

Louise Walter
(Side A)

INTERVIEWER: 28th of February 2004. I'm Jennet Parish and I'll be interviewing Louise today. Hello Louise.

INTERVIEWEE: Hi how are you?

INTERVIEWER: I'm fine and you?

INTERVIEWEE: Fine.

INTERVIEWER: I think we would like to start our interview going back as far as you can remember about you parents we don't, since so many people have passed on that originated else were maybe you could tell us something about their early life, when they were raised.

INTERVIEWEE: My father was raised in Water... Walnut Grove, I'm sorry, Walnut Grove, Mississippi and my mother was raised in Oklahoma someplace, I cant remember but they met and I was born, they met and I was born in Water Valley, Mississippi they migrated there and he worked for the Eleanor Central shop his whole life and when that job ran out he came to Waterloo. The Eleanor Central Shop was thriving at the time in Waterloo. He and some others came her for a better life.

INTERVIEWER: Was he transferred here?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Okay and was that during the famous 1912 strike?

INTERVIEWEE: I believe so.

INTERVIEWER: Okay

INTERVIEWEE: but we came in 1917 so it was extended evidently, I'm not sure but that's when we came to Waterloo. He came earlier and shortly thereafter my mother and I came. I was three so I don't remember it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you know if the railroad company gave them passes to get here?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. Yes. We traveled different places

INTERVIEWER: Where did he live when he first got here?

INTERVIEWEE: We live on Douglas and Beech, which is now the Goodson home. That's where we lived across from Lawndale playground.

INTERVIEWER: when he came up here alone...

INTERVIEWEE: he came first, I don't know here he live then I don't remember hearing that but shortly after that they bought a home at 1017 Mobile that's where I was raised, at 1017 Mobile and I went to Gram school until I went to Jr. East High. Some people may not remember but East Jr. High was where now is the City Hall. That was East, that was Jr. East High.

INTERVIEWER: I didn't realize that.

INTERVIEWEE: I know it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you...

INTERVIEWEE: I've watched Waterloo grow.

INTERVIEWER I: Do you still have family in the South?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I doubt it, there might be some left but I haven't been there for years. We used to go back and forth, but the older ones have gone.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember how you father traveled and your family later, traveled to Waterloo?

INTERVIEWEE: By train.

INTERVIEWER: Was it by train?

INTERVIEWEE: My father never bought a car. That wasn't one of his things.

INTERVIEWER: So he lived near the railroad and worked on the railroad?

INTERVIEWEE: We lived on Mobile, that's all I can remember from the time I was three or four.

INTERVIEWER: Can you remember him telling you about his job and the work that he did?

INTERVIEWEE: No, not really... not too... not really.

INTERVIEWER: Did you family ever make comparison with living in the North as to life in the South?

INTERVIEWEE: At that time there wasn't too much difference, at that time. But it got better. We used to go back and forth to visit those that were still there and really it wasn't

much difference. I enjoyed going and visiting the cousins and uncles that were still there, it was fun and I didn't see a lot of the worse things. We just enjoyed life.

INTERVIEWER: So basically they came her for a better life but really didn't find that, can you talk a little bit about what they did find? Or maybe what was some of the disappointments that they didn't find?

INTERVIEWEE: Well, so many things have left me but we ran into, there has always been prejudice, and second... we were second-class citizens that was our lot. But they became better and we just learned to live with what we couldn't change and that's just been our lot.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us some of the things that would happen to you, you know as a result of that status?

INTERVIEWEE: Not being able to eat at some places that we would have liked to. You know so many things have just wiped out of my mind. So many things I cant remember.

INTERVIEWER: Have things improved over the years, do you think?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, it's improved, not enough but some.

INTERVIEWER: Did you notice differences, social or economic differences between the African- Americans who came from Mississippi and those who moved her from Buckston or Haydock or Des Moines?

INTERVIEWEE: Some of them had a different conception of their importance. There were those who thought they were better, you know there still some in Waterloo who still have the opinion that because they didn't come from Mississippi they were a little different.

