with her, she'd me call me oder I'd call her at night. We'd discuss things, and talk, you know- we never lost friendship. People thought, but we never didn't. She wouldn't have asked me to bring my singers. (Note: Summer 1971 GR Salem Festival asks Mildred bring her singers) And on thing she said, that I always cherish. When I tolder her she said: "Mildred, I hear you got some singers?" I said yes I have. I said I have a mixed group of singers. She said: "Well, what have you got?" I told her, this time, I didn't have my little german girl. She can sing a **NN (19.08)**

Lorraine Goreau

When was this Mildred?

Mildred Falls

This was the time, that she had the last revival she had. That was she said. I was here then. She said „Would you bring - “You know” - Would you bring the singers..” „Yes I am.”

She said: “If you teach them, I know they can sing.” I said: “Don´t you want to hear them?” And she said: “No, if you teach them, I know they can sing.” I thought that was wonderful for her to say. Now that´s pure confidence, isn´t it?

Laurraine Goreau

I know she called you for the revival.

Mildred Falls

And I was right with her every night.

(LG note - wrong: nite I went Mildred was not there, but she was some other nights)

I brought my singers and she said: “You tell them I know she can sing.” And I thought that was so nice for her to say that.

Laurraine Goreau

Something to hold on to.

Mildred Falls

YES, things like that, mean an awful lot.

Laurraine Goreau

Where you with her, that time she got that award in Monaco? Or was that a later time? (Shakes Head, negative). You weren´t on that trip, but I know you were with her on that trip, that ended up in the Holy Land.

Mildred Falls

Oh, Yes

Laurraine Goreau

That was the same one where you all went to Rome and had an Audience with the pope.

Mildred Falls

Two, two audiences.

Laurraine Goreau

The first was to general- too many people.

Mildred Falls

And the secone one was personal. Wonderful.

Laurraine Goreau

In that second one, ther were about 15 people?

Mildred Falls

Thats all.

Laurraine Goreau

That's the figure that she had.

Mildred Falls

About 15. And they were Royal Families, you know, and he said, and the pope had so much to say. He was ill. And that's when he said that the vatican seems to me, like the building itself was like a mother and the other - you know, the curves was like a mother stretching her arms out to her childredn, bidding them all to come in to the mother.

Laurraine Goreau

Did he say that?

Mildred Falls

He said that. That was beautiful, he was a beautiful pope. He was a beautiful pope. Wonderful. Pope John. He went on, "I dont feel good every day," he said, "I do the best I can." But I always remember that, when I look at the vatican, I think about it as a mother stretching out her arms to the whole world, as her children, to come into her breast". He said that. I'll never forget that, cause I wrote that down and carried with me.

Laurraine Goreau

Who was that, wasn't it in Germany? And the you went on. Wasn't that the trip where that fellow who was from the United States, who was a pilot, came by wanted to fly Mahalia around?

Mildred Falls

But she didn't want to go. Mampf mampf Ride of one of them.

They aint going to take me (she imitate Mahalias objections to flying).

But the train was so slow, the train was so uncomfortable, till she start to flying.

And she told me: "See, I talked to my aunt" she's talking about aunt Hannah, and my aunt said It's all right, cause she talked to the lord and it's all right for me to fly."

I say, "You talked to your aunt, but I ain't talked to mine. My aunt ain't didn't tell me nothing. Your aunt told you to fly, It's all right for you to fly, but my aunt didn't tell me nothing. And she made out. She laughed at me til she cried. I say, my aunt didn't tell me nothing! Your aunt, your's told you. (Laughing hard). And she made me out, laughing at me.

Laurraine Goreau

She had to fly her aunt...

Mildred Falls

On her aunt Hannah and that's what I flew on... not my aunt, cause my aunt didn't tell me nothing. And she done laughed.

I said, "Well here we go again, on aunt Hannah. My aunt didn't tell me nothing, bout flying."

David Haber

She said this german fellow was with her named David Haber and he was Jewish.

Mildred Falls

David?

Laurraine Goreau

No, he wasn't. He was german too. Haber's jewish, isnt'it?

Mildred Falls

Yeah, i believe

But he spoke german very well, very good.

Laurraine Goreau

Was Collien, did he have the tour?

Mildred Falls

No, I cant call it right now.

- October 1952 Paris -

Laurraine Goreau

I doesn't matter. The first concert you all gave was in Paris? And it was after the concert that they made the presentation wasn't it of the award?

Mildred Falls

Which award?

Laurraine Goreau

The french Acadmey Award? She won that before got there.

Didn't they present it on that first trip?

Mildred Falls

I dont remember that.

Yeah they did. Cause we brought it back home... We brought it back. That's the thing. I can't remember the name of the award, but I know th song that she did... "Have You Any Time For Jesus?" Yeah that's what's she got. Brought that thing back home. When we came back, that's what she carried.

Laurraine Goreau

The french apparently went wild for her.

Mildred Falls

Yeah

Laurraine Goreau

They already had her on record, of course. Where there any other times then there were presentations awards that you know for, that you were with her?

Mildred Falls

Yeah, Now I cant remember all of them. Cause they used to give her so many things and lot of times, I didn't know what they were... I didn't know.

It was nice in Denmark, The Bellman... Bellboys? The Every day they would come up to her romm and they'd click heels and they'd have flowers for her. And I'd open the door. They were cute little boys, real tiny boys, and they had their little outfits on and their little bow ties and all that, and they would knock on her door (imitating presision) and they'd click their heels an bow, "Flowers for Miss Jackson".

Laurraine Goreau

That would have tickeld the life out of Halies

Mildred Falls

All day long they would do that.

Laurraine Goreau

Which tour was this?

Mildred Falls

That was the first one. She was sick.

Laurraine Goreau

That was the very first on. So that was all the bigger trip, of three...

Mildred Falls

While she was sick, they did that.

I go off the ship in Le Havre. There was a little girl standing there, a littel young girl, with a gread big of flowers bigger than she was, „Flowers for Mahalia“, cause she was going to get of the ship.

