

Dorothy Interview 10/20/06

Side A

INTERVIEWER: So were just going to talk, there's no, I guess there's no wrong question and there's no wrong response. And if you don't get the question completely, because I'm not speaking loud enough, "could you repeat the question please?"

INTERVIEWEE: okay, I can say that. It sounds like I'm on the witness stand =.

INTERVIEWER: No, No (laugh)

INTERVIEWEE: that's what they do to you when you are on the witness stand.

INTERVIEWER: You repeat the question?

INTERVIEWEE: when you want to but yourself time, could you repeat the question please?

INTERVIEWER: When and where were you born?

INTERVIEWEE: I was born in Taylor, Mississippi June 6th 1925.

INTERVIEWER: Taylor, Mississippi beautiful place, I've been there I've traveled there before, very nice place.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: what was it like growing up in Taylor? Where you in the urban, well it's an urban city; an urban community...rural excuse me, rural.

INTERVIEWEE: In the rural area we lived on a farm and I lived with my grandparents. It was a farm and they raised cotton and corn; we had cows, and chickens and hogs and we raised vegetables.

INTERVIEWER: So you was a farm girl to the heart, huh?

INTERVIEWEE: A farm girl to the heart.

INTERVIEWER: So what type of responsibilities and chores did you have on the farm?

INTERVIEWEE: See I lived on the farm unit I was about 12 or 13 years old. My responsibility, we had cows; I don't remember now I think we had four or five cows, in the day time the cows would be out in the pastures feed and the calves would be out in the car lot. Now I would have to go out, see the calves would be out at night and the cow would be so it was my job to go and get the calves so I had to get up in the morning out in the dew and go and get the calves. I didn't do anything with the milking part, I would

just take the milk from the... my grandmother would milk the cows and I would take the milk from the cow lot to the kitchen so that was my job. Another one of my jobs was to get water, we had water from a spring and the spring was about oh, a half a block from the house so I had to take a pail and go and get water to bring to the house. The other job I had was, I had to feed the chicken. I had to care for my own chicken. I had a pet dog or a pet cat, I had a dog and a cat; not necessarily a pet, so I had a lot of responsibility when I was a child.

INTERVIEWER: Now when you're working with, you're living with your grand parents

INTERVIEWEE: I was living with my grandparents yes.

INTERVIEWER: What age did you move in, live with your grandparents?

INTERVIEWEE: I was told that my mother gave me to my grandparents when I was 3 months old. Reason was that I has been born out of wed-lock, then my mother got married to some other man and apparently he didn't want another mans child and so she gave me to my grandparents and I was told that I was three months old at the time that so I lived with my grandparents.

INTERVIEWER: So your grandparents were keeping you busy on the farm and life was good to you on the farm?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: And so they would see you off to school. What school where you going to? What was school like for you?

INTERVIEWEE: The first school I went to was Taylor School. It was a one-room schoolhouse. It was about, well it all depends on the way that you go, now we had a shortcut we called through the woods, like the poem 'Over The River and Through The Woods.' If we walked through the woods to the school it was about half a mile. But if we walked around the road which was a gravel road at that time it would be about a mile. And close to the grandparent would take me, when I first started school was in the first grade, they would take me, My grandmother had a horse and buggy, that was the Cadillac of the day; a horse and buggy. But then sometimes then she showed me how to go, it was a shortcut through the woods and I would go through those woods to school by myself. I think about that, boy, that was kind of something.

INTERVIEWER: that's that kind of nature of the rural life, is it?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, it was woodsy, I mean real woods tall tree all the way. I would go and I would have my lunch, because you took you lunch, and at that time you brought you books because you had you own books, you brought them home in the evening, and I'd have a little satchel, we called them that, that my grandmother made with my books and my lunch on my back through the woods.

INTERVIEWER: Now once you go to the other side of the woods what did you see? The schools itself describe it, the teacher? What was the educational environment like?

INTERVIEWEE: the school was like I said was like one room and at that time when I first started I think it was up until the 9th grade, 1st through 9th grade and, they didn't have kindergarten, I never went to kindergarten, there was no kindergarten at that school, it was jus the 1st through the 9th grade and pass the 9th grade they would go to Oxford, which was the closest town to Taylor you know larger town, they went there from the 9th till the 12th. There weren't very many students in the school. Another thing, even though the school started the first of September, most of the student didn't start until say the first of October because there was cotton to pick and most of them helped their parents pick cotton. I didn't pick cotton so I went to school, you know when it started in September.

INTERVIEWER: Well your grandparents, they gave you a privilege, I guess that kind of a privilege to start ahead of time, well on time.

