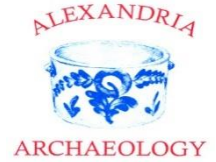




City of Alexandria
Office of Historic Alexandria
Immigrant Alexandria, Past, Present, and Future
Oral History Program



Project Name: *Immigrant Alexandria: Past, Present and Future*

Title: *Interview with Rhoda Worku*

Date of Interview: *May 20, 2015*

Location of Interview: *Caboose Cafe in Alexandria, Virginia*

Interviewer: *Krystyn Moon*

Audio and video recording: *Terilee Edwards-Hewitt*

Transcriber: *Adept Word Management*

Abstract: This is the first interview of two. Rhoda Worku was born in Ethiopia and migrated to the United States for asylum in the early 1980s. She was the first in her family to migrate here and she has a restaurant business.

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01:22 Introductions	
Krystyn Moon:	Are we good? All right. So this is Krystyn Moon again, and I'm interviewing Rhoda Worku. It is May 20, 2015, and we're at Caboose Cafe, which Rhoda actually owns. So first of all, thanks so much for doing this. I know you've been super busy, particularly in the past couple of weeks, and I really appreciate that you took the time to talk to us. So I first want to start of course with your childhood and what it was like growing up in Ethiopia. Do you want to start talking about what you remember?
02:00 Childhood	
Rhoda Worku:	Well, I was fortunate. I had a nice childhood. I was going to a private school and got a little bit of everything, like playing some kind of games, and then some music lessons, and things like that. Until the government comes by over toward—.
KM:	Yeah. Yeah. So where were you growing up at that time? You have a map.
Rhoda Worku:	Yes. I was in the capital city of Addis Ababa.
KM:	Okay. So Addis Ababa.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. I'm from Addis Ababa. And I used to go an English school, which was Sandford. It was run by British.
KM:	And what kind of music did you—?
Rhoda Worku:	Piano.
KM:	Piano? Oh, excellent. I play piano too. Many years of piano. What year did the civil war start, do you remember?
Rhoda Worku:	I'm not quite sure. I think in [19]74.
KM:	So when Haile Selassie disappeared, right?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. I think it was '74 or '75. Somewhere in there.
KM:	And then how did that affect your family?
Rhoda Worku:	It did affect me very much because of my parents as well as all my uncles—everybody was [in] the Haile Selassie cabinet. They were the highly-ranked people with him, and they were the ones who got executed, the sixty of them. From the sixty people there, my father, including all my uncles, five brothers—.
KM:	[looking at photo] Now, this is a photo of your dad, right?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes. That's a picture of my dad and my mom.
KM:	With this amazing car. In Ethiopia.
Rhoda Worku:::	It's in Ethiopia. I believe this is before they got married. I'm not quite sure. But somewhere class.
KM:	It must be the [19]50s?
Rhoda Worku:	Probably, yeah. The '50s.

KM:	I'm just looking at the car. We need somebody who knows cars.
Rhoda Worku:	Yes. I think it's an old Chevrolet, American car.
KM:	Chevrolet?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah, I think so.
KM:	That's really cool.
Rhoda Worku:	My mom also was the first Ethiopian nurse.
KM:	Oh, cool. So did she work in a hospital?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes, she used to work—there were about eight Ethiopian nurses, for the first time in Ethiopia. So she was one of them.
KM:	Did she work in a particular section of the hospital, or just general practice?
Rhoda Worku:	No, she was a matron for the hospital. And she used to work in the—my dad used to be one of the governors of the province, so she used to work—there was missionaries, American missionaries, something like that. That's how I was getting all my piano lessons. I had an American teacher who used to teach me piano, and they've been good family friends.
KM:	Okay. Were they Presbyterian or Methodist—?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes, Presbyterians.
KM:	Presbyterian missionaries. Yeah. I know they were very, very popular or common in Ethiopia.
Rhoda Worku:	Oh, yeah. It was very common. I don't know right now, but at that time, they were very popular. They were very helpful.
KM:	And they ran schools, and did other things too, right?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. Absolutely, yeah. I remember them very—they used to teach me piano, and I used to sing in choir sometimes.
KM:	Oh, that's good. And then let's talk a little bit about who these people [in the photos] are.
Rhoda Worku:	This is myself. This is my older sister.
KM:	What's your sister's name?
Rhoda Worku:	Tegist.
KM:	What is it again?
Rhoda Worku:	Tegist.
KM:	Tegist?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah.
KM:	How do you spell that?
Rhoda Worku:	T-E-G-I-S-T.
KM:	Okay. Because I know we're going to need help spelling that.

Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. So she's a year and six months older than me. I know she looks like a boy, but she's not. She lives in Delaware. She's got a son who's fifteen years old.
KM:	Does she work too?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah, she works for AAA [American Automobile Association.] She's been working for—.
KM:	Oh, okay. AAA? That's great.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. So she lives in Delaware.
KM:	So how old are you in this picture?
Rhoda Worku:	I don't know. I think I'm about—maybe eight months. I don't know. I have no idea. This is a good picture.
06:25 Migration Story	
KM:	Yeah. No, it's a great picture. So we talked about the civil war, '74, '75. What did you and your immediate family do? Did they stay in Addis Ababa or did you leave?
Rhoda Worku:	No, no. I'd been there for at least seven, eight years, because we were not allowed to get out. As I said, my parents were very close to the government, so we were not allowed. So when I got the chance—in fact, the first time when I came, and as I told you, I was in California, it was those—family, the one the missionaries, the Presbyterians—I was staying with them. They were the ones who brought me here.
KM:	Okay. So now, how did you come? Did you come as a student?
Rhoda Worku:	No. I came on a tourist visa.
KM:	On a tourist visa. Okay. And then—?
Rhoda Worku:	And then I was staying with them, and then I was trying to get asylum. I tried to take asylum.
KM:	Yeah. Do you want to talk a little bit about what asylum is?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. Sometime, even though I was young, I know when I took an asylum, because I really didn't want to go back. And I was the first one to get out of the country from my family.
KM:	Right. So you were here, and so you could request asylum, as opposed to a refugee who's in Ethiopia, trying to get out.
Rhoda Worku:	Exactly. So at that time, I was in San Jose. There's Fremont, there was—.
KM:	Fremont, yeah. I know Fremont. On the bay, yeah.
Rhoda Worku:	Yes, exactly.
KM:	Great. So then, were you able to change you status from a tourist visa to asylum?
Rhoda Worku:	I took an asylum. And then, yes, I did, even though it took me very long. Fortunately, I had a very good, strong case, so it wasn't very difficult to get

	it.
KM:	Did the missionaries help get you lawyers or—?
Rhoda Worku:	Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. They were very close family friends, and they knew what we were going through at that time. They had a child who was my age that was born in Ethiopia. And they knew the family background and everything. So they did help me out. Yeah, they did.
KM:	Okay. That's great. Now, once you got asylum, is that when you started to go to school here?
Rhoda Worku:	The twist is, I kind of started, but it was getting very expensive, because I had to pay all of the tuition. So we started to do it after that, to get through that. And then I moved here.
KM:	Okay. And then where did you go to school, and what did you major in?
Rhoda Worku:	I started with accounting, because I have a diploma in accounting back home. I love math and I love accounting. I started with that.
KM:	Okay. And what school was it?
Rhoda Worku:	I started first in California, going to school, and when I came here, I went to Northern Virginia [Community College.]
KM:	Okay. I was going to say, I thought you were in school in California. I wanted to make sure I got that too. So then midway through your schooling, you came to Northern Virginia?
Rhoda Worku:	I came to Northern Virginia because my—my husband now. He was my boyfriend back then. So he was here.
KM:	Yeah. And how did you meet him?
Rhoda Worku:	No, he was my boyfriend when I was back home. But he came before me, a little before me.
KM:	Okay. So he came before you. Did he come also on a tourist visa?
Rhoda Worku:	No. In fact, he came with asylum too. Once he was, but he got asylum.
KM:	Okay. So he was able to apply for asylum.
Rhoda Worku:	No, I take it back. No, what he did was, in fact, no, he was working. And then he took—yeah, an asylum.
KM:	Okay. And then did he go to school here?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. He's francophone. He's French. He was in France.
KM:	Oh. That's cool.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah, he's francophone, French-speaking.
KM:	Yeah. That's great. So then you guys came here—.
Rhoda Worku:	We came here, and then first what we—it's funny. We live right here, on Glebe Road. We came to see a friend, and I loved the apartments. So we rented an apartment and started living there, before we got married.