Laurraine Goreau

She was already there?

She said something in French. I don't know what she said. They thought I was Mahalia. Here come all the photographers was taking pictures and everything and I still didn't say anything. I didn't know what to say. Just looked bewildered and everything.

Laurraine Goreau

When did Mahalia arrive actually?

Mildred Falls

She got there.. she got the next day after we did.

Laurraine Goreau

The next day after you. By this time they met her at the plane?

Mildred Falls

Yeah, that's when they met her, when that thing about „Angel“...

Laurraine Goreau

Yeah, right, the two Frenchman. So that she waited until after you all were there, (to fly) then she came...

Mildred Falls

That's right. We were there.

Laurraine Goreau

I suppose if anything had happened to that ship, she wouldn't have had fly.

Mildred Falls

Right. (Big laugh) That was a good ship, thought I never will forget the SS United States.

Laurraine Goreau

Now she took the SS United States on another trip?

Mildred Falls

Yeah, the next one. Cause I raved about is so.

Laurraine Goreau

Then she was seasick.

Mildred Falls

Yeah, she got sick on there.

Laurraine Goreau

I'll bet she blamed you!

Mildred Falls

Oh, she did. But I was sick at the same time. So she couldn't say too much. I believe everybody sick on that one. Everytime...That drama mine didn't do a thing for me.

1953 or 1954

Laurraine Goreau

Did you ever get left behind, in any kind of a mixup or any of the musician when you were on tour? (Pause, she things)

Mildred Falls

I think I did. I think one time in New York I got left.

Laurraine Goreau

I think she told me, but I can't recall...

That was here, cause I got her on the train, cause I called up and made the reservations and got her on the train. And for some reason I thought the train- you know the train schedule was different from the regular schedule here, you know, and I didn't have no idea right then that the train schedule was... what was it, one hour ahead of ours.

The time was different. And I got there And she was on the train and the train was gone and I'm just getting there and the train was pulled out.. and I thought I had a whole hour. I took a plane... went out to... Aiport an took the plane and met the train in Omaha.

Laurraine Goreau

In Omaha?

Mmhh - I had her on the train, cause we was going to California. You know, the Nothern Route to California? I had her on the train, she got down there in plenty of time. Polly had carries her to the station and everything... And Polly and everybody was gone. The train was gone (put off), and there I was. Asked "That train just left".

Laurraine Goreau

The Northern Pacific?

Mildred Falls

Yeah, the Northern Pacific.

Laurraine Goreau

Did Polly go on that trip?

Mildred Falls

No, she didn't go on that trip. I had got myself. My knee was bad. I got myself a wheelchair, roll up in the wheelchair... train gone.

Laurraine Goreau

What Mahalia say when you got on?

Mildred Falls

She was in th bed when I got on. She say, "Well, you made it, hm?"

Yeah, I made it. I was sitting up there with the Dead... The corpse on both side of me. Sitting up there with the baggage..you know, where they put the mail on, with the corpse on both sides, the caskets all around me, an I'm sitting in the wheelchair. The train arrived, and they put me on the train and I say; "Well, I'll see you later."

Laurraine Goreau

You mean there acutally were some corpses?

Mildred Falls

Really! It was full! On both sides. To each sid! And some mail in front of me, baggage behind. And I´m the only human in the whole bit. I mean alive in the whole bit. And the train stops. And they say, "Well, she´s on this train"m cause she send a telegram, you know. She is on this train. Cause they had sent her a telegram you know I´m trying to think... she... Cause she sent me one back to tell me something, from someplace where they had stopped. And I got her telegram, she had gotten mine. And I met her!

Laurraine Goreau

Did she dish you out in the telegram?

Mildred Falls

She took her time. She wouldn´t do it right then. But she took her time. She finally got around to it; "Yeah! Yeahh (Well)31.41 ! Don´t pay attention to what you doing". Ohhh did I catch it. I thought...

Laurraine Goreau

What year was that, Mildred?

Mildred Falls

Now this is something.. It would have been.

Laurraine Goreau

(you all were still riding on the train)

Mildred Falls

Yeah, that had to bo before 1955. 1953 oder 4 Around that.
No, I remember that.

Laurraine Goreau

How old are you when you first
started to play for Mahalia?

Mildred Falls

Now, you're gettin in my business! Everbody know how old I am. If I tell you that. I told you 25 years.

Laurraine Goreau

Okay, I had no idea

Mildred Falls

You see, lot of people think I'm older than I am.

Laurraine Goreau

You must have been pretty young then.

Mildred Falls

I was. People think I'm older than I am.

Laurraine Goreau

Well, I probaly think you're younger than you are and that's why I cant figure out how you've been playing that long, that's the

Mildred Falls

I got married to young

Laurraine Goreau

Because the last four years you hadn't played regulary... five...

Mildred Falls

When I say 25 years, I'm counting those four years.

Laurraine Goreau

So it was actually 20

Mildred Falls

21, actually. But I'm counting all those years, because she never did fire me and I never dit quit, so I just say I played for her all those years. (we laugh)
I was married to young. I was going to two colleges. What I should have done was stay in school. Marriage didn't work out anyway, but it gave me expirience and that's what I needed. So I was exited anymore, you know.

December 1956

Laurraine Goreau

Did you go to Montgomery with her?

Mildred Falls

YES, that was quite an experience.

Laurraine Goreau

That must have been. You all went by train, didn't you?

Mildred Falls

By train, It was a big affair, huge affair. There was a big commotion down there, but I was worth while.

Laurraine Goreau

She told me, that she sang in church. I didn't know if it was you or Edward.

- both speak incomprehensibly at the same time -

Mildred Falls

No, Edward wasn't then. It was to far back for Edward.

October 1952 Paris

Laurraine Goreau

But I know that every now and then somebody else you know, had to fill in.

Mildred Falls

We always had different organists, something like that. You know, sometime we'd go a place, I'd train the organists. We did that in Paris, even... first time we were over there.

Laurraine Goreau

You trained a french organists?