INTERVIEWEE: I wanted to pick cotton but they wouldn't let me pick cotton.

INTERVIEWER: They wanted you to go to school. How would you describe their parenting style? What were they like being raised by your grandparents? What was it like? What type of rules...?

INTERVIEWEE: Looking back now, I don't think they were very strict because I was the only grandchild. I was the only grandchild up until like 10, almost ten years and I was spoiled, I was spoiled. I call it a spoiled brat, I could look back now say gee. I remember my Aunt would come and she would say, "Oh, you are so spoiled." And they would do things to because I got all the favors and they didn't give favors. But yeah so I was spoiled.

INTERVIEWER: How did they influence you? Your grandmother, as a woman how did she influence you and what type of influences did you grandfather have on you?

INTERVIEWEE: Well grandfather wasn't in the picture too much but my grandmother was always there and one thing that really sticks out in my mid about my grandmother, because she was a really strong religious lady, and I'm thinking she said she only went to the fourth grade; fourth or fifth grade but she always told me, see my nick-name was cat and that what she always called me. "Cat, I want you to get your education, I want you to get your college degree; I want you to get to college and get you a degree." An I think about that, "this lady only in fourth grade, what did she even know about college?" Yet she told me that she wanted me to go to college you know to get an education. My grandfather I think he had about a fifth grade education also but he wasn't, you know he wasn't around like my grandmother. Because when he wasn't in the field he would be out hunting or trapping or something like that and he wasn't around that much. My grandmother had a lot of influence.

INTERVIEWER: Now here you are, clearly you would acquire more education then they would because you would graduate from high school. After your graduation from high school, what would you do at that point? Where would life take you after your high school education is completed?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I told you, I came to Waterloo. That really wasn't my plan my plan was...well, I got a scholarship to Southern University but I wasn't able to go to the University at the time I graduated and the reason: At that time you couldn't wear pant or shorts or, you had to dress up going to college, that was 1945, girls dressed, boys dressed they didn't just wear anything. I didn't have the money to buy the clothes that I needed and my scholarship only covered the tuition part of it. My plan was to work and save some money enough to buy some clothes and things. My mother came down to my graduation because I told her what my plans was and she said, "Well, why don't you go to Waterloo where you can get a better job. A job making more money rather and you can save it quicker." Well that sounded good so that's why I came to Waterloo.

INTERVIEWER: And so you passed up...Okay go ahead I'm sorry.

INTERVIEWEE: but (laughing). The thing of it, I didn't get to school right away. I did get a job but then I met a young man and got interested in getting married and ended up getting married and started raising a family. I didn't get to college until oh 1969, the same year my oldest daughter started, we started college at the same time.

INTERVIEWER: So her in 1945 you would get your high school diploma? In 1945?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes,

INTERVIEWER: but then you don't stay in Taylor you move to Waterloo?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: and so you and your mother communication, your grandparents raised you but you and you mom were still in contact?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, when I came to Waterloo I attempted to live with my mother and, because we just that daughter mother relationship wasn't there. It was more like sister, sister an we both tried, it just wasn't there. I still respect her as a mother and she respected me as a daughter. That daughter mother relationship just wasn't there.

INTERVIEWER: Now you here in Waterloo, what are you doing in the way of keeping you busy? Are you pursuing a career? The college didn't work out at the University, what school was you looking at where you got the scholarship?

INTERVIEWEE: Where I got the scholarship? Southern University.

INTERVIEWER: Southern University.

INTERVIEWEE: It's in Louisiana

INTERVIEWER: Louisiana, excuse me, sorry. So what are you doing in Waterloo in 1945? Where is your career taking you, what are you doing?

INTERVIEWEE: You said 1945?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

INTERVIEWEE: When I got to, first I got a job.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about the first one.

INTERVIEWEE: The first job I got was a domestic job. I don't know what they call that now. A domestic job, which is like cleaning house you know cleaning and cooking, washing for people. My job was just cleaning. Cleaning house.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get involved in that and how long did you do it?

INTERVIEWEE: well I got involved with it, I had a friend that lived here; I knew her in the south, and when I got here I met her and told her I was looking for a job. She told me about the job, she was doing some work at the same place, she was doing some laundry and she said these people needed someone to clean the house and she would find out if I could do it and she did and that how I got that job. I only worked there till about 8 or 9 months and I got a better job, I call it a better job at Allen Hospital. From then I got better jobs.

INTERVIEWER: and so your at Allen Hospital

INTERVIEWEE: Allen Hospital

INTERVIEWER: Okay,

INTERVIEWEE: that was by 1946

INTERVIEWER: and so, it was common that many African-Americans, during this time, were replaced to service sector.

