

**SIGMA CHI FRATERNITY:
MECHILLE IVY, COOK**

"If I was at home I'd say I do home-cooking like country-cooking. That's how I cook at home. Up here, it's a lot different from the way I cook at home because I can do stuff like I want to at home. But, they try to watch the calories and stuff like that with the boys. So, you can't add too much starch and you can't add salt."

--Mechille Ivy

FULL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION:

Mechille Ivy, cook
SIGMA CHI FRATERNITY
University of Mississippi
Oxford, Mississippi
March 23, 2004
Interviewed by Mary Beth Lasseter

Mary Beth Lasseter: All right; today is Thursday, March 23, 2004, and this is Mary Beth Lasseter. I am at the Sigma Chi House on the campus at the University of Mississippi interviewing Miss Mechille Ivy. Mechille, how do you spell your first name?

Mechille Ivy: M-e-c-h-i-l-l-e.

ML: And, do you have an address that we could get down?

MI: Yes, ma'am; 121 Price Hill Road.

ML: And the city?

MI: Oxford, Mississippi.

ML: And the zip code?

MI: 38655.

ML: And do you have a telephone?

MI: Yes, ma'am--236.

ML: 236.

MI: 9868.

ML: 9868; and that's area code (662)? All right; where were you born, Mechille?

MI: In Lafayette County.

ML: All right; whereabouts--down at the hospital here?

MI: No, actually I was born at home.

ML: Really?

MI: Uh-hm.

ML: Tell me that story.

MI: I was born out in Yocona.

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ML: Oh yeah, down by the restaurant?

MI: Uh-hm.

ML: So, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

MI: I have four sisters and one brother.

ML: And, did they know you were coming or was it a surprise?

MI: [Laughs] I was the second child out of all of those kids.

ML: And, you were born at home; that's great.

MI: Yup.

ML: What is--what is your birthday, Mechille?

MI: December the 12th--13th, 1972.

ML: '72; all right. And, so you have--and you're um, married or single?

MI: Married.

ML: Married; okay. And, when did you get married? What's your marriage date?

MI: Uh, June 14th--July 14th.

ML: Okay; and your spouse's name?

MI: James Ivy.

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ML: And, do you have any children?

MI: Yes, I have four boys.

ML: Oh, who are they?

MI: [Laughs] I have one named Joseph, one's name is Jermaine--.

ML: How do you spell, J--?

MI: J--J-e-r-m-a-i-n-e.

ML: Okay.

MI: Justin [Laughs] and Tyrese.

ML: Spell Tyrese, too.

MI: T-y-r-e-s-e.

ML: How old are these young en's?

MI: [Laughs] Joseph is 14.

ML: You don't look old enough to be having a 14 year-old.

MI: [Laughs] Jermaine is 13, Justin is 11, and Tyrese is 4.

ML: Since you were born here in Lafayette County, did you go to school here?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: Where did you go to school?

MI: I went to Oxford.

ML: Oxford High?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: All right; I have a series of questions that I'm just going to run through and we don't have to stick to them, but it should be like a conversation. So, how long have you worked here? We're at the Sigma Chi House.

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MI: And I've worked here for two years.

ML: And, what brought you here?

MI: Well, I was doing home healthcare, and one of my patients died and I got attached to her. And, I didn't want to go back to home healthcare. And one of my aunts was working up here and she told me they needed an opening, and I decided to come up here. And, I've been here ever since.

ML: Was your aunt working here at the Sigma Chi House?

MI: No, she worked over on the girls' side. Let me see what's that--what's the name of the house she works at? Um, I can't think of the name.

ML: But, she works for the sorority here on the campus?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: Okay; and then how did she know that there was an opening here?

MI: One of the guys went over and was eating in the house with one of the girls, and they asked if they knew anybody who wanted to work because they had an opening.

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ML: Oh, so the students through word of mouth.

MI: [Laughs]

ML: That worked out. Describe your family, if you will, for me.

MI: [Laughs] That's kind of hard. They're--I have a great family. They can be a pain in the butt sometimes, but they're--they're great. My kids, they are well-mannered and try to get good grades. They--they do pretty good.

ML: Now what grades are they in?

MI: Um, two--the two oldest ones are in the 7th grade and then Justin is in the 5th grade and Tyrese is in Pre-K.

ML: Now, do they go to school here in Oxford, too?

MI: Uh-huh; they go to Oxford.

ML: Oxford Middle, I guess?

MI: Let me see; Middle School and one--they go to Central and the Middle School.

ML: Okay, okay; um, has your job changed since you took it two years ago?

MI: No.

ML: Tell me a little about what you do.

MI: [Laughs] Well, it has changed a little. I um, was coming in at 2 o'clock. I was part-time when I first started. And, I come in and I cook, help the other lady cook, and around Thanksgiving of last year, she--one of the guys quit, so she needed somebody at the spur of the moment around the holidays, and we figured she couldn't find anybody to clean the house with that little short of notice. So, she asked if I wanted to do it. And, I started doing it, and I've been coming in at eight every morning since.

ML: So are you full-time in the kitchen only or do you work in the house?

MI: No, I work in the house, and then when I get through in the house, I come up in the kitchen and work in the kitchen.

ML: Okay; now you're the only one in the kitchen right now. So; who usually works in the afternoons, or is it always you?

MI: Willette--I work in the afternoons, and then Willette is here in the afternoon. Debra is here. She comes in, in the morning and cooks breakfast and leaves at 10.