KM:	Okay. Now, was your friend from Ethiopia too?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes. They were here before us.
KM:	Okay. About what year was that?
Rhoda Worku:	That was [19]83, end of '83, yeah, '83.
KM:	Okay. And were there a lot of other Ethiopians around in this area?
Rhoda Worku:	Not as many as now, but there were some Ethiopians around.
KM:	Okay. So that's Alexandria, right? Yeah. Okay, I'm trying to remember where it is in terms of—south of Four Mile Run, right?
Rhoda Worku:	It's right here in—Aspen House. They changed it to Aspen House.
KM:	Oh, I know where it is. Yeah, Aspen House. Okay, yeah.
Rhoda Worku:	That was our first apartment.
KM:	Yeah. How did you like Alexandria when you came here in '83?
Rhoda Worku:	I loved it—I don't know, for some reason. Yeah, I really liked it. So we started living there, and then we moved to Fairfax.
KM:	Okay. And do you still live in Fairfax?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. Still the same house. We live in Fairfax.
11:58 Starting Caboose Cafe	
KM	Yeah. So I want to ask you a little bit more about the business and how you ended up owning Caboose Cafe. When you first came here in 1983, is that when you got married?
Rhoda Worku:	After two years. I'd say '85.
KM:	So this is in 1985. And this is in Maryland, right? Or St. George's?
Rhoda Worku:	I got married in St. George's. It's a Greek Orthodox church. At that time, there was not lots of Ethiopian—I'm not even sure if there was any, but there was one church, I believe—but there wasn't much. So I went to St. George, got married. And then that's a park, I guess.
KM:	Yeah. It's beautiful. It's beautiful. So then you came here in '83. Is that when you started Caboose?
Rhoda Worku:	No, no.
KM:	How did you end up here?
Rhoda Worku:	We started Caboose in 2004. I was going part-time to school. I used to work for Bread and Chocolate sometimes.
KM:	Bread and Chocolate down in Old Town [Alexandria]?
Rhoda Worku:	I worked lots of places. Down in Old Town. There was one in Crystal City. There was a family. I was working the main office. I've been with them for fifteen years.
KM:	Oh, okay. Were you doing accounting for them?

Rhoda Worku:	I did accounting for them, but I did the sales, I did run the—a little bit of everything. I opened the store for them. I used to do accounting, fill in tables—.
KM:	Is that a Greek-owned—?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes, it's owned by a Greek. And a Swiss. And then I met Nora [Partlow] there. Nora used to work.
KM:	Oh, at Bread and Chocolate too.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah.
KM:	Oh, I didn't know.
Rhoda Worku:	Oh, yeah, yeah. Nora. So we've been friends. So when Nora opened St. Elmo's, I used to go and help her, like, let's do this, let's do that. We've been good friends for a long time. It's at least—I would say, I don't know, maybe twenty years, because I've been in this business eleven years. So I knew Nora before that, at least six, seven years.
KM:	And were you doing accounting with her, or were you doing—
Rhoda Worku:	No, after Nora left, I went back to the office to do accounting, a little bit of accounting, and the sales department. But what we were in the store. I think in the King Street—we worked together at King Street, and there was one in Skyline Mall. We used to work together there. And then she was always encouraging me. She was telling me, "Rhoda, you're a hard worker, so I think you're going to be successful. Just open your own business." That's how I started.
KM:	Okay. And so then did Nora tell you about this space, or how did you—.
Rhoda Worku:	Yes. Nora told me about this space. And she connected me with the landlord, Scott Mitchell, and she highly recommended me. So even though it took a few months, maybe about six months, back and forth, back and forth. And then finally, me and—.
KM:	What was in this space before Caboose?
Rhoda Worku:	There was a—it was Annie May. It was a bakery as well. But they were ready to get out, and it was closed for a few months, I'd say maybe six, around there somewhere. Not quite sure.
KM:	And so you chose the name because—.
Rhoda Worku:	Because—the reason we chose the name was because we tried to pick out a few names. It was Del Ray Cafe, Caboose, and I forgot the third one. And we'd been asking people, in fact Lonnie Rich, who is from the neighborhood, is one of the attorneys, and he said, "Why don't you guys call it Caboose?" Because there's a caboose right behind the [Mount Vernon Community] School. So we'd been asking people which one they'd pick, and they picked Caboose. And we're the end of the block.
KM:	Like a caboose.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. I heard this place—like a hundred years ago maybe, there was a train