Mildred Falls

Did that in Denmark, and everywhere we went, the first time... they'd get an organist and I would train them.

Laurraine Goreau

How did they fit in? Were you able to train them?

Mildred Falls

Fine! Just fine. They were trying to learn Mahalias music anyway. At that time it was a training point for them. They were getting into this music. Anyway, so just it worked fine with them.

Laurraine Goreau

Probably made them quite famous locally.

Mildred Falls

It did. Big thing for them.

December 1956 Montgomery

Laurraine Goreau

Mahalia said she was actually afraid, there in Montgomery.

Mildred Falls

Most she did let me know, she was scared. I was frightened to death! When she left there, the next day or two, they bombed that house. I was really afraid there down there.

Laurraine Goreau

You were staying with the Albernatys.

Mildred Falls

They bombed Reverend's home.

Laurraine Goreau

Yeah, Lord, well, at least you had an extra lease.

Mildred Falls

Yeah, cause that was something they bombed that house.

Laurraine Goreau

It was a room you all had walked through, too.

Mildred Falls

The one we stayed in ! That's the one they bombed. The front part of the house is where we stayed, and that's where they bombed. You see, they would have gotten both of us... I'm telling you.. because we where in the front room, one they bombed.

Small section missing

1949 or 1950

A Close Call Near Lynchburg, VA.

We've had some very close calls. On time we where on the train, down in Virginia and Mahlia wanted to- we wanted to go to... I cant remember... Lynchburg Virginia and we stopped before you get to Lynchburg and they had just lynched a man the night before. And the people was still angry.

Laurraine Goreau

In Lynchburg?

Mildred Falls

You know, didn't feel right. No, before Lynchburg, we were going to Lynchburg. The train stoppted before Lynchburg and we got off, cause Mahalia said... I cant remember the name of the place. We got off jut for a few minutes and...

Laurraine Goreau

Where were you coming from?

Mildred Falls

From Chicago. I can't remember the place... maybe this was Lynchburg. Cause the conductor wouldn't ever call the name of this place and people was just getting off, down in Virginia. Cause it was so rough down there. Then, this is a long time ago... And Mahalia said, he had the porter put our baggage off. She said; "You stand here at the baggage." I said „All right“ and she went to the phone. The phone was right on the platform. And the people started gathering around, you know? And she was way over there by herself and I was over there by the luggage. So the conductor saw us both standing out there and saw the people coming off the street up the steps, you know? With the overalls on and all that... And he got concerned. He said: "Lady, he said ; where do you want to go?" I said Lynchburg. "This is not Lynchburg." He ran down and picked up the luggage. "Get on the train Lady." And Mahalia ran. We got here, he gave the signal you know pull the train out and Mahalia ran, and he grabbed her hand and pulled her up on the train.

See, I was already up there. Cause I walked slow and I was already up there on the platform. I was going to leave, thought - if they going to leave her, I was going to get off too. They would have had us both ! And Mahalia got the - he signalled for the man to pull off and when the train pull off, he reached down Mahalia got up to the steps and she put her foot up and he reached down and pulled her up. We been through some terrible things like that.

Laurraine Goreau

Was this in the 1940?

Mildred Falls

In the 50's. Around '49 or '50. I don't know... that late. (talk quietly and confusedly) That man said: "Oh no, don't get off here lady!" He was the conductor, you know.. he said; "They just lynched that man out here last night and they still mad! They'll be hurt you too!" And he beckoned for her to come on and she put the phone down.. You know those kind of booths, they still have 'em—had. 'em way back there made out of glass, you know?

He was over . She was talking and she was looking and he was telling her to come on. Here telling her to come on and she had talked to the phone and the said; "This is not Lynchburg" and she hung up and she took off. And I was getting up on the train. N She took the baggage and threw them up on me. I had to doge out the way. "Hey, you fixing to hit me". Throwing them up ther in a hurry, cause he was to take offe. She ran and she put her foot up there and he grabbed her.

We went through a lot of things like that.

Laurraine Goreau

You didn't have any organist with you than either...

Mildred Falls

No, I traveld for years without an organist. By myself. Just in later years we had an organist. More assets, you know It was a long time before we took organist with us. I was the secretary — I was all of that at first. And as we progressed, then Mahalia would add on this or that one. Take some of the work off me... Caus I did it all for a long time by myself. I don't regret it.

Laurreine interrupts again

Easy for me

One thing I got to keep people off of her by letting them talkt to me. They didn't want to talk to me that much, but I did kid, Lot of fun with them... They'd laugh and kid with me. That give her a chance to rest.

Laurraine Goreau

I know there have been times when someone has come up to talk Mahalia, you know, a perfect stranger.. come backstage and want to tell her how she'd had some effect on their lives...

Mildred Falls

She's affected - Really.

Many preachers that I know hat have done fine... not only singers, preachers as well. And many young people have said that one thing or another was happening in their life and she changed their minds. ...

You know... The way that they were living.. changed their minds about that and want to come tell her about it. Say "remember you was in this place and you did a song, so and so?" Mahalia say; „When?“ "It was doing so and so and you was doing so and so and you helped me..." And she say: "When I did that?" oder "What I do it" ?

... I did?" "Yeah, you did this and you do that, and you know, " Make her feel good.

Mahalia say (to me) "You remember that?" I say sure..."I've never seen anybody with a memory like yours! I dont have it now. I used to. Mahalia say „I've never seen anybody with a memory like yours...NN You can remember everything. I said, no I couldn't remember everything.

Laurraine Goreau

She always did do a little talking along with the singing, didn't she?

Mildred Falls

Most of the time she did. Now there were times when she didn't. It was according to where she was. She didn't do it all the time. When she was felt fear not she did.

Laurraine Goreau

Did the audiences begin to be mixed pretty soon, some of them? At first they were mainly all black.

Mildred Falls

Yeah, thats right.

Laurraine Goreau

And then the word sort of percolated, I guess.