ML: Could you describe a typical day for me?

MI: [Sigh] Real busy [Laughs]--most of the time it's real busy. Sometimes it may be slow. It depends on the boys.

ML: So, what do you do when you get to the kitchen in the afternoon?

MI: Well, I start cooking my supper. Help--I help get the dishes situated and stuff and then start working on what I'm going to cook for supper.

ML: Okay; how do you decide what you're going to cook?

MI: We normally do a menu, and then we figure out what type of meats we're going to have, and then we normally just decide at the spur of the moment what type of vegetables that would go good with the--the meats.

ML: So do the boys have any input in that, or--?

MI: Yeah; we um, ask what do they like and then they'll give us some suggestions and we'll just pick a day and decide when we're going to cook it for 'em.

ML: So that informal; like they're coming through the line or do you all have meetings with the president and things like that?

MI: No, the--the House Mother does or sometimes we'll just--when they come through, we'll ask do they have anything different that they want to eat or anything. And, we'll write it down and make a list for her. And, she'll talk with them, and she'll order it for them.

ML: Do any of the guys give you recipes from home to try out?

MI: No, they haven't yet. They've been talking about it, but they haven't yet [Laughs], so.

ML: Okay; where do you all get the food from? If you're choosing recipes--I mean if you're choosing vegetables at the spur of the moment, how does that work?

MI: Um, we--we normally keep vegetables in the cooler and the canned goods and stuff; so we just decide--we go to the pantry or whatever and decide what we're going to pull out of there and cook for them.

ML: Now, who orders all that food?

MI: Miss Lucy normally orders it.

ML: And Miss Lucy is?

MI: The House Mother.

ML: Okay; now do y'all do mostly canned vegetables?

MI: No, we're doing lima beans today. They're just not in the can [Laughs]. So, we do green beans--this comes out of the freezer and stuff like that--black eyed peas, corn. [085]

ML: Is there something you serve that the boys just won't touch?

MI: [Laughs] No.

ML: No, brussel sprouts?

MI: They love broccoli; they love cauliflower, and stuff like that. They--we just really haven't cooked anything that they won't eat.

ML: Good, good; now does the food come from a commercial vendor or farmer's market?

MI: Sometimes she goes to the farmer market and gets the vegetables and mostly--mostly--the--the majority of them come from the--whatever that thing is. [Laughs]

ML: The foodservice company?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: So how many people are you cooking for on any given night?

MI: Uh, I'm going to say around--between 175 to 200 guys a night.

ML: Wow; now how many--is that all of the fraternity brothers that are here?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: So what time does dinner start--or supper?

MI: It starts at 5 o'clock on Tuesday through Thursday, and on Monday they eat at 5:30 because they have a chapter meeting on Mondays.

ML: Are any of the students picky eaters or are they health conscious?

MI: Yeah; we have a few that's picky eaters. So, they normally make--they--we've got a couple that try to eat healthy. They don't like a lot of fatty foods. [Laughs] So some of them will come in and they won't eat anything but some--like grape nut cereals or something like that--maybe some fruit or something. We've got a couple of them that's kind of picky--some of them--not many, but we know that--that they just--we've got one that he's real healthy like; so he loves like oat brans and stuff like that. So, we try to keep stuff like that for him because he's got some nights he will eat a regular meal and some nights he won't; so.

ML: Now, on nights when he or anybody else doesn't eat what y'all prepare, do they just come pillage the kitchen; or?

MI: Yes [Laughs].

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ML: So how does that work?

MI: They'll be like, "Do y'all have anything in here?" "We don't know," so we just let them come in and they go in and find whatever they want and ask if they can have it. And, we tell them, "Sure, go ahead."

ML: Are they allowed to use this kitchen to cook for themselves?

MI: I don't--I don't think so. They've never been here to try to cook anything. So, I don't--.

ML: So what are they finding in the fridges--leftovers, or--?

MI: They go in and the bacon that they have in the morning times, they'll go in and make a bacon sandwich or something like that.

ML: Okay.

MI: [Laughs] So--.

ML: Now, do y'all have a lot of leftovers and what do you do with them?

MI: We don't have a lot of leftovers most of the time. They will eat everything that we put out. [Laughs] So, they don't know what it is to get leftovers over here.

ML: [Laughs] Well do you have one particular recipe you can think of that they just love or hate?

MI: They love the Chicken Rotelle.

ML: What's that?

MI: It's like a spaghetti-like, and you add Rotelle to it with cheese and um, chicken.

ML: How do you make it--just briefly?

MI: [Laughs] I promise you I can't remember how I even did it because Debra normally makes the Rotelle; so I'm not sure because I don't mess with the Chicken Rotelle because she normally does it before I get in here; so. [Laughs]

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ML: So what do you cook? Name some stuff that you've cooked maybe this week or last week.

MI: Uh, I mostly do the vegetables, like black-eyed peas and lima beans and fried okra, corn--what else--mashed potatoes, a lot of different vegetables, broccoli.

ML: How do you mash potatoes for that many boys?

MI: [Laughs] We have to buy the instant potatoes [Laughs], and I just watch the line and whenever I get low--I normally make two pans to keep me ahead of myself and when I see that they've gotten to the second pan and I know that the line is still long, I know I'm going to go ahead and make my third pan. And, normally three and a half pans will last me if they've got extra vegetables to go with it.

ML: Okay.

MI: So tonight they're going to have mashed potatoes and they're going to have fried rice with um, lima beans and meatloaf.