INTERVIEWEE: Absolutely, the job I had actually was in the diet kitchen of Allen. At that time people were on those special diets, they fixed those special meal in the kitchen which was on the first floor and at that time they had, they didn't call them elevators they called them dummies; they sent it up and came up through the like the same area the elevator came up and they'd sent it up to a certain floor. Then I would take that food off

and put it in containers and it would be delivered up to people. These were people on special diets you know people with diabetes or whatever.

INTERVIEWER: Okay you were cooking and you were preparing the food.

INTERVIEWEE: I wasn't preparing the food. Okay for instance like; say a person was suppose to have, because they always measured the food you know like a half a cup or a half a teaspoon full, that's what I would do. They would send up what I call the recipe, this person had a half a cup of this, teaspoon of that, two teaspoons of that, so I had to measure up and put it on the tray and someone would come and deliver it to the patients

INTERVIEWER: So how long would you work at Allen?

INTERVIEWEE: I think I worked there for two years, about a year and a half two years. I actually worked there until I married.

INTERVIEWER: then at that point in time what would you do? Now you have a family, your raising you family right in addition and you working? Right? What are you doing after Allen because were still in the 50's, right?

INTERVIEWEE: Now? Oh, then.

INTERVIEWER: At this point and time.

INTERVIEWEE: oh that was, let's see I got married in '47 and first my first child was born in 1951 or 1950 rather. So I was home raising children then that was my full time job.

INTERVIEWER: okay(laughing). So now here you are a family woman, raising your family and working, at what point in time would you decide to take your career in a different direction where you would pursue to be a juvenile court officer? What would lead up to that? Why a juvenile court officer what would you pursue that type of career?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, the first job I had, well not the first job I had, the first job after the children was old enough to go, the last child, was old enough to school all day to go to first grade that when I started to get a job. The first job I had was in a daycare center. I was an assistant teacher and I worked there about a year and I decide didn't work effectively, I didn't think I worked effectively with young children. I worked there about a year and then head start came to Waterloo, this was when they first started to organize heads start, his was 1965,6, uh 7. So I went, I applied for a job at head start, I actually it was for the same job almost like and assistant teacher because it was like a step ahead, a step up, making more money. Then when I was called for an interview I was asked to take a different job, they we were looking I guess in my experience; this that another. I asked them what the job was and they said it didn't have a name of it but they could tell me what they wanted me to do. It was more or less being a liaison between the head start classroom and the office. You know like working between the two. So I started working

for head start and this is when head start was first organizing in Waterloo. I think it was 1967 and I worked there for two years. In the mean time if they still needed an assistant teacher or a teacher in the room I'd go and do that. I just didn't get the feeling that I worked effectively with young children. One day I was talking on the phone with a friend of mine who had worked at juvenile court, teenagers and she was complaining, well not complaining, she was just saying, "I don't like this job, I feel so sorry for these young people, I go home I cry and my kids tell me I don't need a job if I gotta come home and cry." And I said, "Well gee, I don't to work with these younger children they crying and want you to take them up in your lap and hug them and it's to many to do that." Anyway we were exchanging and she said, "I'm going to quit my job, you might want to apply for it." It was sort of like a joke. I said, "are you serious?" and she said yeah. She did call me when she quit. I went down and applied for the job, I got called in for an interview and I got hired.

INTERVIEWER: And this position was what?

INTERVIEWEE: It was juvenile, well at the time I didn't have my degree, I still had my high school so I was hired as a juvenile court officer aid, and that was 1969 uh August or July of 1969.

INTERVIEWER: When did you realize, 'this is not for me, this is not good?'

INTERVIEWEE: the younger children?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, this is not it.

INTERVIEWEE: I just did not feel that I worked effectively although my supervisor told me that yeah I did a good job but I didn't feel I did. I got the job at Juvenile Court.

INTERVIEWER: Now you would become the first African American woman to be a Juvenile Courts officer.

INTERVIEWEE: That's what I'm told. In the state of Iowa

INTERVIEWER: Yeah in the state of Iowa. Okay so this is good, this is really good.

INTERVIEWEE: Now they had a juvenile court officer aid and that was two, well there was one before me and then there was another African-American that worked the same time I did but she didn't have her degree.

INTERVIEWER: She was an aid? Okay

INTERVIEWEE: Right. So the same year I started juvenile court I started a UNI working on my degree.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you fell in love with it. You knew this was for you.

INTERVIEWEE: absolutely. I was hired one day and the next day, one of the officers asked me to go to Madison, Wisconsin to pick-up a run away. I thought that was great. That was reall... that was just what I wanted to do. I knew I would like the job so for 25 years I stayed on that job.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so here you are as an aid. That's how you started out and then, how long did it take for you to realize, "this is my passion, this is my calling. Working with juveniles of this capacity" what point would you come to realization?