Mildred Falls

Yes, and as her records grew, people began to like her more. (Than they want have segregated audiences) NN She told them wanted to have segregated audiences. And she would have it. "Let everybody sit where ever they please. If they don't than I wont sing. Thats gospel. If they want to have Mlz Josanna ? That have chauffeur and all that, chauffeur have to sit in the balcony somewhere Miss? Sit on the first floor, in the front. And she say no, everybody sit together or I won't sing! And that stopped that. Cut that cut completely.

Laurraine Goreau

In her own way, she started integration.

Mildred Falls

YES SHE DID.

In her own quiet way.

Mildred Falls

She say: "Now I'm not going to have this."

And the places we would go where they have you sit on the back of the bus. That kind of a thing. Things like that we get into the auditorium and say; „Well, I won't sing. If we got to have all this, then I just won't sing. Give them their money back. I'll just go on. And the sponsors they don't want to hear that. You know, "Give them their money back" - they say "everybody can mix, sit where you want to, whrere you please." And a lot of people come down, sit where they wanted, takt the seats they wanted.

Laurraine Goreau

- There must been a lot of shuffeling around...

Mildred Falls

They felt better up a lot of the white people didn't to sit down in front.. Want be up in the balcony, because they can see better. And they'd get up and go up there, too. My people come felt better to sit down in front. And they felt happy about the whole situation.

Laurraine Goreau

So actually, people felt freer on both sides.

Mildred Falls

Sure they did. And you ha a freer audience too. More tissapation... more freedom and more... I mad for a good fellowship among the people that was there.

Laurraine Goreau

Was the segregation only in the south, or were ther other places

Mildred Falls

What I can remember was only the south. I cant recall any other places. Now if they were, I cant't recall them. I know we had some terrible experiences in the south. But since then, all that broke down. Lot of that was through Mahalia and a lot of that was through Martin... But Mahalia had beenon the ball long time before that. But people didn't know it. Cause you see there is a way to do a thing, you know, without making a big to-do over it.

Laurraine Goreau

Without forcing people into a position where they had to tak a stand...

Mildred Falls

But still now and all you still get it done.

Laurraine Goerau

- In other words, wo mad da quiet stand.

Mildred Falls

But she had take this stand years ago, an I know this. **I'm a witness, I was there.**

Laurraine Goreau

She told me she had.

Mildred Falls

She had, I know, cause I was there. Sure.

Laurraine Goerau

Mahalia never was one to lies, she didn't need to.

Uhhh uhhh no. Lot of things I want to tell all about her, you know. I want to tell her, cause she started way back. Way back, And a.. People didn't know it. She never said a word about it. (makes LG laugh - Mildred has a wry wit)

I didn't say anything. Most time she say "You never say anything when you going to start talking ? You never say nothing. I say something about her " You just hush, you just talk too much".. When I say something about her. That's the way she was. Every time. And I was reading a passage in the bible, you know, and a... was it last night? I believe.. It was. And I just want give it to you, cause you reminded me so much of Mahalia... I'm talking while I'm looking for it.

And he would perform miracles an he would tell you his people, don't tell anybody. This is in Matthew. I read it last night. He cast off two blind men, and he told them dont'tell it.

Laurraine Goerau

That's in Matthew?

Mildred Falls

It's in Matthew. And he raised a lady's daughter and he told her, don't tell it. It's all through Matthew. All the beautiful parables, all the beautiful things that he did, and when he get through, he say; "don't tell it."

That's what Mahalia used to tell me all the time; „Don't tell it. Don't tell it.“ Always the same thing. And I just was to say it is.. **were it is..**
Can you cut off...

(cut off the tape while she searches)

Laurraine Goreau

When did you go to the White House, Mildred with Mahalia?

Mildred Falls

Twice, yeah both times was for President Johnson. When we went for Kennedy, was the Pre-Inauguration. She did the **??** there. Sidney Portier, Laurence Olivier, Helen Traubel, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, The Kennedy Brother in law, he was there, yes, Peter Laford...-

Laurraine Goreau

She told me about Lawrence Olivier was especially kind to her.

Mildred Falls

Hes was. She had the way to singing .. of course if she was living, I wouldn't tell it, cause she would tell me I was wrong.. But I was trying to teach her, how to sing "The Lord's Prayer" and she always a way fo putting her own words in it. Any song she would sing. I say you know you cant do.

"Don't tell me what I cant do" I didn't say a word. I was on the piano. I was wrong again, shut up. And we out there and Laurence Olivier say (Mildred whispers-imitating Olivier, who I telling her something is off on "The Star Spangled Banner"... /

suddenly roars as Mahalia...;-)

"Mildred, I told you that wasn't the right way to do that."

(LG and Mildred laughing)

Laurraine Goerau

So, Laurence Olivier, an englishman is correcting Mahalia on „The Star Spangled Banner“.... I think it's adorable and it was so typical of Mahalia... and she told me, he helped her.

Mildred Falls

(HE DID)

(Imitating Mahalia)

I been singing

"I told you you didn't have that song right" The Star Spangled Banner ecer since I been in school, all this years...

Laurraine Goreau

She told me she hat a terrible time ..that you all came over to the house

Mildred Falls

(i.e. M's Mildred came) while she was trying to learn those she parried or those words she couldn't get them straight in her head.

And I was rehearsing her and rehearsing... "Don't you tell me how to do it"
She went on, went on.

Laurraine Goreau

But it finally came out right.

Mildred Falls

Oh, it was beautiful, she wouldn't have sung it had it not been.

Laurraine Goreau

It was really stirring, according to everybody who was there.

Mildred Falls

It was marvelous ! She.. they said "You all just let her get by herself.
Just before she was singing..." "Just leave her alone, a little while let her come out by herself."

She came out a different Mahalia... look like the spirit would take her over and master be driven (?).

Laurraine Goreau

No matter what.

Mildred Falls

No matter what the problem. And she say (small voice picking up the burden),
"Well, aint nobody going do it. (How long do) I gon' do ti. I pray Lord, I read my bible. The lord took it over, that she said. Tore the house down. Encore after encore. Honestly! Say (m's small voice) „Well - she say that to me - "Well, I didn't know if I was going to do it..."