ML: And, meatloaf--how do you make your meatloaf?

MI: Willette does that. [Laughs]

ML: Willette does that? So everybody--.

MI: She normally does most of the meats.

ML: So everybody has a specialty?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: That's interesting; how did--how do you get your specialty assignment?

MI: I don't know; I guess we just worked amongst ourselves and decided, "Okay, you're going to do this and you're going to do this," and we just decided like that.

ML: What would you call your style of cooking?

MI: I wouldn't--I wouldn't know what to call my style of cooking. If I was at home I'd say I do home-cooking like country-cooking. That's how I cook at home. Up here, it's a lot different from the way I cook at home because I can do stuff like I want to at home. But, they try to watch the calories and stuff like that with the boys. So, you can't add too much starch and you can't add salt.

ML: Who advises y'all on that? Is there a dietician?

MI: Well, Miss Lucy normally advises us on that.

ML: How do you cook at home? You leave here and start another meal at 8 o'clock at night?

MI: [Laughs] Most of the time, I do.

ML: Then what time does your family eat?

MI: [Laughs] It's about 9 o'clock, I'll tell you, unless I just play smart and I do it the day before. And, I cook them enough, they'll--my family will eat leftovers. So, sometimes they tell me to cook them enough to last them for two days, and then I don't have to worry about it for the next two days. [Laughs]

ML: Good idea; what time do you leave here about in the evening?

MI: I leave here probably about 6:30--between 6:30 and 7:00.

ML: And then go home and start cooking?

MI: Some nights they might not get a meal because my kids do a lot of sports. Like last night I didn't go home and cook because I didn't get home 'til 10. [Laughs] My oldest one is running track right now.

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ML: Really?

MI: I told them, they was--at first it was football. Then they did the basketball thing, and now it's with the track. I'm like, I'll be glad when school's out so I don't have to deal with this, this summer. But, if they've got me busy, if they've got a track meet or something like that, then I get home too late to be worried about a meal for 'em. [Laughs]

ML: Now, how are they getting around in the evenings while you're here at work?

MI: They--they ride the bus home, or either if they have like a track meet or something, they stay after school because normally they leave right after school is over with and go wherever they have to go. So, they normally get around by the school bus. And, my husband gets off at five, and after he gets off at five, if they need to go somewhere he takes them; so.

ML: Now, where does your husband work?

MI: He works for Elliott Lumber Company.

ML: Okay; what does he do?

MI: Nothing--sits in front of a computer. [Laughs]

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ML: Oh, that's harsh.

MI: He sits in front of a computer; he takes orders, bosses people around.
[Laughs]

ML: Now, do you like to cook?

MI: My mother says I do. I think I do because I--I do most of the cooking in my family. So, I think--I guess I do like it because I--if my father-in-law's birthday come up or the kids' birthday, when they--when I do their birthday parties and stuff, I cook a full-course meal for them. They don't get just hamburger and hot dogs. They get a full-course meal and then they can have their cake and ice cream. They still get their cake and ice cream and stuff like that, but they have to eat a full-course meal before they can get their junk food. [Laughs]

ML: How did you learn to cook? Who taught you?

MI: I learned on my own. I've been--I've been away from home every since I was 16 years old. So, I figured if I had to eat, I had to learn how to cook. So, I just went in the kitchen and started practicing and I figured if I could do it that one time, I just kept doing it. [Laughs] [186]

ML: Now, do you have any mommas or grandmas that shared recipes with you?

MI: No, my grandmother--well my great-grandmothers and stuff was all passed away. So, I didn't get any recipes from then. And then, my mother's mother, she got real sick, so I couldn't get any recipes from her. And, my father's mother passed away when I was little, so I didn't get recipes from her. I just--I don't know how. [Laughs] I just got in the kitchen and went to cooking.

ML: And your momma doesn't cook?

MI: Uh-uh; she comes to my house. She'll call and say, "Are you cooking greens?" I'm like, "No," because if I said yes they come--everybody comes for greens. And then I'm like--.

ML: Now why the greens?

MI: I don't know; they think--if it's not the greens, it's the broccoli casserole. And I'm like, "Will y'all please stay away from my house." I have a cousin who stays in Wichita, Kansas, and she calls and her husband will say, "Can we get an invite?" I'm like, "Y'all can just come visit." And they're like, "No, we thought maybe if you'd invite us you'd cook us some greens." I'm like, "Uh-uh." [Laughs]

ML: And what do you do to your greens to make them so special?

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MI: I cook them in neck bones.

ML: Okay, tell me about it.

MI: [Laughs].

ML: I need that recipe from start to finish.

MI: [Laughs] I--and I normally don't cook anything but collard greens.

ML: Okay.

MI: Which is--a lot of people say is hard to get real tender, but they always turn out tender when I cook them.

ML: Which is why everybody wants them.

MI: [Laughs].

ML: And where do you buy them from?

MI: I normally get them from Winn Dixie.
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ML: Okay, which is the old Jitney Jungle; right?

MI: Uh-huh; and I just--I get a pack of neck bones and boil the neck bones and let them get half way done, and stem my greens and wash them, and just add `em in.

ML: How long do you cook them?

MI: Oh, probably about three or four hours--just let `em simmer.

ML: And what do you do with that smell?

MI: [Laughs] I don't know--catch everybody that's coming past the house.
[Laughs]

ML: Do you put any special seasoning in them?

MI: I put some of everything in them.

ML: Tell me.