	station around.
KM	Yeah, there was.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. He was the one who introduced me.
KM:	Yeah. We would have to ask the city archaeologist, but I think she knows exactly where it is.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. I think that was the reason. So I said caboose is the end of the train, for the kitchen. So we decided on that.
16:32 Sons	
KM:	So, some other questions. So you also have two boys.
Rhoda Worku:	I've got two boys.
KM:	So.
Rhoda Worku:	Two boys. I have two boys. Friendly boys.
KM:	What are their names?
Rhoda Worku:	My older son's name is Worku, who is named after my father. And that's Abel.
KM:	Abel, yeah, who I met.
Rhoda Worku:	Worku's twenty-eight, and Abel's twenty-five.
KM:	And they're up in New York right now.
Rhoda Worku:	Abel is in New York, but Worku's here. He's in [Washington] D.C.
KM:	Oh, okay. And what do they do?
Rhoda Worku:	Worku works for Capitol Hill for a foreign affairs desk. I'm proud of him. It is the American dream. They're very good boys. And then my younger son, Abel, he is in New York, working for Grey. It's a communication and advertising company. He got a diploma from [the College of] William & Mary about three years ago, I guess. Yeah, 2012. And that is what he wants to do. He wants to work on himself before he goes to grad school.
17:41 Religion	
KM:	That's great. We talked a little bit about the Presbyterian missionaries that brought you here. I want to talk a little bit about it and talk about where you got married. I want to talk about the Greek—or not Greek, the Ethiopian or Catholic—.
Rhoda Worku:	No, it was a Greek. I got married at the Greek Orthodox church.
KM:	But are you a member of an Ethiopian Orthodox church?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes.
KM:	Did you help establish that church?
Rhoda Worku:	I would say yes, because I started joining that maybe twenty-eight, twenty-nine years ago, before I had my son.

KM:	Okay. And what's the name of the church?
Rhoda Worku:	It's Ethiopian Medhane Alem Orthodox church.
KM:	And it's in—
Rhoda Worku:	It's in Branch Avenue. It's Maryland.
KM:	Oh, it's in Maryland. Oh, okay.
Rhoda Worku:	I think it's the first—the church, Ethiopian, I guess, in—
KM:	In this area?
Rhoda Worku:	In this area.
KM:	So it started twenty years, 1990?
Rhoda Worku:	We were renting.
KM:	You were renting. Okay.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. At that time, they were in Pennsylvania Avenue, because my son got baptized there, I remember.
KM:	Okay. Pennsylvania Avenue in D.C., or in Maryland?
Rhoda Worku:	No, in D.C. And then we bought the land, and then we built the church. So I've been a member since then.
KM:	And do you—I mean, it's far from Fairfax.
Rhoda Worku:	Not much. It's about maybe, I would say fifteen minutes from my house. It's by—Branch Avenue's exit seven. It's not too far. You just take [Interstate] 495.
KM:	Do you go for festivals and holidays?
Rhoda Worku:	I do, yeah. I try to go. Sometimes it takes a long process. Our church starts from like seven to—I'll say twelve o'clock. It's a long—we follow the Greek Orthodox.
KM:	The calendar? Or the holidays?
Rhoda Worku:	All the things that—most of the Russian Orthodox or the Greek Orthodox, it takes a little bit.
KM:	Do you wear the traditional dress?
Rhoda Worku:	Sometimes, yeah. Sometimes.
KM:	Do you want to pull out your scarf so we can show it?
Rhoda Worku:	Oh, okay. Sure. It has been pressed. It depends. Sometimes I wear it, sometime—I mean, you do it different ways, but—some people put it on their hair, like this.
KM:	Yeah, I've seen it that way.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah, and then like—
KM:	And is there any significance to the design, or is it just whatever you like?