INTERVIEWER: So there's a higher archy that's developed.

INTERVIEWEE: You know it's to bad that our people don't recognize the fact that we were all slaves. Descendants of slaves and we all came from where our slave owners turned us lose. You know it was just that simple. They were dropped from different places, that's where they came from to Waterloo. Isn't that right Ruth?

INTERVIEWER: Maybe that's a human thing to do.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes it is

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think people maybe have done that?

INTERVIEWEE: They don't know any better. It's just that simple. It's to bad.

INTERVIEWER: Back to your family. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

INTERVIEWEE: No.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, you were an only child?

INTERVIEWEE: I'm an only child, my son is an only child, and his son is. That was our lot.

INTERVIEWER: That was a time when people had really big families.

INTERVIEWEE: I know.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us your favorite stories about your childhood?

INTERVIEWEE: I had one favorite teacher, one lady, Mrs. Bocard. I had said that over and over, because she treated us like her children. She called me one of hers and she called Cliff her grandchild. All the teachers were white but she was just a special person.

INTERVIEWER: What age were you? What grade were you in at that point?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh, maybe 3rd. 3rd or 4th. I was still at Grant.

INTERVIEWER: and you remember her still?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes I remember her still. In fact her name is up on the wall at Cunningham because I turned her name in for that reason and it's there.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think she did that made her stand out so much?

INTERVIEWEE: She was just a kind person. She didn't show any prejudice and I just loved her.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember some of the teachers that weren't so good? Not their names necessarily but just some of the things they did?

INTERVIEWEE: No I can't even remember their names.

INTERVIEWER: That's okay.

INTERVIEWEE: I can't. I tuned them out.

INTERVIEWER: I'm thinking more the difference in treatment.

INTERVIEWEE: Oh no. No. They weren't, there was really no bad treatment, no nothing like that. But she was just a special kind of person. She acted more like we were maybe

her children, instead of, and so often in a class I was the only, sometimes I was the only black person. We were colored then you know. I remember so many things.

INTERVIEWER: Tell us some of those things. It's important for us to know.

INTERVIEWEE: I remember two or three young ladies that used to walk with; we walked together to Jr. High down on 5th. We had to walk down by, to get to school and it was cold and we walked everywhere, it was just that way. And when I went to East High, it wasn't quite as far because. But I really don't regret some of the things that I experience. They were good learning experiences.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think they taught you?

INTERVIEWEE: They taught me that, I learned the hard way that I was as good as anybody. My mother was that kind of person. She was a special lady; she didn't allow me to have an inferiority complex. I was my own person and then right out of high school then I got married, we didn't shack up then we married. I married more than once but we did it right and when Cliff was born we stayed together two or three years and he didn't act right so I quit him and remarried. Some things I don't, you know I'm not proud of some things. But I did maintain my dignity.

INTERVIEWER: And that, your mother helped teach you that?

INTERVIEWEE: My mother yes, and my father. Some things you just don't do and come here. My father was a special person. My mother was more educated than my father because the men worked. She had taught country school in Mississippi before we came, before she came here. That was out when she got here, but my life was good.

INTERVIEWER: What kind of education did she have to be able to teach.?

INTERVIEWEE: It was a high school, grade school because she taught in the country. She was a special person.

INTERVIEWER: Now would that have been mostly black children that she taught?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, because she was in Mississippi. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So the schools were very separate then?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, Oh yes. Very. Everything. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: but when she came here then

INTERVIEWEE: She didn't work my father didn't want her to work. He worked at the shop and he was the breadwinner and that was the way most men were at that time. The wife was home; she was the homemaker.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember your neighborhood at all?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What types of people live there and what it was like?

INTERVIEWEE: Ladies stayed home, had dinner ready when their husbands came home and then we'd have family time. You've heard of Lawndale playground I'm sure, we always went there in the evening. That was a part of our life. You know we could walk out and not even lock the door. Just go, it was a different kind of world but it was good.

INTERVIEWER: Did you know your neighbors well then?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, everybody knew everybody, yes.