INTERVIEWEE: well. It wasn't too long after I started. I wasn't that I saw some result of it from some child I just felt more comfortable working with teenager. Identify, I felt identified with teenagers much better than I did with younger children or adults because I was often jobs with adult parole, probation but I didn't feel comfortable working with adults. I just felt more comfortable working with juveniles. I don't, actually if you ask me, right away like the first case, like I told you, I went to Madison to pick-up the girl, I felt real comfortable and this was the second day I was there, like I was doing it all the time. So I knew this is what I need to do.

INTERVIEWER: and so now answer this, you've been being the first African- American woman to work a job of this position in the state of Iowa, was there any pressure coming from that, you know doing that being a black woman representing a segment of the population? Did you feel any pressure, did your co-workers challenge you as a matter of being incompetent in any way?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, that was pressure but I guess; and I go back to my grandmother well how I was raised to respect people and her motto was, "do unto others as you would have them do to you" and I think that works and you just, you know there's a lot of things that you have to do to resist the temptation. I'm just saying, this is a job for me and I'm just ready to do it. I was able to do and had what it needed to do it. Why I said that is because doing the 25 years that I was in Juvenile court I was so many come and go and I kept think, this must be for me, because I'm still here you know.

INTERVIEWER: Okay you entered your position as an aid. How long would it take you to get your degree before you would become...?

INTERVIEWEE: actually, all together, ten years.

INTERVIEWER: Okay.

INTERVIEWEE: because I started taking one class, you know one night class at a time because I have four children and the first year I started school my husband and I separated. So I had four kids children; one in college and four in school. And I took one class a semester for...I tried to take two but it was just too much, and it was UNI-cube.

INTERVIEWER: really?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah, I was one of the first students in UNI-cube. I feel real good about that. I tried to classed and it was just too much so I just took one class. There was uh... I'd say I went through a ten-year period. I dropped out because I had a grant, when I started going I had a law enforcement grant and they withdrew the grant from UNI so I didn't have any money to go to school so I was out like two years before I was able to go back I finish. I sit and figure the time. If I would have gone full time, as a full time student semester it would have taken we four and a half years.

INTERVIEWER: So you had a lot of support coming form your peers and you profession, they supported you?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, one person who was very helpful and encouraged me; B.J. Fergusson. B.J. was one of the coordinators at the head start program and seeing the work I was doing, I guess the person I was she would say, " Girl, you need to get your degree." Because she said, "you do really good work." And that was the same thing my supervisor, Judy Macore told me. She said, " You need to go and get your degree ." and I said well B.J. I want to do it, I guess I don't trust myself. I had checked at UNI and back then it was a teachers college when I first came to teachers college and I checked out the curriculum and there was classes that High School students had that I'd never heard of and coming from the south is was very different and that kind of, you know I started doubting myself that I wouldn't make it and B.J., bless her heart she encouraged me, " You can make it." You just try, you can make it.

INTERVIEWER: Now what type of, because you've got B.J. Ferguson who's a very prominent individual in the community like yourself. I know Ruth Anderson, Dr. Ruth Anderson played a key role in assisting you.

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah Ruth Anderson, she was one of my instructors and my advisor at UNI. Ruth was another person, she was so happy when I went into social work and she always told me, "girl, you need to be in social work. You'd make a good social worker." And I said, "Okay." And she was one of my instructors at UNI and also one of my advisors. Yeah, Ruth was real helpful and encouraged me to get my degree.

INTERVIEWER: And you would get your degree in what exactly, what would you get your degree in?

INTERVIEWEE: You said when and what?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. When and what would you get you degree in?

INTERVIEWEE: I finished classes , now I have to remember, 1979. At that time UNI didn't have a graduation exercise in December so I finished in `79 but I didn't, what do you say, walk until `80. I got my degree in `80, 1980.

INTERVIEWER: Now would this be important to you becoming a juvenile court officer versus an aid? Would this help move you up?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes, I got the title of Juvenile court officer 1, that's the way I started out. And on the side I really got a nice raise. Even my supervisor of juvenile court encouraged me. In fact he was the one who told me where to go here on the campus to apply for the grant. Because he told me I needed to get a degree because he said, "you need to get a degree because you do the same work as the officers with the degree, I can't pay you that but you do just as good of work as they're doing." So that was another plus for me. He even told me where to go on UNI to apply for the grant that I, so I had help both ways.

INTERVIEWER: And so what were some of your duties. What were you doing as a Juvenile Court Officer? What are some of your duties?