MI: [Laughs] I use--well see, when I season the meat, whatever seasoning that I put on the meat, it ends up seasoning the greens. So I use like lemon pepper seasoning on my meat, seasoning salt, Accent salt, regular salt, a little pepper--some I'm going to miss, and I add--when I put the greens, I add a little red pepper--the crushed red peppers--

ML: Yeah.

MI: --not enough to make them hot but have a little taste to them. And it all just blends in together.

ML: Now, do you eat the neck bones?

MI: My husband does. [Laughs]

ML: I'll let you stop for a minute. Sign this invoice for this nice gentleman.

[Interruption - Delivery; Tape Paused]

ML: All right; we'll pick up where we left off with those greens.

MI: [Laughs].

ML: So your husband eats the neck bones?

MI: Uh-huh; they--when I first started cooking them with the neck bones in them, it was like, "If you cook those greens with them neck bones in them, we're not eatin' them." So I cooked them, [Laughs] and when I got to cooking them, they was like, "Did you cook them greens with neck bones?" I said, "No, I didn't cook them with the neck bones." I messed around and gave them to them. They was like, "Momma--." "I thought you said--," they went back for seconds and they said, "I thought you didn't cook the neck bones in them." I said, "Oh, I just told y'all that so y'all would eat 'em. So they've been eatin' 'em every since.

ML: That worked well. Let's see, where do you get--um, what are some other things, I guess, that your family likes to eat? What are your recipes at home?

MI: My oldest son likes the--a broccoli-corn casserole that I fixed smothered in cheese.

ML: How do you do that? That sounds good.

MI: [Laughs] I normally just get--buy me some broccoli and wash them and put them in their pot. I add my little seasoning and add a little corn in it. Let all of it cook together and when it gets through, I pour cheese my over it and let it smother and simmer all into it. [243]

ML: That sounds delicious.

MI: It is. [Laughs]

ML: What else do they like?

MI: What else do they--they eat spaghetti. What else--uh, now they--they've been fussing at me because I used to fix them lasagna all the time, but I haven't fixed it for 'em in a while. And, I mean they basically like all type of vegetables. They eat mostly anything I cook.

ML: Well that's nice.

MI: So, I don't have to worry about them eating. A lot of people say, "Oh that stuff would get thrown away in my house," well not in mine 'cuz they can eat--but, I guess raising four boys--boys can eat more than girls; so.

ML: Of course; now where do you do all your shopping?

MI: I used to go to Sav-A-Lot in Batesville, go to New Albany at the Wal-Mart over there. Now I just go around town. Sometimes, I might shop at Big Star or Kroger's. If I'm not there then I'm across town over here at Winn Dixie.

ML: Now, do you shop those places because they're convenient or because they sell something you know that you want, like your greens from Winn Dixie?

MI: [Laughs] No, I don't get those greens from anywhere but Winn Dixie because their greens look the freshest to me and I just--I'm picky about my greens. If they don't look fresh, I won't buy 'em. [Laughs] If they look they've got spots all over them, I ain't getting' 'em. So, that's why I get my greens from Winn Dixie. Meats--I try to go around and see who's got a sale on them 'cuz I hav to buy too much meat. When I buy food at the grocery store, a lot of people say, "Are you having a cookout?" "No, this is going home to the deep freezer." I spend like anywhere from \$350 to \$450 buying groceries?

ML: Wow, how often?

MI: That is probably like every two weeks.

ML: I guess with five boys in the house, you need that.

MI: [Laughs] Uh-huh; and they think I'm crazy when I do that. They're like, "Child, you don't know how my folks eat." But they--they can eat up some food. [Laughs]

ML: So for all this cooking you do at home, what's your kitchen at home like?

MI: [Sigh] Uh, it's--it's pretty well much organized where I know where everything is where I can just reach at it and get it. So it's--it's pretty well organized for me where I can just--I know where everything is unless the boys go in there and try to fix something themselves, and move it, and then I'm running around in the kitchen in a chaos like, "Where is my stuff?" But normally, it's pretty well organized for me.

ML: Now, is it a big kitchen?

MI: I say it is. [Laughs] It's pretty big. It's big--it's big enough where all of them--all of us are in the kitchen at the same time, but I don't like that because when I'm in the kitchen I don't want nobody in the kitchen but me. [Laughs]

ML: I understand; now do you use gas or electric?

MI: I use gas.

ML: And do you have a preference?

MI: No.

ML: You just use it 'cuz you got it?

MI: Well, I don't--I used to use electric, but I just--I stopped using it I think because gas saves me--I save more on gas than I do on electric. When I--as much as I cook, my electric bill probably would be sky-high.

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ML: Now when you're having your family over, how many people is that?

MI: Woo--it's anywhere from 50 to 60 people.

ML: Where do you put them all?

MI: My trailer is big enough where all of them can fit in there; so--but they--when one comes and they know they call everybody. And, everybody comes to eat.

ML: They just walk through a serving line?

MI: I have a bar in there and they just go through the bar and get everything they need off the bar.

ML: And you cook it all; nobody brings anything?

MI: Nobody brings anything and nobody helps cook; I have to cook.

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ML: What about the clean-up?

MI: [Laughs] They'll pitch in and help clean-up, but they're not cooking anything. If I go visit them, before I get there, they call me and tell me the menu and tell me what I got to cook when I get there. [Laughs]

ML: No.