INTERVIEWER: What was that like? Would you stop in and eat at your neighbor's house if you were invited?

INTERVIEWEE: Some times, Some times, yes. It was good.

INTERVIEWER: Now what was it like if you stepped outside of your neighborhood?

INTERVIEWEE: We didn't. Not to often. If you happened to have been, you heard Rev. Mills and he laid out our territory, Sunday, you know when he preached that sermon. You knew where to go, where not to go. You didn't even care about venturing out. Not too much

INTERVIEWER: Your needs were basically met in the area

INTERVIEWEE: Yes right there.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have grocery stores.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. Wrath Bryant.

INTERVIEWER: Who owned those, was that African-American?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. Yes. Yes. And there was Joe William at Claimers. We did, we had some smart people who didn't, the only thing they needed was a break; a chance There was a filling station Benjamin filling station, you remember that Ruth? Everything was provided. Our people had incentive and all they needed was the means. When the means came up out they did things.

INTERVIEWER: Was there a lot of time when those opportunities were closed? And I'm not exactly sure what I'm getting at here. But you said, 'if they had the means'

INTERVIEWEE: Some people went broke you know but most of them did okay.

INTERVIEWER: When it was, I don't know if you feel comfortable about this or not but, the home that you had did you rent it or were your parents able to buy it?

INTERVIEWEE: They bought it. They had to pay, you know they paid monthly until it was paid off. I remember that, I remember walking with mama to make the payment. Yes, they were very independent. My mother was a good bookkeeper, she took good care of what he brought home. She was a real special person.

INTERVIEWER: Did you, did they get a loan from a local bank?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't remember that, I don't remember.

INTERVIEWER: I think there was an African-American bank, wasn't there?

INTERVIEWEE: There was, I'm sure yes. But I don't believe it was in operation when they bought. That was way ahead of that was way before they had it.

INTERVIEWER: Well now let's grow you up a little bit here.

INTERVIEWEE: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: When you went to high school, can you tell me where you went to school and stories about that time?

INTERVIEWEE: I went to East Jr. High, where now is the City Hall. There weren't too many good things or bad things, I just got through. We weren't in many of the activities; we were black. So.

INTERVIEWER: Where there some activities that you weren't allowed to be in?

INTERVIEWEE: Mhmm.

INTERVIEWER: Which ones were those?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I don't remember. I guess I tuned it out. We learned so many things like that, didn't we Ruth? Just tune it out.

INTERVIEWER: SO you just went on to them more positive things that you could do and not grieve over the things that you couldn't do.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, that right I was taught that.

INTERVIEWER: Help the attitude. Unfortunate that you had to make those choices though. So you went to East High School?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: and that was at that... then you graduated?

INTERVIEWEE: 1933.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, did you parents stress education?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes, my mother especially. Yes they did they stressed it. And you might be interested to know that after a few years, I don't remember just how; Cliff was 8 or 10 years old, I went to beauty school in Des Moines, Chrisent Beauty School. It was run by a black couple Pauline Ulfrie. Then that was my... I made my living doing hair after that for a long time. I did Ruth's hair.

INTERVIEWER: Did you have your own shop?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: What was it called?

INTERVIEWEE: I didn't call it anything (laugh) it was just in my house. It was in my home. I just did hair in my home.

INTERVIEWER: An your son was born?

INTERVIEWEE: At the old Saint Francis. Huey was born in the... I cant remember, I have to think of it . He was born in 50... I don't mean that. He was born in 1935. I married in '33, 1933; right out of high school and he was born in 1935.

INTERVIEWER: So that was before you went to beauty school?

INTERVIEWEE: Mhmmm. Yeah that was before I went to beauty school.

INTERVIEWER: Did he go with you to Des Moines?

INTERVIEWEE: No. My mother, they were the best parents in the world. They took care of him. Des Moines wasn't that far, on weekends I would come home. I remarried. I had remarried by then. (laugh)

INTERVIEWER: How did you travel back and forth?