Rhoda Worku:	I'm not sure. I think it's whatever you like, the color combinations.
KM:	Okay. Because sometimes I've seen it more narrow and more like a ribbon.
Rhoda Worku:	Oh, yeah.
KM:	This is really pretty.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. This is something, when it comes—the first one, the one we used to do a long time ago—in fact, I like those ones, the traditional ones.
KM:	Oh, so that's a more traditional style?
Rhoda Worku:	I think so, yeah. Like sometimes ago, that we were using—I remember my parents. My mom used to—but now they've been changing them, the styles and everything.
KM:	Yeah. Did you get this one in Ethiopia, or is there somebody who makes them here?
Rhoda Worku:	No. I don't know if anybody makes them around here, but I got it from Ethiopia.
KM:	Okay. You got that one from—?
Rhoda Worku:	I'm sure—in fact, there's one lady. I think she's in Old Town. She does really nice ones. She can design it for you.
KM:	From Ethiopia?
Rhoda Worku:	No, no, she's not. She's from here. But she does a really great job. She's off of King Street.
KM:	Okay. What are your favorite holidays with the church?
Rhoda Worku:	Christmas, I think, is my favorite. And the second one would be the Easter.
KM:	And is there anything specific that's unique about your church or the Ethiopian Church for the holidays?
Rhoda Worku:	Well, of course they have a longer service. Like Easter, you go and spend the night there.
KM:	Oh, you do? So it starts at midnight or—?
Rhoda Worku:	No. It starts around—people start going eight thirty, nine o'clock. It's very crowded. So things started at ten thirty, eleven, and then they finish around two in the morning. So literally, they're all—.
KM:	Do you do like Stations of the Cross, or is it just service?
Rhoda Worku:	No, just a service. Just a service. So it's kind of long ones. I don't usually go. I'm going to be honest. It could be—we celebrate on the seventh, not—yeah, January seventh, am I correct?
KM:	For Christmas.
Rhoda Worku:	Yes, Christmas.
KM:	So it's a different day, because of the calendar.

Rhoda Worku:	Yes.
KM:	And then the same with Easter too, right?
Rhoda Worku:	Easter, we follow the Greek Orthodox. We always have the same—some years the same day, but most of the time a week apart or two weeks.
KM:	Okay.
00:01 Begin Audio 2	
KM:	But Christmas is January seventh, yes?
Rhoda Worku:	Christmas is—yes, January seventh.
KM:	Okay. Is that just only with the Ethiopian calendar?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes. Oh, and then I guess also the Greek Orthodox. They celebrate it on the seventh, I believe.
00:21 Naturalization	
KM:	Okay. I didn't know. I'm just looking at our questions—oh! Did you go through the process of naturalization?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes, I did.
KM:	What was that like?
Rhoda Worku:	Oh, very nice.
KM:	Was it easy?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes. It wasn't very difficult. I got that twenty-something years ago.
KM:	Okay. Did you have to study for the exam?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes, I did study. It wasn't very hard. I studied the exam and then became naturalized.
KM:	Did you go through the naturalization ceremony?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah, of course I did.
KM:	Was it here in Alexandria?
Rhoda Worku:	It was in Fairfax.
KM:	Okay. City of Fairfax?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. I don't even exactly remember where it was, but I remember it was in one hall. As I said, I live in Fairfax. So I believe it was somewhere in Fairfax. I did it probably twenty, twenty-one years ago. I have it here.
KM:	So do you remember the ceremony at all?
Rhoda Worku:	In Alexandria they do really nice ones, but I don't remember. I know I swear. But this, they do it at city hall. Because I always cater for that.
KM:	Oh, you always cater that one?
Rhoda Worku:	Always. Every year.