MI: For Thanksgiving, I cooked for everybody for Thanksgiving, and Christmas, we went to West Point to my sister's. And before I could get there, she's like, "You're cooking greens; you're cooking sweet potatoes." I'm like, "I don't want to cook all that." She--I had to do sweet potato pies, [Laughs] greens, she wanted me to do the dressing, and it was something else I had to fix for 'em. I was like, "I--I'm not cooking all that food." I had to do potato salad.

ML: Now, do you make it in your kitchen and tote it in the car or do you take over their place?

MI: I have to go over there and take over their place and stay up till four and five o'clock in the morning cooking so I don't have to get up the next holiday and get up--I can just get up and enjoy myself. So, I end up staying up till like four or five o'clock in the morning. Go to bed, and get about two hours worth of sleep and get back up and enjoy the family.

ML: Now, when you cook, do you watch TV or listen to music or--?

MI: No, well I mostly listen to some music, running back and forth checking these pots out.

ML: What do you like to listen to?

MI: I listen to a lot of blues and gospel. That's mostly what I listen to.

ML: Do you have a favorite artist?

MI: Sir Charles; [Laughs] yeah.

ML: What album or are you listening to the radio?

MI: No, I have--I'm trying to think--I think the--the one that I listen to all the time is, The Love Machine.

ML: And do you bring your music up here to the Sigma Chi House when you're working?

MI: No, we listen to the radio up here. [Laughs] We normally just listen to the radio. [327]

ML: Okay; is that 'cuz y'all don't have a CD player or--?

MI: Yeah; we have one. I just--we've got one that has a particular music she likes to listen to, so instead of us arguing with her about the radio, we just let her do what she want to do with the radio and go on. [Laughs]

ML: That makes sense. Um, a couple questions just kind of about your job. Do you have another job besides this one?

MI: No.

ML: Full-time here?

MI: Yeah.

ML: Okay; and what is your favorite part about this job?

MI: The favorite part is probably coming in and doing things for the boys all the time. I enjoy doing things for other people.

ML: Now, do you know the guys here pretty well?

MI: I know most of them--some of them, I know them by face, but I can't call their names. But, the majority of them, I know them--I know the faces and the names; so.

ML: And how did you get to know them?

MI: They come in and talk to us and just kind of got to know 'em by them coming in talking.

ML: Do they come back in the kitchen a lot?

MI: Yeah; we've got a--I've got a couple of 'em. They come every morning at 8 o'clock. They come in and they give me a hug every morning. And then at lunchtime when they pass me again, they give me another hug. And when I get ready to go home they give me another hug and tell me they'll see me the next day. So, they've got--I've got a couple of 'em that comes in and does that every day.

ML: That's nice. Do they talk to you a lot about school or home?

MI: Yeah; a lot of them talk to be me about passing tests and stuff and studying and stuff; so.

ML: Um, what is your relationship with the University? Are you--how is--who are you employed by technically?
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MI: Um, I don't know. [Laughs] Lucy [Unintelligible Phrase].

ML: So you get checks maybe from the Sigma Chi as opposed to the University of Mississippi?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: Okay; so you're employed, I guess, by the national organization. Do you ever come up to the University when you're not working on weekends? Are you a big Ole Miss fan?

MI: Well, I come up a lot and go to the coliseum and walk a lot. My kids come up like when y'all are having football games and basketball games and they work the concession stands and stuff.

ML: Oh do they?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: Now, is that a volunteer thing for a school organization or a job or--?

MI: They do it through our church. They just--the church I guess just got into it for something for the kids to have to do. So, they decided instead of them running up and down the road all the time, just having something to do to come work the games and stuff. And, my kids enjoy it.

ML: Now, does the church benefit? Do they get a donation at least?

MI: Yeah; I think they do. They get a certain percentage of what they make through the concession stand.

ML: Now, where do you go to church?

MI: [Unintelligible Phrase] in Taylor.

ML: Who's the minister there?

MI: Pastor Johnson.

ML: How big is that church?

MI: It's not a great big church. It's--I would call it a medium-sized church. We have a nice congregation. But it--it's pretty big. We um, I'm thinking that some of the people from the University, I'm thinking that they had the University Choir out to our church one time. So I'm not--we do pretty good.

ML: Now, have you been going there all your life?

MI: Yeah; all my life; that's where I've been. My pastor asked me the other day, "Where does your husband go to church?" And I told him, "New Hope Church." "Well why don't you go to church with him over there?" I said, because he wants to go to church with me over here." [Laughs]

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ML: Oh, so y'all go to two different churches on Sunday? And the boys go with whom?

MI: They normally goes to my church; yeah--so.

ML: Now, do you have to cook at your church, as well as house? [Laughs]

MI: No, they'll call sometimes and ask me to fix my casserole--my broccoli casserole, or fix some greens or some dressing, but I don't have to do that all the time--it's just whenever they're going to have a program or something and nobody has time to go home and cook. So, we just have a meal at church, and everybody pitches in and just brings a dish.

ML: That's interesting. Let's see; um, do you know any of the people who worked here before you? Has anybody retired since you've been here or come on?

MI: Nobody's come on since I've been here except for Robert, and he's the clean-up guy that comes in, in the evening time. And, Mr. Cee-Cee and Miss Marguerite Henson used to work here before I came. They're my aunt and uncle.

ML: Oh, and they worked here at the Sigma Chi?

MI: Uh-huh; and they retired--they had a retirement thing for `em last year.

ML: They boys did?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: What was that like?

MI: It was nice. We came in and catered for `em and everything. And, they gave `em a card and stuff. It was--it was nice for `em.