INTERVIEWEE: By car.

INTERVIEWER: and that took how long

INTERVIEWEE: Oh, about a couple hours.

INTERVIEWER: Well no I mean, how long were you in school.

INTERVIEWEE: Oh it was nine months. Almost a year, something like that

INTERVIEWER: So then you had an independent income of your own.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, yes. On my own. And I can remember so clearly taking the exam in the State House. That was quite and experience to go through. Those of us who were ready to go, we walked through were they were have their meeting to get up stairs to the place were we took our, we did some hair and part of it. One day we took the writing exam, then next day we did some hair. That was part of our practical exam. That was quite an experience in the State House

INTERVIEWER: An you said it was an African-American teacher?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, he and her. And man and his wife. Pauline Humphrey and Major Humphrey.

INTERVIEWER: Was the school mostly African-American?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, oh yes.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting.

INTERVIEWEE: It was on Center Street in Des Moines.

INTERVIEWER: Well that sounds like quite and interesting job to have.

INTERVIEWEE: It was, I met, you know Ruth and I have been friends all through the years and I have so many, the ones that are left; are living, they remain friends.

INTERVIEWER: When did you stop cutting hair?

INTERVIEWEE: I didn't. We had a different process, it wasn't cutting, not really. I did it until...I cant remember but I quit, I stopped a long time ago. Because it was not good for my health I was tired.

INTERVIEWER: A lot of standing.

INTERVIEWEE: My, Mr. Walker, my last husband I had a sick experience I was sick and I was in the hospital for a while and when I had came home he had moved out all the stuff. He just decided that I wasn't going to do it anymore and he just took everything out

from where it was. Out of the basement, that's where I worked. And he had set it up in a different way that was rude. Yes he didn't want me to do it anymore because it wasn't good for my health. So.

INTERVIEWER: So that stuck?

INTERVIEWEE: It stuck.

INTERVIEWER: Tell me about some of the processes. I know hair treatment has changed through the years. Do you remember some of those different stages?

INTERVIEWEE: It was shampoo and a press and a curl. We called it a press and a curl. It was a different process completely but it was interesting.

INTERVIEWER: How do you do that process?

INTERVIEWEE: Well I can just shampoo it and there was a comb, a hot comb and it was interesting.

INTERVIEWER: Was that to straighten?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, then we'd curl it. I enjoyed it. I made friends and a living.

INTERVIEWER: Were you in the business when the natural due came out.

INTERVIEWEE: I wouldn't have done that. I'm pretty down to Earth. Some things I don't care about.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think...

INTERVIEWEE: I wouldn't have done that.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think of the new braid with the all the beads and the things that take so long to do?

INTERVIEWEE: Wouldn't do that either. (laugh) You know I just like down to Earth things. Like Ruth and I have our hair. We like that just, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What about your church life. Where you a member of a congregation?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh let me tell you I am the, I have the longest membership in Antioch. I have a plaque; it's in the kitchen. You want to get it? It's hanging right over the kitchen door. To your right.

INTERVIEWER: And this is at Antioch Baptist?

INTERVIEWEE: You see it, at the back door

INTERVIEWER: So how long were you a member there?

INTERVIEWEE: We were 92 years; I can't remember it's on there...just bringing it.

INTERVIEWER: the plaque will tell us.

INTERVIEWEE: Mhmmm yes. Thank You. 'Antioch Baptist Church it says certificate of distinction Antioch Baptist Church Senior Citizen Committee ministry recognizes Louise Walker; longest church membership this 6th day of October in' ... I guess it doesn't have the exact date. When they gave it to me they told how long... I forgot. They didn't put all of that on there. They figured out that I had been a member of Antioch longer than any member that was living; you know the older ones have gone.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember when you became a member?

INTERVIEWEE: Not exactly.

INTERVIEWER: Were you a young child?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I was seven or eight years old.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, Okay, interesting. I'm going to let you take that back.

INTERVIEWEE: I'm sorry I thought it was on there.