KM:	Oh, I didn't know that. That's really cool.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. And they always look at the American dream.
KM:	Is it once a year they do it?
Rhoda Worku:	I think it's once a year in September, the second week of September.
KM:	That they do it?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. But I don't remember our—I don't remember. I know it was in a—it was not outside.
KM:	It was in a hall.
Rhoda Worku:	In a hall. There were more people.
KM:	And did your husband get naturalized at the same time? Oh, he did.
Rhoda Worku:	Same time, yeah.
02:14 Menu	
KM:	The last set of questions I have is about Caboose, and in particular about your menu. You have both Ethiopian food and what I would call American food. Why did you decide to offer both?
Rhoda Worku:	Well, I wasn't intending to do the Ethiopian food at all, but people were coming as soon as we opened. They were teasing me. They said, "When are you going to feed them some injera?" I said, "Injera?" Everybody kept saying, "Yeah, we've got to eat injera. We've got to eat injera." That was soon as—after the year we opened. I said, okay. One day I took people's names and sent them an email. "I'm going to have injera."
KM:	Now, what is injera?
Rhoda Worku:	Injera is a spongy bread.
KM:	Okay. And that's the—what's at the bottom—?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. Spongy—yeah. It looks like a pancake. So I did that. It turned out very well. So I started with the vegan, only the vegetarian, because the people from yoga keep asking me to do vegetarian.
KM:	Oh, the yoga place down the street here, right here.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. And then I started very small, limited.
KM:	So what vegetarian dishes did you start with?
Rhoda Worku:	Like red lentils, the kik alitcha which is not too spicy, the cabbage—because there's lots of kids. And then the harvest veggies, and gomen, which is collard greens.
KM:	Oh, collad—okay.
Rhoda Worku:	Gomen is collard greens.
KM:	I'm just trying to remember if I've eaten all these things. But I have.
Rhoda Worku:	It's a nice platter. I started with that one. It's the Caboose vegan sampler. So

	I started with that.
KM:	Okay. And then you have expanded.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah, expanded. And it's amazing—like ninety-five of dinnertime is the Ethiopian food.
KM:	And it's mostly non-Ethiopians.
Rhoda Worku:	Non-Ethiopians. I usually depend on the neighborhood. So I don't think any of the community knows about this Caboose.
KM:	Oh, yeah. Oh, so most of the Ethiopian community—except for maybe some friends?
Rhoda Worku:	Just friends, family, yeah. I never advertise or target some Ethiopians. I didn't do that.
KM:	Okay. Are you in the Ethiopian phonebook?
Rhoda Worku:	No, I'm not.
KM:	Is it Mama Tutu?
Rhoda Worku:	No, I'm not. I'm not.
KM:	Okay. I was just curious.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. Because it was just, as I said, one hundred percent of my clients are from the neighborhood, and they're not much here. And I guess that's why. And my menu's also a little limited, limited ones. I don't have any kitfo, which—.
KM:	What is kitfo?
Rhoda Worku:	Kitfo is the raw meat, the ground beef—.
KM:	Oh, yeah. Okay.
Rhoda Worku:	And the other ones. It's just limited.
KM:	Okay. Do you feel—I mean, I know you in part because you did a program with Girl Scouts. Do you find that oftentimes you become a community representative for the Ethiopian community here in Del Ray [neighborhood of Alexandria]?
Rhoda Worku:	I don't think so. I don't know. I don't think so. I don't know. I'm proud of being an Ethiopian, but as I said—.
05:38 Back to Ethiopia and Mr. Jack	
	Do you ever go back to Ethiopian?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes, I do.
KM:	I want to make sure we talk about this.
Rhoda Worku:	Sure.
KM:	So how often have you been back to Ethiopia?
Rhoda Worku:	I try to do every two years, if I can. But this time, it took me about three