ML: So, how many family members do you have working um, within Greek organizations on campus?

MI: Uh, a lot [Laughs]; I do have a lot. I can't count. I would say probably about anywhere from 15 to 20 works for the University.

ML: And have they been here long?

MI: A lot of `em has been long enough to about retire.

ML: Wow, now do y'all get to see each other when you're in different houses?

MI: Yeah; we can--like when we take our breaks or something like that, go over and visit with `em for a minute or something like that.

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ML: So did the different staff get to know each other and how did that work?

MI: We do; um, normally if somebody like right around up in this area doesn't have anything in the house, and most of us know each other real good, they come over and [*bary-borrow*] stuff from us and then we get to know them through them coming and [*barying-borrowing*]. And, we go over and borrowing stuff from them. So, that's normally how we end up meeting each other.

ML: That's really interesting. So do y'all--I mean, borrow large quantities of things or just small things?

MI: Just small things--maybe you don't have some sugar or something to make our tea--[*bary-borrow*] a little sugar or something like that and return it whenever we get our order in. If our order doesn't come in before we need the stuff then we'll end up having to borrow it and we'll give it back to them when the order comes in.

ML: How often do y'all have orders come in?
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MI: [Sigh] Uh, I almost--every day. [Laughs]

ML: Is that because they're different companies or y'all run through it that fast?

MI: These boys can eat some stuff. [Laughs] They eat up some stuff. So, like next week, they're having Derby Day so I don't know how many orders we will have come in so we can be prepared for Derby Week because we're going to have feed a lot of ladies.

ML: Now how does that work; what do y'all do for Derby Day or Derby Week?

MI: Um, we feed--I think like a lot of girls from different sororities come over and eat our house--we feed them. And, I don't know what else they do for Derby; I forgot last year how they did it.

ML: Now, do y'all do special meals?

MI: No, because most of the time the girls like to eat light. So, we do like um-- what are the salads? I can't think of the name of them salads we do. It's like a noodle-like salad.

ML: Like a pasta salad?

MI: Yeah; we do--they like the pasta salads and the Caesar salads--stuff like that, and probably sandwiches and stuff like that, ice cream for dessert, tea and Kool Aid for--and water if they want it; so.

ML: Now, is it just the boys who can eat here? Who--who can come to the house and eat on a given day?

MI: Well, every--almost every day we see a different face. They bring either their girlfriends or some of their friends come; some of the boys are on the football teams and stuff like that and their friends from the football team come and eat with 'em sometimes. Just mostly every day, they bring somebody different.

ML: Now, do those folks have to buy meal tickets or they can just scoot on in?

MI: They just scoot on in with everybody else; so.

ML: Oh; have you ever known any girlfriends, boyfriends, get out, get married-- that kind of stuff?

MI: No I haven't; um, they were telling me it was one of the guys, his name was Will, and I can't think of his last name. He was here last year and he--they came back and told us that he had gotten engaged. I'm--I'm hoping that he comes back before he gets married so we can congratulate and meet his fiancée. But I got attached to him [Laughs], and my baby boy got attached to him. He met him one time, and he was crying because I told him it was time for us to go, and he wanted to stay. Will was like, "He can spend the weekend with me." And I said--he had--he had a doctor appointment that day, and I said, "Will is not going to want to fool with you." But, he cried and every time he'd ask me, "Momma, is Will there?" I said, "No, Will's gone baby." But, he--he still asks about Will, and I think he got attached to him because he had him in his room and he'd let him swing in the

hamper and watch all the cartoons he wanted to watch and just playing with him like a big brother. So, he--he liked that.

ML: So, do your kids get to come up here a lot or do they just pop by?
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MI: They--they come up sometimes; sometimes they come if they get out of track practice or football practice or basketball practice early, they'll come over here. Instead of riding home with my husband, they'll walk over here 'cuz their school is just down the street. So, they'll walk up here and wait on me to get off.

ML: Now, will they grab dinner with the guys or wait for home cooking?

MI: They--sometimes, they will grab dinner with the guys. If they--if we're having something that they're--that they like, they'll grab dinner with the guys, and then don't worry about me cooking when I get home. [Laughs]

ML: Yeah; what--I guess, how do you keep up with the guys after they graduate, or do you? Do any of them come back and visit?

MI: Some of them do; sometimes it [leaves] a while before they come back and visit, but most of them come back and visit.

ML: On football weekends or--or when?

MI: Yeah; or if they're having--if Sigma Chi is having something special, they'll come back and join in with 'em. So, we--we still get to see most of them. And, then most of em that's graduated, they--some of them still live close by. So they'll come up sometimes and eat supper with the guys.

ML: Now, do you ever see any guys dealing with the homesickness or anything like that--breakups with girlfriends?

MI: [Laughs] We have one; he--we told him he had to get rid of his girlfriend [Laughs] because she was beatin' him.

ML: No!

MI: Yeah; we told him--he um--she proposed. He--she wanted to get married and he wasn't ready for it. And I--I said it was a good thing because if you're not ready for it, you shouldn't do it. And I said, it was better that he told her that he wasn't ready than to just jump in something and you'd be married for two or three months and you said, "I can't deal with it; it's off." So, I said at least he didn't just say, "Okay; we're going to get married and [finger snap] then be in misery for the rest of his life. But, he was still willing to date her until he was ready, but she--when he said he wasn't ready, she punched him in the face. [Laughs]

ML: No! So, did you find this out through kitchen talk? Did he come here looking for comforting?