INTERVIEWEE: I, well the first job, the first ten years I was a field officer, it's what they called it at that time. You assign cases to officers to supervise and because whatever it needed for supervision you are to provide it or find it or whatever. The last ten years I worked as an intake officer. An intake does an interview when the child and family comes into the office for the first time you interview. You know you talk to them about the case and then make a decision whether the case is going to court or going to get settled out of court or just what's going to be done. So I had that the last ten years, that's what I did, because I juveniles, I still had cases that I supervised and I still had children in placements and I had to visit you know I had to go and visit I was on the road everyday. Because I had, I always said I got the worst cases, I wouldn't say the worst, I'd say the more active cases.

INTERVIEWER: Did you find yourself, being the first African-American woman to serve in this position in the state of Iowa servicing a lot of the people from the African-American community here in Waterloo? Where you getting those types of cases, where they deliberately handing you those types of cases?

INTERVIEWEE: No, that's no, I didn't just get African-American cases I got both.

INTERVIEWER: Did you?

INTERVIEWEE: that was never a, that never happened. One thing and I did question, I got more male cases than I'd get females because we'd get more referrals, more male referrals too than females but usually I'd get ...so then I asked my supervisor why did I get men and she said, "I guess because you do a good job." But no I didn't, the cases, that didn't happen

INTERVIEWER: so how do you think...what are one or two ways that you think that working with the delinquents or the adolescents how do you think you might turn their life around? What source of inspiration would you give them to help them to see things different or in a better light when working with delinquents?

INTERVIEWEE: I not that sure, you could you say that again, how...?

INTERVIEWER: your working with a delinquent, someone who has just got in trouble with the law, who about 15 a 15 year old male. Lets say African-American male and he has just stolen something. As an African-American woman, did , what would you say to him or feel obligated that you would have to say to him to kind of steer him in a different direction?

INTERVIEWEE: well first of all I guess I have to go and start from the first. I told you when you would have them in you would do and interview and that to find out about this child and the family. What's going on in this family? Are there problems? You know supervision in the home? So you have to asses the situation to see what's needed there because sometimes you could get a kid whose never been in trouble before go in the school get straight A's no problem at home, now what do I do with him. Now you have to look at, if he stole something naturally your gong to stress on don't steal but then here you get a case where he stole something and he's running away from home, skipping school, what have you so then you got to look at things that would help this situation you got a kid here, maybe he needs some counseling, maybe he needs some medicine, so when you asses it you have to see what's needed there and then try to provide that. That's kind of how that, you know, maybe it might turn out to go to court. He may need to be placed outside the home; foster home or group home or if it's something, because at that time we were doing more placing outside, out of the home now they got more programs in the local area to provide for young people, that way they don't need to be placed outside of the home. So thanks to goodness for that. But at the time I was working we didn't have to many programs available for young people so we had to place them... oh I've had children placed in Texas, Indiana or where ever they had a suitable place for that child. So to answer your question I think you have to asses the situation to find out what's needed and then try to provide for that child.

INTERVIEWER: Now looking at the delinquents, looking at the role and what you do, how, did you see... let me say this. In doing what you do and working in the system, the court system as a juvenile court officer did you notice any partial treatment when an African-American student or White student would come in, did, were they placed differently? Did you se a trend or a pattern that was unfair or could be considered racist? As far as the way the cases were handled and other juvenile court officers mad decisions regarding African-American delinquents. Did you see anything like that?

INTERVIEWEE: That was, yeah has happened but not too often and thanks heaven we've always had a chief juvenile court officer, that's the head officer, who is very understanding and I recall one particular case, when the chief juvenile court officer did have aproblem with I guess as such and she was told to get, well at that time, I don't know if you; well no your too young , they had a person, Anna Mae Weems, you know Anna Mae Weems would always have a person, I cant think of his name, come to Waterloo, but he was real good because they have diversity programs now, Eancy Beaver, that was his name, he would come and he would have these work shops and at

that time it was black and white and you'd go and if you went and completed one you'd be like, I'm trying to think of the word...born again (laughing).

INTERVIEWER: All right this is good, this is a good program, or workshop if that's the case.

INTERVIEWEE: This guy was good. I went to one on my own, not that I had done anything to go, but he was good he was real good. And the first time we went to, or completed that program she was a different person, I would say she was born again so yes, it happens.

INTERVIEWER: It happens. Now tell me about your involvement with the National Association for Black Social Workers?

INTERVIEWEE: Okay,

INTERVIEWER: what is their mission and why did you feel it was important for yourself to be involved in that organization?