	years. This was 2011. As you know, I was there this last February. That bad storm. I was back home for six weeks.
KM:	Yeah. You missed all the snow.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. But I'd like to tell you my experience in the snow too. I forgot to tell you. When I came first to this country, I'd never seen snow in my life.
KM:	Oh, okay. Go ahead.
Rhoda Worku:	And London's foggy, rainy. So my first arrival was in Boston.
KM:	Oh, okay. I was going to say, in California—.
Rhoda Worku:	In [19]82, in February. I came in January.
KM:	It's cold.
Rhoda Worku:	It's really, really cold.
KM:	Yeah. And it's bone-chilling cold. I'm from that part of the country, so I know.
Rhoda Worku:	And I remember, as I said, I was going to a private school, so we used to get catalogs to go to universities. When I saw the snow, I thought people would go to see snow over here. I never expected—I was really surprised.
KM:	How cold it was?
Rhoda Worku:	How cold it was, and when we landed, when I saw the snow—oh my God. And then it was sunny, and it doesn't feel like it's going to be cold. And it was freezing.
KM:	Yeah, freezing cold. Did you play in the snow?
Rhoda Worku:	No, no. I was in London, so I wasn't sure. I never know. So it was really, really cold.
KM:	Yeah. In Boston, you didn't play in the snow?
Rhoda Worku:	Oh my gosh. No. I just stopped over there in Boston, and then, as I said, I went straight to California to Mr. Jack. His name was Jack Smith.
KM:	Jack Smith. And he was a Presbyterian mission—?
Rhoda Worku:	Yes. And he did a lot. He was a missionary for some time in Ethiopia. And I believe he had three—I'm sure his son will still be a missionary in Africa right now, I'm pretty sure.
KM:	Yeah. Did you end up bringing other family members over?
Rhoda Worku:	Oh, yeah. All my family.
KM:	Who else did you help bring over?
Rhoda Worku:	My sister—well, I have seven siblings.
KM:	You have seven. Okay.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. So all of them are here.
KM:	So do you have five brothers or—?

Rhoda Worku:	No, I have two brothers and four sisters here, and I have one in Sweden.
KM:	And one in Sweden?
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah.
KM:	Okay. So you were the first to come here.
Rhoda Worku:	I was the first one.
KM:	And then did you sponsor them?
Rhoda Worku:	No, Mr. Jack did. Mr. Jack Smith.
KM:	Oh, okay. And he was able to get them—?
Rhoda Worku:	To get them here. I think two or three of them, if I'm correct—yeah. He did my brother. He did my sister. The other ones, they got a visa. But Mr. Jack was—.
KM:	Okay. So some were able to get visas.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. He sponsored them, and he brought them here.
KM:	Okay. Sponsored like as a refugee?
Rhoda Worku:	No, no, no. He sponsors them, like he got food for them in California.
KM:	Got it. Okay. So for them to go to school.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. Sponsor.
08:49 Favorite and Hardest Parts	
KM:	We got sidetracked. I was going to ask you more about the restaurant. But that's okay. So what's your favorite part of running Caboose Cafe?
Rhoda Worku:	My favorite thing is this neighborhood, the kids. I love them. When they come and they call me Miss Rhoda, and get a hug, and it's eleven in the morning—and I love that part.
KM:	Yeah. Saturday mornings, I've been in here, and it's packed.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah, it is packed.
KM:	And lots of kids.
Rhoda Worku:	I enjoy the kids.
KM:	And what's the hardest part?
Rhoda Worku:	The hardest part to running the restaurant is when something breaks down on you. And usually, any companies like to concentrate more on the bigger franchises. If my fridge gets down, it takes them like—to get in here.
KM:	Yeah. They take a long time.
Rhoda Worku:	A longer time. That's the hardest part. That's the hardest part. But to see the kids growing up.
KM:	That's the good part.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. They keep telling me, "Miss Rhoda, can I come and work for you?"

	Because now I'm sixteen." But I've known them since they were five.
KM:	Right. Well, they're right across the street, right? Going to school.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah, yeah. And they come here after school. They do their homework. Sometimes the parents come and pick them up. They have little gift cards from the Caboose. They buy their muffins.
KM:	Yeah. That's great.
Rhoda Worku:	I think sometimes it takes community.
KM:	Yeah. It's a great area.
Rhoda Worku:	It's a great area.
KM:	I think we're about done. Is there anything else you want to add or anything?
Rhoda Worku:	Not really. Just my food and just appreciating the people in Del Ray.
KM:	Yeah. That's great.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. They're really supportive. I remember when my boys go to school, college, they kept telling me, "We've got tuitions. We have to come and help."
KM:	Yeah. That's great.
Rhoda Worku:	Yeah. It's allowed me to be a great citizen, just makes me proud.
KM:	Yeah. Good. All right. I think we're good.
Rhoda Worku:	Thank you.
11:09 End	