INTERVIEWER: No that's okay

INTERVIEWEE: They brought me up front and had presented that to me.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember who the minister was early on or some of the ministers?

INTERVIEWEE: Well there was Reverend Davis from Pinknie. I believe Reverend Pinknie was the one I joined church under.

INTERVIEWER: Where you married there as well?

INTERVIEWEE: No, I married in my mother's front yard. We married out in the front yard. I was never married in church

INTERVIEWER: How significant was the church in your daily life?

INTERVIEWEE: Very. It has always been very significant in my life. My mother was a school, you know Sunday school teacher when she was able. Sunday school was a part of my life. It still is a part of my life. That's what I like.

INTERVIEWER: What's atypical Sunday like when you go to church?

INTERVIEWEE: I usually go to Sunday school at 9:30 or a little after. Then sometimes it's too long, my interest span is a little shorter than it used to be but I'd rather be there than any place else. I can't govern what they do and I'm a mother, one of the mothers'. We prepare and take care of the community and that's my life I just love it that's what we do.

INTERVIEWER: That's good. Did your church help new comers adjust, do you think, especially in the early days?

INTERVIEWEE: I didn't participate in that but yes.

INTERVIEWER: What do you, what role do you think the church kind of in a general way plays in the community? Why is it so important?

INTERVIEWEE: Christ gave his life for us. That's why.

INTERVIEWER: Are most of your social or friendship connections through the church? Or do you have other...?

INTERVIEWEE: I have other interests but mostly yes I would think so. Most of my friends belong to the church I belong to. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So through the years what kinds of things did you enjoy doing for entertainment, outside of church or school?

INTERVIEWEE: I used to like to go dancing, parties you know I lived a normal life. I didn't smoke and some things I didn't participate in but I like parties a dances. We used to go to Electric Park on, what was it Ruth. We had a certain day, I couldn't think of the name of it. But yes I always, Uhuh, we used to go to Electric Park.

INTERVIEWER: Now you said there was a special day. Was that just for African-Americans? Or where you going to dances with the rest of the community?

INTERVIEWEE: Once in a while I went to dances I didn't go...not a lot. I never was a special you know dancer.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember any of the dances at that time? Or what about some of the musicians or the bands that came through? Electric Park was quite a...

INTERVIEWEE: There were a few but even the big bands even though they were black bands if they were at the Electric Park they played, they had to play for white dancers first. I can remember going to a dance with someone after the white children had danced. We had to wait.

INTERVIEWER: Now until they were tired and left the floor or until they left the building?

INTERVIEWEE: Well they just had two dances. So many an hour or a couple hours. Oh yes we had been through it.

INTERVIEWER: What other groups did you belong to in the community?

INTERVIEWEE: The Waterloo Women's City Club, have you heard from that?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

INTERVIEWEE: I just retired from that about a few years ago because I just didn't feel like going.

INTERVIEWER: What was the purpose of that club?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh, it's just a Civic club. It participates in so many things. I can't recall all of it now. It was a good club just as I got older I felt less and less like participating that's all.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, where there member of the greater community there in that club you met that was just not African-American so did you meet people from the rest of the community?

INTERVIEWEE: When we did other things. When we mingled it was an African-American club yes.

INTERVIEWER: It was?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes. It was a good one I enjoyed it. I just get tired you know? Kind of outgrew it.

INTERVIEWER: When you were reacting with the rest of the community, how did they treat you through the years as an African-American here in Waterloo? Can you remember some of the positive and the negative?
(Someone sneezes) Bless you.

INTERVIEWEE: You know when I had that cleaner thing on I don't sneeze. It cleans the air. Well you know I've come to the conclusion that there are good people and there are bad people black or white and I argue with my son. He went through a bad time trying to

find work, that's why he's in California. I believe in my heart that there are more good people than bad; black and white otherwise I don't think the world would stand. I believe that. The good people are quiet; it's the nut that you see running around here, not the good people. That's true.

INTERVIEWER: Good people need to make more noise don't they?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes in a way but they have their own way, their own. There's something about the good people.