INTERVIEWEE: Well first of all I was...when I first knew about, excuse me, the National Association for Black Social Workers was by and African America, Vern Johnson, who had a group home in Des Moines and he was telling me that he had gone, in fact he was a presenter on the social worker convention.

INTERVIEWER: Don't mess with that. Keep your hands down. Don't mess with you face when you talking because then we cant cut that out when you go like this, okay start over please I'm sorry.

INTERVIEWEE: First time I was aware of the National Association for the Black Social Workers an person names Vern Johnson who had a group home for boys in Des Moines, in fact he had a work shop and this convention and he was telling me and this was in the '70's, and he told me that if I would go he thought I would really enjoy it. I was all African American, you would get to meet people with Ph.D.'s which you didn't see very many around this area, professional people and the workshops they had you probably would come in contact anywhere else. He made it sound so good, I think this was 1975; it was Baltimore, Maryland. I attended to convention and because they were very young at that time they had just organized around, let's see that was 1975, not too many years before then, fairly new and like he said I was able to go to workshops that I hadn't been involved in before.

INTERVIEWER: How did you benefit form being affiliated with that organization? What tools where you able to walk away from?

INTERVIEWEE: well first of all this had been the first time, because the NAACP; I had been a member of the NAACP which was a little different, this was the first time in my life that I had seen that many professional, African-American professionals at one time

doing something like this. And this was really good for me. I'll give you an example: they had a workshop called, if you were the only African American working in an all white office, or if you were the only Caucasian working in an all African-American office. You know workshops like that. Workshops about placing black children in white foster homes and plus that was one of the reason that they pulled out from the National Association of Social Worker because they disagreed with placing African-American children in white group, or foster homes. And so that was a learning experience for me and plus at the time in order to have a chapter you need twelve, I think twelve or fifteen people that was involved or social workers. WE didn't have any at the time.

INTERVIEWER: So now your talking about a chapter?

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah I'm talking about a chapter.

INTERVIEWER: Now what was your role, you started a Waterloo chapter is that correct?

INTERVIEWEE: That was later on, when I started attending the association convention that was in the 70's. The spoke t me about a chapter at that time I think we only had African American in social work.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so this is the black association that's talking to you about this?

INTERVIEWEE: right.

INTERVIEWER: Okay so there's the association for social workers and then there's the national association fro black social workers.

INTERVIEWEE: National Association for social work

SIDE B

INTERVIEWEE: As a member I joined the national. And I attended the conventions every year until about '85. And they began to change, because some of the things they started out being real strict here and there, they kind of loosened up. And they change quite a few things. You did need, in order to have a chapter, you didn't need social workers per se, you could have anyone working in the human service area, social service area, you know, teachers and like that. SO that's how we were able to start a chapter here in Waterloo. Cause we had people working in school, public school. We did have a couple social workers in Juvenile court. So we had people from different agencies.

INTERVIEWER: So you started that chapter here in Waterloo?

INTERVIEWEE: 1987

INTERVIEWER: 1987? Are you still involved with that chapter?

INTERVIEWEE: No

INTERVIEWER: Okay, alright. This is good, this is really good. So the chapters still active here?

INTERVIEWEE: No, and reason there was so many services, it just kind of overlapped anyway. Another thing, which they didn't hold against us, the fact that we placed black kids in white foster homes. And I made it real clear, actually when I got the chapter, that we did that and we didn't have no choice.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so this is one of the problems you were addressing with the chapter? You were using that as a resource to address some of the issues?

INTERVIEWEE: No one of the chapters, one of their, was not placing African American children in white foster homes. They was against that. But when I first joined and met with the, we were all having a meeting the, at the time the president of the chapters, I let them know that we had no choice in Waterloo, Black Hawk County. Because we didn't have enough African American foster homes to place the black children at the time. I don't know how it is now. But then we didn't. So we didn't have any choice. Plus the fact that I wasn't all together against it anyway. I think, it's some good parents, some good African American parents, some not so good, the same with Caucasion or any other race. You know, so if a child is in a good home, it doesn't matter what race it is. But as I say, by then some of the things that they had been real concerned about, they had kind of loosened up a little. So they said 'okay if that's what's going on in your place, you know we go along with it 'so.

But no one reason our chapter went down, like I say, there was so many overlap in services. To actually, I'm not saying it wasn't need, but...and then you know you have to have so many to keep up a chapter and we weren't able to do that. Keep enough people, you know to have a chapter.

INTERVIEWER: It had to be a challenge. I can see why with the numbers and stuff. So now you know your busy in your profession, your juvenile court officer, you belong to a number of national organizations or local organizations, another interesting organization, a very important organization I know that you belong to was the NAACP here in Waterloo

INTERVIEWEE: I still belong to that, I'm a member. I'm not active, but I'm a member.