Laurraine Goreau

What she did said to the audience?

Mildred Falls

NN - she tell to me... No, she was talking to me...

Laurraine Goreau

Thats sounds like Mahalia when she is talking to you, herself

Mildred Falls

The Lord took it over.

- And she really mean it too

Mildred Falls

Course she meant that. She was sincere about that. There was nothing phony about her. She was real.

Laurraine Goreau

That's what so struck me, from the first minute I laid eyes on her. And I never had cause to change my mind. Not once.

Mildred Falls

No. She were real

Laurraine Goreau

Did President Kennedy give Mahalia a memento fo that occassion - a bracelet, or somthing of the inauguration? Do you remember Mildred?

Mildred Falls

Yes, but I don't know what it was. He gave her something, yes, and it was personal too, but I can't remember what ist was...

Laurraine Goreau

I can't, either, and I didn't write it down: Sometimes you can't always write a thing down. A lot of times I did take direktly on the typewriter, but a lot of other times... besides, I'd get so fascinated listening to Mahalia, I'd forget about notes!

Mildred Falls

Yeah, you be fascinated and you forget !

Laurraine Goreau

Now, both times you went, with the Johnsons there?

Mildred Falls

Yeah, both times we were in the White House. The Pre Inauguration was for Kennedy.

Laurraine Goreau

Who went with her for President Eisenhower?

Mildred Falls

I did. I played for five Presidents for her !

Laurraine Goreau

That was the Press Club - that was at the White House, wasn't it?

Mildred Falls

No, where they have the Presidential Dinners and what have you, in Washington, it's like a Hilton, or

Laurraine Goreau

The Mayflower?

Mildred Falls

NO, it wasn't the Mayflower, like a Hilton Hotel. Like that. I know the Mayflower. Like a Hilton Hotel. It's been so long, I can't remember all these places.

Laurraine Goreau

You played for Kennedy, and Johnson, and Eisenhower..

Mildred Falls

And Truman.

Laurraine Goreau

Now Truman was at the White House?

Mildred Falls

No, we didn't.. we went to Missouri for that.

Laurraine Goreau

You went to Missouri to play for him.. that's when seh was campaigning with him.

Mildred Falls

Yes, we went Missouri, Louiville - äääh, St. Louis, Missouri. That was Truman... Eisenhower... Kennedy...äh- Johnson oh, and the President of Mexico. That was five Presidents.

(Es war wohl Miguel Alemán Valdés - Präsident von Mexiko 1946-1952)

Laurraine Goreau

Now you werent down in Mexico

Mildred Falls

No, he came to Washington for something. And Eisenhower had to stay for him. So, that made the fifth President.

Laurraine Goreau

Mildred, that one when you met Truman in Missouri... was he running for reelection?

Mildred Falls

Yeah

Laurraine Goreau

Cause she told me, that she campaigned for Truman in Illinois..

Mildred Falls

New York

Mildred Falls

A little place in Ohio. I can't remember the name. After a long time, I'm a sticker for what I was... I'm a fan, too (she is looking thru the bible for Matthew) I read it this morning. Yeah you can talk as I'm looking...

Laurraine Goreau

Now for President Johnson, one time was a big gala affair, and there were a lot of stars, wasn't it?

Mildred Falls

Yeah. That was in one of the executive houses. It was a theatre in the executive house. They had some kind of Zipanzaller Singers? Dippendaler Singers? Some kind of name like that.. Zipendaler? Dippendaler? let me see and they had Hugh O'Brian. And what's this lady sing about the Orange Juice?

Anita Bryant.

Yeah, she was there. And Herbert Marshall. Another singers that's well known. I can see his face but I can't remember. Herbert Marshall was there. Another singer, older, that was there. That's one she thought was a good one. Anita Franklin (hat sich vertan?

Anita Bryant was in her dressing room and Mahalia was in hers. And if I not mistaken, this time Minters was there. I think Minteres was there too. Anyway, this didn't concern them.

What galeed me was that... Oh I know Garner

Laurraine Goreau

Earl Garner?

Mildred Falls

No, no, a white fellow. He is white, he is a singer. His wife was an actress, his daughter too. Mc Crae. Gordon Mc Crae, she was there too. They kept saying, "Miss Jackson, will you come and take a picture with Sheila McCrae?" "Miss Jackson, will you come take a picture with Hugh O'Brian " "Miss Jackson, will you come... I say wait a minute, you just wait a minute. I told the press, the Washington Press, The AP, The UP. I said "Wait a minute, this is Mahalia Jackson. She's a star in her own right. Don't come hollering all over this place. Everywhere telling her to take pictures. Let them come to her, she's a star. She is the only one we have in this field. She's the greatest one we got. eDon't be calling her everywhere. And here come on reporter didn't hear me say that.. And Mahalia was trying to say "Hush, hush! Mildred , hush!"

Here come another reporter: "Miss Anita Bryant" - I said: wait a minute. "Miss Anita Bryant, would you come and take a picture with Mahalia Jackson?" She said; "I'd be delighted too." And she got up her hair dressing room and came in Miss Jackson's dressing room. And Miss Jackson bawled me out. Ohhhhhh

Laurraine Goreau

But you were right.

Mildred Falls

Sure I was right.

Laurraine Goreau

And they were delighted to do it.

Mildred Falls

Miss Anita Bryant said; "I'd be delighted." But they were hollering at Mahalia everywhere... "Come over here", and everybody say; "Come on, come on" (Mildred imitating hushed voices)...

Run in there to jump on the picture with her. I say; "Wait a minute, I didn't get in one picture. Wait a minute.

Trying to haul her everywhere. I say, "Now wait a minute! This is the best one we got! She's a star... she is the star.. Don't be hauling her all over the place taking pictures with everybody." And Mahalia "Hush" . She couldn't say Hush: She's trying to give me the hand signal... I knew what she was doing. I kept right on talking. And from then on, they stopped it. They didn't mean to harm, but they weren't thinking what they were doing.