INTERVIEWER: You've been through a lot of different decades, nine of them. Can you tell me how racism has changed for the better or not changed, things you'd like to see happen that haven't?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know. I would like to see people more open and more accepting of other cultures and other people because no matter what, were here and we have to live together so why not in peace, why not in a good way? I can't fix it but I wish I could.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think...can you imagine some things in your life would have been different without the whole oppression because of color? Things you maybe would have done that you weren't allowed to do?

INTERVIEWEE: I can't think of any right now. I did most of the things that I wanted to do. You know I lived in the Bronx for about a year, I enjoyed that but I was glad to get back home. You know I married and that didn't work. Cliff enjoyed it because it was a different culture and I've had a good life. There's some things I wish I could erase.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember African-Americans running for office in this community?

INTERVIEWEE: I never did get too involved. Not really. I remember them but I can't put my finger on them because I didn't get involved.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. You talked about the businesses that were here and having your own, what do you think happened to them? We seem to not have very many any more.

INTERVIEWEE: It's a fact that the lack of money.

INTERVIEWER: You said you weren't really involved in political advocacy but I wondered if, Do you remember some of the African-American leaders that emerged in the '60's like Anna Mae Weems and Jimmy Porter?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, I've known all of them. I never was around them a lot because I never was as outspoken and their lifestyle was their choice. I wasn't against them; you know it was just different with me.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think they had any impact on the...?

INTERVIEWEE: I think so, I think so; even though they didn't accomplish all the things they had planned to accomplish they opened some eyes. And sometimes I'm sure some of the white people might have realized that it is better just to accept some things than to fight about things you know it's easier because we were right you know, when you've done a lot of work to accomplish some things you entitled to a few you know. Some times we have had a few bed breaks but I think things are better. I hope they are. I've never been in politics or that kind of thing so I never belonged to the NAACP, I should have probably but it's easier. Maybe I'm too complacent. I was okay.

INTERVIEWER: What are some of the...what would you say would be one of your most favorite accomplishments in life?

INTERVIEWEE: my beautiful son. When my parents started getting old they were living; My husband wasn't happy with their surroundings. They lived across the street...if you know where Paine Memorial Church is, there was a little house there it was the cutest house at that time because Poppa liked nice things and he didn't like, my husband didn't like his surroundings and he came home one day and he told me how he felt. He said, "I don't think they should be there." As they got older they were in there seventies and early eighties at that time. We lived on Willow. 733 Willow. That's where my beauty shop was. We sold that and their house and bought this one and moved my parent in with us. That was my greatest accomplishments. I was able to take care of my parents. I think, and that, I felt like that was just the thing to do and I was so glad I did that.

INTERVIEWER: Did they live with you then until they passed away.

INTERVIEWEE: Mhmm, Mhmm, right here.

INTERVIEWER: Now you said that your son moved to Los Angeles because he wasn't able to find the right kind of job here, is that what you meant?

INTERVIEWEE: No. He went through just before the breaks, just before I cant think of the word. What's the word Ruth? Just before things began to break for us. Cliff went into service he came, he was a water purifier in service. He drove a truck. He told me all the things he did in service. He was good enough to do that in Service.

INTERVIEWER: What year was that, do you remember?

INTERVIEWEE: It must have been in the 50's something like that. One of the wars, I can't remember which war. I wish he were here he could tell you, you know. But when he came back home, back here to Waterloo, he was so sure that things were different and he went to the water company because that's what he did in service; they wouldn't even talk to him. He was just, and that broke his heart to think that he has served in the Army

and he came home and he couldn't get a job at what he was trained to do in service. Those things break your heart. So he finally went to California and he was fortunate enough to get a job at General Motors and when I talk about my pension he says, "Your in my union." You know General Motors, Deere is from General Motor but he likes to tease me. But my husband was a Deere's until he died. Cliff is fine now, he went to California and got a job right away out there it was just a different thing. Now he has big house with three apartments he has two apartments rented out, he lives in one. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: What is his neighborhood like?