INTERVIEWER: How were you using the NAACP to help them further...let me say this, in dealing with some of the issues you were dealing with in your profession were you able to use the NAACP, the national association for advancement of colored people, to advance some of your goals?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, but believe it or not, I was the youth director. I was with the teenagers again. (laugh) I was a youth director with the NAACP for several years. I'm

trying to remember the year...we did quite a few things. We went to conference and programs, but I was the youth advisor, yeah, for the youth. I didn't do too much with the chapter at the time. When I was active I worked with the youth. Some years ago they had a youth chapter and it was very active, very good thing.

INTERVIEWER: What were some of the things you were doing with the NAACP that were important to the community? What were you involved with, some projects or some issues that the NAACP was dealing with? And that you were able to participate in and help out with?

INTERVIEWEE: You mean the adult chapter?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, was there anything?

INTERVIEWEE: It's been so long since I've been active, well some of the...I'm not sure if that was the NAACP, the walks, when they use to walk, the peace walk, the rallies and things like that. Use to have and participate you know and things like that. Cause otherwise when I was active most of the time I spent was with the youth.

INTERVIEWER: Now also, I know you were working with the Jesse Cosby center. What was your role with that center? And

INTERVIEWEE: I'm still there. I was, I am one of the directors of the Jesse Cosby choir. And cause at the time now, I drive, they deliver meals on wheels, and I'm one of the drivers to deliver the meal and direct the choir. Fact I just check this morning, the schedule, we're going to be singing at the nursing homes next month. So that's my involvement at the Cosby center.

INTERVIEWER: Now how long have you been a director of the choir there?

INTERVIEWEE: I retired in 1994. So since 1994. That last year we haven't been as active as we had been in the first 7 or 8 years, because we have the same members and we all are getting older, and older, and older. So actually, the name was changed because at first it was the Jess Cosby senior citizen choir. And cause we had to get some members involved that weren't senior citizens we had to change the name to Jess Cosby Community Choir, so we would embarrass the younger people. But we are not as active now as we have been, we took engagements and went out of town to sing and had concerts and things like that, but we're getting older now and so we're not as active as we once been.

INTERVIEWER: And so now having reached retirement age in 1994 and Jesse Cosby center and your involvement with that organization, it's pretty much a volunteer for the most part

INTERVIEWEE: I am

INTERVIEWER: and giving back to the community. What are some of the other things that you were doing in the way of volunteer work within the community?

INTERVIEWEE: I'm a volunteer for the Waterloo Convention Business Bureau, and my duty is to, they have an information booth at the airport and I work out there no Monday's and my responsibilities there, we give out information, people want to call a cab or find out where something is, we have brochures for about everything there is in town. Brochures, maps, and I love that job because you get to meet so many different people. I love people, just love to meet people, I like to talk. So I do that every Monday and course with Jesse Cosby center, and I have school. I haven't been as active in school this year as I usually be because of some help problems. But I have, I started with a class in the first grade. They are in 7 or 8 grade now and I tried to follow most of them since then. Up until this year. I was usually involved in a couple schools, a volunteer.

INTERVIEWER: Now also, I know that with your volunteer work that has been recognized cause it's extensive and you've been doing a lot. In you retirement you haven't been idle at all.

INTERVIEWEE: Actually I have gotten the governor award for volunteering, I got the mayor's award, the Cedar Valley award for volunteering, so yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me a little about that

INTERVIEWEE: Another volunteer the waterloo community playhouse.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you volunteered there.

INTERVIEWEE: And once in a while I get up the nerve to be in a play. At the waterloo community playhouse, one of my responsibilities is on the postal committee. When there are shows and that's black hawk children's theater and waterloo community playhouse, they both have shows. I take posters and place them in certain places in the metropolitan area. Another job, Vice President of internal arrangements, of course my responsibilities there is to , when they have a show on Friday night is the opening night, we have like after the show on Friday night and opening night we have audiouvrs there. The shows at the waterloo community, arts center. After the show, then you can meet the actors and people in the show and we serve aurdiouves, so I'm responsible for that. And then the house manger serve during the show, they kind of help out with different things to do, the ushering and things like that. And like I say, I'll be in a play every now and then.

INTERVIEWER: Well you're a very busy woman, very active. By any means retirement has not slowed you down in any way. You've been recognized for your contributions by the mayor, the govenor, Cedar Valley, etcetera. Tell me about receiving the governors award. What was that like?