Laurraine Goreau

Now Minters wasn't there in that time?

Mildred Falls

I don't think he was. Somebody was there with us.

Laurraine Goreau

It wasn't Mindling?

Mildred Falls

No, I don't think it was Mindling. It was somebody else, though.

Laurraine Goreau

Now the other time at the White House with President Johnson, when Minters was there, you were there too...

Mildred Falls

Mhmm. Yeah, we were in the White House. I know, he was there. And we ran into that congressman is dead now, was married to Hazel Scott.

Laurraine Goreau

From New York?

Mildred Falls

Yeah

Laurraine Goreau

Adam Clayton Powell.

Mildred Falls

Yeah, she was getting on the elevator going home. Cause he wa tired and I said "Just a minute, hold the elevator. And I whispered to him, "It's Mahalia."

I'm not going to tell her who's here, cause she loved him. I say (calling to Mahalia) "Come on, get on the elevator, just a minute." "Just a minute"

(Imitating Mahalia, gruff) "I'm tired. I'm ready to go home." I say, "All right, just a minute, here is the elevator, com on just a minute."

- end of tape. Mildred exclaim over joyous surprise for Mahalia when Mildred coaxed her into the elevator, she sees Powell. -

INTERVIEW Part III**Laurraine Goreau**

You haven't run onto Matthew yet?

Mildred Falls

I find it... I thought it was right here? But...

Laurraine Goreau

Mildred, you know Russell Roberts, what was the name of his church in Atlantic City? You remember?

Mildred Falls

I'm sorry, don't.

Laurraine Goreau

Well, Mahalia said that was a men she should to married. Did she say that to you?

Mildred Falls

Mhmm, zustimmend.

Laurraine Goreau

Her would be differend, If she had to do this...
How was Hawaii? Was it a good trip?

Mildred Falls

I didn't enjoy it.

Laurraine Goreau

Why didn't you enjoy it?

Mildred Falls

I don't know... I just didn't

Laurraine Goreau

Did you both seasick on that trip?

Mildred Falls

Zustimmt: Mmmhm. She was more seasick than I was...I made it pretty well. But there was something about that trip I didn't enjoy it.

Laurraine Goreau

What was the name of the girl who went along secretary on that?

Mildred Falls

Elisabeth Thornton - Butch

Laurraine Goreau

That's the name I been trying. Elisabeth Thornton b-u-s-h ?

Mildred Falls

That's her nickname - Butch.

Laurraine Goreau

Oh. With a round face, and kind of dimpled...

Mildred Falls

That's Butch.

Laurraine Goreau

She was Mahalias secretary?

Mildred Falls

Yeah

Laurraine Gorau

At that time

Now, where was Polly at that time?

Mildred Falls

Polly was working here in Chicago, she was still her secretary, but she was at home.

Laurraine Goreau

So, this girl was her road secretary.

I see, this girl functioned as her road secretary. Cause I wondered about that...

Mahalia never talked too much about that Hawaiian trip except so say she had enjoyed it so... when we stopped in Honolulu on the way over Japan, she had very fond memories of it and wanted, really meant to wait over and just vacation there, on the way back, but everybody was so tired, the only thing they wanted to do was to go home.

Mildred just makes mmhhhm noises sounds occasionally, no real verbal response to any of above...

Laurraine Goreau

Her life would be different if she should do that

Mildred Falls

Yeah

Laurraine Goreau

Did you like Russell Roberts? What I mean is how did he strike you?

Mildred Falls

Fine Preacher.

Laurraine Goreau

A fine preacher... hmmm And that's the end of that?

Mildred Falls

Very well educated. A fine preacher. Whatever he was to talk about he was very well informed.

Laurraine Goreau

You didn't think he was the man for Mahalia?

Mildred Falls

I told Mahalia that, so I can say it again. No I didn't think so. She did.

Laurraine Goreau

Why didn't you think so Mildred?

Mildred Falls

After Russell would get through preachin- and I'm not criticizing Russell, because he's a human just like me- I have faults - but after he would get through preaching hee would then com out of the pulpit, the man part of Russell would com out. They didn't think alike. That's what I'm saying. That's what I'm saying. Because when he was getting ready to preach and she would know just what to sing, they were a beautiful team. Beautiful team. But when he get through preaching and she'd get through singing, they weren't co-ordinated. That's my way of thinking. See, Mahalia always treated me like I was a child and I appreciated it, that she thought enough of me to treat me as a child? And that way I looked up to her and a lot of things I wouldn't say to her. But? Just had that feeling, they was not co-ordinated. See? I'm going to say something... I'm going to say what I feel. Act like I feel? A certainly way, not that I'm not that kind of person. If i make enemies, I'm sorry, but - as a person , he was fine man. He really was. But ahhh- I said before, they'd make a beautiful team, but when he came out of the pulpit they werent'coorinated? May way of thinking. Mahalia was a simple, down-to-earth type. I don't mean stupid when I say that.

Don't misunderstood me (-no, I know what you mean) - Down to earth type person, Roberts? Russell Roberts was not! He was not. He was not a simple down to earth man. He was a man that would live in his mind very high. And she didn't. That's was I say ther weren't coordinatetd. If I could't say Russell Roberts was a simple down to earth man, I would say they were perfectly coordinated. He had all this education - well? I'm educated too, but I hope I don't act like it some people do, they flaunt their education in the persons face. That is not educated, which is not right.

Laurraine Goreau

In the first place, (as I told) Mahalia, tha all education doesn't com behind a desk...

Mildred Falls

Nooo. There're a lot of people born with it, a lot of people call horse sense an those are the people that make it.

Laurraine Goreau

Now, did this... did Russell Roberts seem... too sophisticated in yor eyes for Mahalia, is that it?

Mildred Falls

No, she could be sophisticated all right. It wasn't that. Let me see now, I'm trying to put my finger on it... She could fit in anywhere but the fact that he had more education than she did, was the thing that sort of, to me, she would been a little, littel to much, understand?

Laurraine Goreau

You mean she felt...