MI: No, he came--he came in and he had a--she hit him; she had a ring on her finger and the ring left a scar on his face.

ML: Oh. [529]

MI: So, we were like, "What happened to your face?" He was like, "My girlfriend punched me." We were like, "Why?" He said, "She was talking about marriage and I told her I wasn't ready and she punched me." [Laughs] I was like, "You need to get rid of her."

ML: Oh, my goodness.

MI: I was like, "You don't need nobody that's gonna be beatin' on you like that." I said, "You was just bein' honest with her." But she punched him, and then she used to do other things to him like, "[Reid], you have got to get rid of that girl." [Laughs] It was just awful--like, find somebody else.

ML: [Laughs] Do they take your advice when you offer it?

MI: Yeah; he said he did. He was looking for somebody else, but I told him he was not going to get any peace 'cuz she's still been bothering him. [Laughs]

ML: What do you do--what do you do? Do you ever see any differences in kids from different parts of the country or different parts of the state--do you know?

MI: No, I really haven't seen any difference.

ML: Are there any special traditions? I know we were just talking about Derby Day; any special meals or traditions or things that y'all do for the guys or with the guys?

MI: Um--.

ML: Do y'all do holiday meals?

MI: Yeah; we do. We cook them Thanksgiving meals or--or Christmas meals before they leave. And, I'm trying to think do they get an Easter meal. I'm--I can't remember whether we did Easter for them last year or not.

ML: Now how often is the kitchen open?

MI: It's open every day except for when they're not here.

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ML: So seven days a week?

MI: No, well Sundays they don't--Fridays we close the kitchen. They normally--most of them goes home on Friday. So nobody's here on--on Saturday and Sunday.
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ML: Right; so do y'all have to come in and cook anyway or no?

MI: No.

ML: Okay; they can just come in and raid, I guess?

MI: [Laughs] Normally, I think they go out and order a meal or something on--if they're here on Saturday and Sunday. But most of them are always saying, "We're leaving today; we're going home;" so.

ML: So y'all cook three meals a day Monday through Friday?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: Now--

MI: Now Friday they only get breakfast and lunch because they all say they're going to get out of here about two--one o'clock; so.

ML: Now, if they're having special events like parties or receptions, do y'all cook for that, too?

MI: No, we do like--we, I think the only thing that we have to come in and cook for them for is the um, when they do Homecoming.

ML: What do y'all do for that?

MI: We come in and maybe fix them some finger sandwiches, fix a veggie tray, and stuff like that.

ML: Now, y'all are bringing it where--in the house or the Grove or--?

MI: They come here and eat before they go, and then their families--most of their families come up, their mothers and fathers, and they come over and eat, too, before they go to the game and stuff.

ML: Oh okay; so you're not--like y'all aren't catering a Grove tent?

MI: No.

ML: Do you ever get to the Grove?

MI: [Laughs] No.

ML: Not a Grover? Do you ever get to the game?

MI: No, I don't. Most of the time if they're having a game on the weekend or anything, I am at home babysitting my goddaughter.

ML: Okay.

MI: And I send the kids on over here to work the games.

ML: Yeah; um, let me see. I had a question and it just left my head. Um, oh I know what it was; in addition to your greens recipe, which I've gotten on tape here, do you have another recipe that you could share with us--something that the guys love, maybe? Let me turn--let me turn the tape over real quick so we don't cut off in the middle of it.

[End of Tape One, Side A; Begin Side B]
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MI: Chicken spaghetti and I think--I don't fix them, Debra does.

ML: Is that the chicken spaghetti?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: Well what about, can you just name me some kind of meals that y'all do around here, like desserts? What do y'all cook for dessert?

MI: Today, they have cake. We do chocolate chip cookies, um, brownies, cupcakes, different varieties of stuff. Some days they may have ice cream. If we don't feel up to doing the desserts [Laughs], they'll eat ice cream and stuff.

ML: So how many people are working here in the kitchen?

MI: It's three of us in the kitchen.

ML: To serve 170-some boys?

MI: Yeah.

ML: And does the House Mother eat with them, too?

MI: Sometimes she does and sometimes she doesn't.

ML: Does she have her own kitchen and stuff or--?

MI: No.

ML: No?

MI: She um, if she's busy up there in her room then she don't get to come and eat supper with 'em, but we'll save her a plate and she'll go to her room and eat it after she gets through doing what she's doing.

ML: Do y'all do a lot of plate-saving for folks?

MI: Yes. [Laughs] You see our list over here.

ML: Now what--what is that? Tell me about this bulletin board.

MI: This is our late plate list, and if they're not going to be here on time to eat supper or they're not going to make it back before supper is pulled then they sign their name on that sheet over there and we make them a late plate and put it in a [boom box]. It keeps their food warm for them.

ML: Okay; and how do they--they just come in the kitchen and sign up or--?

MI: Uh-huh; they just--they come in and sign up and we read the list every night and see who signed up, and make enough late plates for them and sign their name on the top of it so they'll know who all gets a plate.

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ML: And if you don't sign up, you don't get late plate? That's the way it works?

MI: No.

ML: Okay; what else is all over that bulletin board?

MI: That's our menu right there.

ML: Oh, can I come see that?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: What are y'all servin' this week?

MI: This is our menu right here. We had BLTs Monday for lunch. We had country fried steaks for supper. Tuesday we had tacos for lunch and ribs and pot roast for supper.

ML: That's a lot of meat.