INTERVIEWEE: Well that was a result of my involvement with the program, this was from the department of human services to, I'm trying to think of the name of the program

it won't come to my mind, my responsibility was to check or work with foster, children that's placed in foster homes. We would meet with the workers of these children, it more or less was keeping tracking of children in foster placement and reporting back to the court. I served on the hill first again, I think it was the first or second program in Black Hawk County, I worked for that and that's how I got in on the governors volunteer list. Governor Villsak.

INTERVIEWER: Villsak he recognized your, okay.

INTERVIEWEE: and because the mayors award I was recommended by Waterloo community Playhouse for that award and it's kind of like a double award. When you have the mayors volunteer, so many of those volunteers are selected for Cedar Valley volunteer so I was selected from the mayor's group to get the Cedar Valley volunteer award.

INTERVIEWER: So how does that make you feel, being a recipient of that award and several other awards?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I feel good. It makes me feel like I'm worthy of doing something to help somebody and that makes me feel good, so yeah I, and to keep doing something as long as I'm able to and I must be helping somebody.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I've noticed that you are very good with people. People from this community have a tremendous amount of respect for you, your presence is recognized, it was very and I've learned this more so

INTERVIEWEE: It is?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, and I've learned this more so through the birthday party, your 80th birthday party. I thought it was real nice how they put that together for you to recognize a life time of achievement. KWWL also came in a recognized you. Who was the gentleman name who did the 15 minute video? Rick Coleman, is that right?

INTERVIEWEE: Spokes program, yeah my sons Wayne and Dallas had that set up to do that. I kind of liked that myself and I was kind of a surprise too. I never had and idea why he was following me around.

INTERVIEWER: Because you were talking about Rick Coleman, channel 7 locally here

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah taking pictures.

INTERVIEWER: He was following you around with the camera trying to capture some of you day-to-day routines.

INTERVIEWEE: It was just like oh, I happened to be here I'll take your picture and little did I know that's what it was. He showed up at the Cedar River I was fishing, it was like, "Oh, I'm just down here taking picture, I'll take your picture."

INTERVIEWER: See that says a lot, that says a lot. In fact I know there were a number of very important people in the community that attended your party to recognize your lifetime of achievement. They even spoke; they said some very kind words about you. Some of the people; what was your reaction to some of their comments and stuff?

INTERVIEWEE: I was stunned, I really was. Like Judge Clark, he wasn't there but he was on the video. B.J. Ferguson because Steve Smith was my supervisors; chief of juvenile of code officer. He and his wife was there and one of the person from Waterloo community play house was also an instructor a UNI, an instructor there and one of the retired policemen who moved up to Shell-Rock I think he was the mayor there for several years was there and it did, it made me feel real good, very good. I just couldn't believe it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay we got about five minute, we'll wrap this up

INTERVIEWEE: I really have to go to the bathroom.

INTERVIEWER: Were going to wrap this up as soon as they come back for three minutes because the birthday party is the last thing I want to talk about. Who else was there? I'm trying to think and remember, you mentioned the important people, I think that were there, in the community leaders I'm trying to say because they all were important family and friends they all were important, I guess right were community leaders?

INTERVIEWEE: The ones that couldn't be there I said was on video you know, B.J. Ferguson.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

INTERVIEWEE: And because I said Judge Clarke couldn't be there.

INTERVIEWER: Hold on can you be quiet for one second.

INTERVIEWER: There was a lot of, there clearly was a lot of love that was expressed by you know everyone in attendance. The numbers was large there were a lot of important people who wanted to pay tribute to you and every thing you've ever done for the community, and it was interesting to hear some of the stories that some of the people were saying about you, about how you influenced them, about how you affected there lives. Very important things. To sum it all up, that was a great way to celebrate and 80th birthday party because you've got another 30 years still yet to live, to go.

INTERVIEWEE: Thank you.

INTERVIEWER: To sum it up, what piece of advice would you give to a student who is looking at pursuing a career in social service or being a juvenile courts officer?

INTERVIEWEE: Well first of all you need to work hard to get your degree in social work, keep an open mind. I rely on prayer; prayer is one of my main tokens. And just always hope for the best and keep a clear mind. It's hard to do but it can be done, and the old motto 'do unto others as you'd have them do to you.' It's hard to do but it can be done, okay?

INTERVIEWER: (Laughing) I like that.

INTERVIEWEE: that's what I try to do, you know I don't always do it I'm not perfect I do it most of the time and I think that's what has gotten me through. The man above has given me this life to say here and do that.

INTERVIEWER: All right well thank you very much for sharing your story with me I appreciate it, I appreciate you making the time to come down.

INTERVIEWEE: Thank you David

INTERVIEWER: It's been very interesting; very exciting.

INTERVIEWEE: thank you I enjoyed it very much, god bless you.

INTERVIEWER: again thank you