Mildred Falls

She felt inferior to him. And she shouldn't have, she was superior. But she didn't feel like thats And that's why she felt herself so much lower. Well, that's how a woman should feel about her man, superior. But that not far superior. And I'm just speaking what I think. I say just what I think. And I thought he's a very fine man, but I didn't think he was for her, and I told that, and I shouldn't have but I did. Ohhh, what I tell about her...

(- L.G. guding; I bet seh redd you out)
What'd I say that for?

Mildred Falls

Honey, I bit my tongue a many day about that.
That was true.

Laurraine Goreau

And then when Minters came along? At the time Minters came along you weren't playing regularly for Mahalia then?

Mildred Falls

Yes I was.

Laurraine Goreau

Yes, wait a minute, that's right, certainly, certainly, yeah...The cottage, littel white house that he had. How did Minters strike you?

Mildred Falls

I feel this way about him, he just was exited, and he didn't settle down. He was, I think he was happy to meet Mahalia. But he was exited; he never settle down. He never did cool down, never did settle down. Gettin to a level and staying there, he never did. Never did. And I don't like to talk against her people cause you know, you give people the wrong ideas, but I wasn't the only one, had no reason to be like that, but just wanted her to be happy. Cause she was a person to me she gave happiness to everybody and I wanted to see her happy. Not with somebody bugging her and worrying her unhappy. That's not... I wanted to see her happy.

About business Mahalia knew !

If she just couldn't be fooled anyway at all where business was concerned. But when it came to something like that hadn't taken enough time to see a out men, who, what they would be like and all. She.. what they're really saying. And you know, man will say most everything, if he's trying to get his paws on me he'll say it you know, and blessed her heart, she didn't know. Now when it was a money deal? She would say, Now you wait a minute, and she would have gotten him straight. But she didn't have time to do everything. She was singing, you know to save the whole world? She tried to do everything? You know, trying to get the message across, she tried to look after business affairs, she tried to do all of it. A lot of woman, they can't do anything at all, but look at a man, can, they would have seen the difference in them, wouldn't have taken time the day, you understand what I'm saying?

See, see, she had too many things to do. She didn't have time, to really analyze, cause I feel like today, honest to good to my soul I do, she died of a broken heart ! That's what I believe. I'm still going to say it. I'll say it anywhere I want to say, cause I believe it. She died too young. Too much to do. Her work wasn't half finished. I believe that. I really do. Her work wasn't half finished, but things went wrong and she had gotten the place where her health wasn't good, and things were going right and I think she just grieved! Just grieved, that's what I believe.

I don't to be quoted too much on that because I know people are sensitive on the subject. ...

Laurraine Goreau

That's all right, honey, because I've got a whole broad spectrum of that. You know something that I think have been, speaking of Mahalia trying to save the world and being.. you know, such a sensitive person.

Mildred Falls

She tried to save the world !

Ah, when she went to the Holy Land, that must have been a time to be around her.

Mildred Falls

That was marvelous. A beautiful experience.

Laurraine Goreau

Her reactions, well she talked a little bit to me about it... she was just really awestruck to be walking on this ground.. biblical ground... Jordan River really was real... You know what's interesting, in the state of health you were from time to time, you never were the one got sick on the road and had to break off, were you?

Mildred Falls

I'd get sick and she'd talk me out of it, she would. That's one thing when she says "GO" It was never too sick to go. So I don't get any credit for that cause it was true. When she said "GO" I was ready to go... I was on the road with the flu and...cause I enjoyed it, and it was a thing that I was hoping would last.

Laurraine Goreau

When she came back from Europe that first time, did she have to have surgery, that first time in Europe? That's when she had

Mildred Falls

The first operation

Laurraine Goreau

That was gallstones, wasn't it? No, no, that wasn't gallstone...

Mildred Falls

Female... that was female...

Laurraine Goreau

That was at... that big broad... I never wanted to ask her about that, that was personal...

Mildred Falls

She didn't want to talk about herself.... Appendix or something...

Laurraine Goreau

Well, she told me that she had had to have that operation because of having to hold water so long, all those years...

Mildred Falls

Yeah, it ruined her stomach, mine too.

Laurraine Goreau

It ruinde her kidney.

Mildred Falls

Ruined sure. Mine too, but I was lucky, I was younger. I could take it a littel better than she could.

(some discussion here about going to the bathroom or not going to the bathroom)

.... Better not. Ooooh? Got to that bathroom.... all night long.... Those were terrible expiriences for me, but I didn't want her to be down there by herself. One time we had an expirience where she told me to got home, not because she wanted me to go home, but kind of (telephone ring)
Treatment I would get (?)

Laurraine Goreau

You were starting to tell me when the telephone interrupted, and I think that's so good cause it show how considerate Mahalia really was, that she wanted to send you back... where was that?

Mildred Falls

Oh, It was upset about south? She was sick, and we had travelled as far as we could the train, and we were going to take all our things that we were carrying with us and go on the bus. NN the train will go to this city

Laurraine Goreau

Where was that?

Mildred Falls

This is ahhh - Carolina

Laurraine Goreau

South Carolina?

Mildred Falls

Somewhere around there. It's near NN but you have to go into the city at this time by bus.

Laurraine Goreau

How far did that train go?

Mildred Falls

The train were about like thirty some miles... What (bugged) me first. I had to get on the bus with all these things, and they stood there and let me put them on. They helped all this white people on the bus and all, and Mahalia was sick, so I had to help her on the bus first to her seat and then I had to go back and get all of our things. So, I got them on, and she couldn't do anything, but get on there and sit down, and I got em all on there. And the man pulled out... I was the last one on there... All these things still in the aisle. And nobody bothered, you know, back of th bus and..so we got this place in South Carolina and I said I have so many ... And I need somebody to help me get these things off

I had to put her arms around my neck. At this time I was stronger than I am now, and help her out the bus. When I did this, she said (weakly) "Well, I'll get a cab". I said; „All right“. So she went and got a cab and she sat down in the cad, and she told me, "Well, go got the porter.". So I went and get the porter, an the porter was two white boys and they had this thing that you wheel, you know?