MI: And, today for lunch we had red beans and rice, baked chicken, and tonight we're going to have meatloaf. Tomorrow for lunch, we're going to have spicy chicken.

ML: Now what's that--fried or--?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: Fried chicken.

MI: It's fried; uh-huh--fried, spicy chicken. And, we're having hamburgers tomorrow night. And, Friday, they have fried Friday--just a variety of stuff like chicken nuggets or French fries, onion rings, whichever one we decide we want to give them like the fries or the onion rings, and then they have um, egg rolls and corn dog nuggets--just a lot of variety of stuff. And, they love fried Friday.

ML: So everything you serve on Friday is deep-fried.

MI: Uh-huh. [Laughs]

ML: And, what do you deep-fry it in--vegetable oil or lard?

MI: In vegetable oil. [Laughs].

ML: There's a little bit of health consciousness there? And what do the healthy ones do on fried Fridays--go to the kitchen. [Laughs]

MI: Well, the healthy ones most of the time on fried Friday they eat fried Friday. [Laughs]

ML: Do they; it's their splurge day, I guess. Now, what's all back--what's all back here in the kitchen? Do y'all have storage or refrigeration or what?

MI: Yes, storage; this is the refrigerator. We have a cooler at the back--back there, and that's the pantry back there where we keep all the canned goods, marinades, and stuff--the salad dressings and stuff back there, where we can stock it up. [684]

ML: I see all the cereals on the shelf.

MI: Yep, 'cuz they go through it so fast. But, we have to keep a little shelf and keep an eye on what we out of. Soon as we get down to the last thing, we have to write it back on the list. Before the week's gone, it's on the list. [Laughs]

ML: How does that work? Do y'all order a set amount or do people come in and raid and steal a bunch of stuff?

MI: [Laughs] No, they don't raid and get it. They--we just order--it depends on how they eat it, and then we judge how they eat it and then order it by the judgment of how they're eating it. If they eat it real good then we have order a good amount for them.

ML: Okay; now there's--I see outside; it's about what 2:30 today and there's a salad bar. So, what are the hours for the other meals?

MI: Um, they eat lunch at 11:00--from 11:00 to 1:15. They have salad bar all day.

ML: Oh, it stays out all day?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: Okay.

MI: Even through supper except on Mondays, we pull it after lunch because they have chapter meeting and chapter meeting starts at 6:00 and they eat at 5:30. So, we don't have time to pull the salad bar.

ML: Okay.

MI: So, we have to pull it on Mondays after lunch in order to be able to clear out everything for them to have their chapter meeting.

[Cell phone rings]

ML: So, they have their chapter meeting in the dining room?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: Okay; I'll let you get your phone--I'm sorry.

[Mechille Ivy answers phone]

ML: Your sister-in-law? Does she need a ride?

MI: [Laughs] No; she trying to get her car fixed and she had--she's had several opinions about her car, and the guy that works here, he had told me 'cuz he's

looked at the car for her, and he told me that she probably should have changed her filters on the car because her gas is not going up to the carburetor. So, he said it was two different filters, and probably should have changed both of them. And, I don't think she changed but one of them. And she's--somebody else is looking at it, and he's saying he's going to take the part that she got back to the store--it's something else wrong. She wanted me to tell him to call. [Laughs]

ML: Oh got it; well let's um, we'll go ahead and wrap this up then. Is there any particular story or anything you want us to know about you that you'd like to share?

MI: No. [Laughs]

ML: Do you think you'll be working here a long time?

MI: I hope to be working here a long time.

ML: Do you enjoy what you do?

MI: Uh-huh; yes I look forward to it. When I'm not here, I be--I be saying I need a break sometimes, but then when I'm not here, I be glad when I go back to work. [Laughs]

ML: Now what do y'all do in the summers because don't these houses close in the summers?

MI: Uh-huh; well in the summer I stay at home and spend time with my kids and we draw unemployment.
[714]

ML: Oh you do?

MI: Uh-huh.

ML: So, it's not a 12-month job then?

MI: No.

ML: Do y'all get health insurance and stuff?

MI: No, I wish we did.

ML: But there are no benefits?

MI: No.

ML: Are there any--is there any talk about maybe getting some of that stuff in the future?

MI: I don't--I haven't heard anybody say--my aunt was saying that they were talking about it when she--when I first started here over there on the girls' side. Since I've been here, I haven't heard anything else about it. But she said they were talking about trying to get insurance in the houses. But, I haven't heard anything else about it; so I don't know if they're going to do it or not.

ML: So, I guess you have that kind of stuff through your husband's job?

MI: Uh-huh.
[720]

ML: Do you know what other people do who don't have that?

MI: [Deep breath] I don't know.

ML: I'm just wondering if they um, I--I don't know what I was wondering. Is it--is it hard on people? Like, what do you do in the summers? You stay home with your boys, I mean, but--?

MI: Uh-huh; well the other two ladies--one of them, she has--she has grandkids, and she spends time with her grandkids and stuff. And, the other lady--both of them have grandkids, and she spends time with her grandkids, too. In the summers, like if I get bored at home, my father is an interior--interior/exterior decorator. So, when I get bored, me and the boys go help him with his work.

ML: Okay.

MI: [Laughs].

ML: Well it's interesting. Thank you so much for talking with me today. I really appreciate it.

MI: All right.

ML: And um, I'll be back in the kitchen hopefully visiting some other folks soon.

MI: Okay.

ML: This concludes our interview today with Miss Mechille Ivy, and this is Mary Beth wrapping it up.

[End]

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