Laurraine Goreau

Luggage cart

Mildred Falls

And they were coming out with the luggage cart, and I said (small, polite) "I'm looking for the porter." "We're the porters." I said, "I have quite a bit of luggage on the bus, would you please help me?" And they said in a very nasty manner, "Who you think you are, gael?" Tha'ts what they said to me. And that hurt my !

I had records and books and clothes and all that stuff...

Lauraine Goerau

Cause you travveld

Mildred Falls

Tired, and all this..

Lauraine Goerau

Cause you'd take the records along and sell them

Mildred Falls

Yes - we did at that time. And I had all this to take off the bus, and the man said, "Well, hurry up and get 'em off, cause I got to move this bus!" (rough voice)... All that stuff on that bus!

He could — He'd let me get all that on there, and he was made because hat to pull it off before anybody could sit down. And there we are in this place... I pulled off everything I could. had to take two, no three trips... I was so angry. I got the cab, Mahalia's sitting in the cab. Colored people standing away from the cab, and they was just passing me like I had the plague or something...the colored man afraid to help me. So I just had to pick the things up myself... Had big boxes with records and things... and take them over to the cab, and when I got them over to the cab, the cab man didn't want to put them in his cab. I said "Well I'm not going to move them out of the way, and you cant move unless you let me put them in the cab... I'm not going to move them, an they're right undery our tires... And you better not run over them.

Lauraine Goreau

White fellow or colored?

Mildred Falls

We couldn't ride a white cab. He was a colored fellow. He's afraid, because of what the white boys said to me. And I was, acted like, a marked women or something.

So I said "If you dont want to get out, so let me have the keys." So I put things in the trunk. So Mahalia said, "Le'ts stop by the train station." The man said "All right." Mahalia said, " Girl, don't you get out of the car." You stay in the cab. You don't have to get out. You stay in the cab. Cause I started to cry, I was crying. So she went in and got the ticket, and she said I wound out when the train leaves. I 'll go on to the hotel.

Laurraine Goreau

Was this a train to somewhere else?

Mildred Falls

Train to Chicago that brings us home...

Laurraine Goreau

But you hadn't come from Chicago?

Mildred Falls

Yeah. We were on a tour, see... we'd gotten so far down there and then we had to go on to this place.

Laurraine Goreau

But you made another date first, so you had to take the bus, in other words...

Mildred Falls

We were on the train going to this place but we had to get so far, had to get off and go on the bus, at the end of the train stop goin to this one place.

Laurraine Goreau

Yeah. Right. But then the train direktly back to Chicago wasn't from that sam place? Was it?

Mildred Falls

No. No. We hat to get on a train an go somewhere else and lay over and than catch on.. We had to get on the bus in order to get there in time for the ...
(-Yeah... of couse)...

So Mahalia say here's your ticket, now if you want to, just stay around here at the train station... You come go with me and I'll see that somebody gets you down town on the train and you can go home... Not a southern....I said, No I'm not. We went on to this hotel. This man stopped of a block down the street in the dark for us get out.

Laurraine Goreau

with all the luggage?

Mildred Falls

With all that luggage. So I got out.

All the suitcases, you know and records, all the books. All that stuff. So I said down and waited til somebody came along and I didn't know where I was, I had never been in this place before. So she send somebody out there who took all that tuff and took it upstairs, and I was still crying. She said, „You didn't have any dinner. I said “No I did.” Go downstairs and eat.” I went down and sat down there and I was still cryin, and they wantetd to know why I was cryin? And I couldn't eat. I ordered food an I couldn't eat. And than I got back upstairs. I was still cryin. Mahalia said, “Hey, don't you take a bath?”. I just couldn't stop. And so in the middle of the night...

Something about twin bed she gets up and goes to sit in the living room... hey have a suite... and she's still crying and can't stop.

So she came to me and said, Mildred, Talk. You'll fell better. And so I said, I never seen anything like this. This is awful. I said I've heard of it? And I've seen somebody who's been through some things, this is the first time I really experienced something like that... and we'd been throught other things, like we couldn't to to the bathroom and things like that. But I thought this was the worst... my people was afraid to help me, wouldn't help me...

Laurraine Goreau

This was then, early fifties?

Mildred Falls

Yeah. I hadn't been through, a lot of that? You know, that was the ????

I'd had of that, we talked just about all biggest the first real experience night. By dawn my tears had stopped.

Laurraine Goreau

You talked about just every different kind of thing? Tried to get you mind...

Mildred Falls

Tried to get my mind off that. First she made me tal about whatI was upset over. I told her that, waht made me so disgusted and all those things, she tried to explain to me. When she got on something else, other things, you know. So about dawn the tears stopped. You know and she let me wash my face and she told the man, she say who's down there? Bring us some ice. Bring us some pop up here. She took the ice and said „Now hold it on you eyes.“ The N.N? had kind of gone down then...

Laurraine Goreau

And that day you all had a program?

Mildred Falls

Yeah, That same day, that same evening.

Laurraine Goreau

How many years had you playing for her by then?

Mildred Falls

Oh about two, two or three, not too long

Laurraine Goreau

You'd been in the South before but not..

Mildred Falls

I'd been to som places where you'd say, do you have a lavatory?

They got the big sign up there. And No. „Clean Bath“. „Clean Restroom“

Laurraine Goreau

Do you have a lavatory?

Mildred Falls

No we don't. I'd been through that even. But that, to, was the worst experience I'd had up time there. That was the worst introduction I had really gone through. When you say that to young people now a days they can't seem to understand it. It's so much different tha what it used to be. They just can't understand it. I was saying to some little children there, young people - I call them children, young people and young marries, in Michigan, at a concert, and they couldn't understand it..."You must have done something, or why would they want to do it?" You know, What reason would they have? The young people wouldn't understand, they had no idea.

People to think that the things tha happend today would be for posterity and it wouldn't happen... What I had experienced.

I thank god it's better today than it was then.
It's not prejudice !

The tape ends here