INTERVIEWEE: He lives on Southdale Seas. I hadn't been for a while but it was a nice neighborhood.

INTERVIEWER: Is it a multi-ethnic neighborhood?

INTERVIEWEE: I think so. I have a picture of it, some parts of his home. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So things definitely improved for him?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes he's fine. Yes they improved for him. Jimmy Benjamin, so many of his contemporaries those that came in through that bad time are out there and they were fortunate enough to do all right.

INTERVIEWER: Because one of the questions they had her was that people call the 1970's the lost generation and that's when so many young African-American's left Waterloo. I wondered if you remembered that exodus or kind of a major and you've expressed kind of why that happened.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes. Yes. This was a very prejudice little place.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember the bridge-way effort? This was kind of a response to the young people leaving.

INTERVIEWEE: I don't remember that

INTERVIEWER: Have there been some major events since about that time that have affected your life here?

INTERVIEWEE: Is that yours or mine? (laugh) I didn't know if that was yours or mine. I cant think of so many things.

INTERVIEWER: We've asked you a lot of questions.

INTERVIEWEE: Mhmm.

INTERVIEWER: Well I think we've about come to the end do you have some questions Ruth?

Ruth: When you went to East High did they have the swing show there

Ruth: and did you all participate in it? Did you get to get in there?

INTERVIEWEE: No. And something that stands out in my memory, I don't know if it's the swing show or some other play but Olla Belle Reed was in High School at that time and whatever the play was there was a black maid in it and she asked for the part and Mrs.... I can't think of her name. I wish I could think of her name; Nana Check or something. She refused to let Olla Belle have the maids' part but they go her at a class reunion several years later and reminded her of what she had done and they did it on purpose. They shouldn't, you know I wouldn't have done it. You know but younger people; that's what they did.

INTERVIEWER: Did they give the...lets see it was a black part and they gave it to a white.

INTERVIEWEE: black maid part and they gave it to a white girl.

INTERVIEWER: Was she in make-up or did they just take out the...?

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know, I don't know how they did it but they refused to let Olla Belle have the part. Mrs. Lana Check, that name stands out. I don't know her she wasn't there when I was there. At a class reunion Olla Belle reminded her, they had at a banquet, they embarrassed her, they did it on purpose because she refused to let her have the part; a black maid. Those are some of the things we've been through.

(Flip tape: Side B)

INTERVIEWER: Quick question just to file it. What was a swing show?

INTERVIEWEE: It was musical. It was a big musical

(Ruth): It was like a musical. Dancing and so forth and particularly they didn't want the blacks dancing with the whites

INTERVIEWEE: Oh we'd been through it and it's too bad that some of our black, young men especially, when they've heard and read of some of this they are defiant and they do some stupid things because you can't the things that had been done. I think it's foolish to retaliate and you know it's too late. I always think what's done is done and everybody has to pay for their own mistakes.

INTERVIEWER: Where could we go from here? What do you think the community could do to help improve life for African-American's now? What would you like to see happen in this community?

INTERVIEWEE: Make sure it's cleaned up and spend some money you know doing some roadwork. The things that every..., we all like the same things, nice things. I can't think of too much

INTERVIEWER: what would be your vision for your great grand children? What would you like to see happen in their lives?

INTERVIEWEE: to have a good education and business. To want to have more, getting it the right way through education.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else you would like to add that I've left out?

INTERVIEWEE: I cant think of anything no, it was very pleasant.

I2: Ruth had more questions

INTERVIEWER: Did you have more questions

INTERVIEWEE: Yeah Ruth has some. She's so smart. She's always been smart.

Ruth: You talked about having mostly our own things in our own community; the filling station, the cleaners, and the grocery stores. Janet mentioned a little bit about where they all went just like that. The filling stations, the cleaners, and the Benjamin's

INTERVIEWEE: Well they retired they were older. When they retired they, some of them left town and they're all gone now you know.

Ruth: Joe Williams is gone.

INTERVIEWEE: I don't know whether he's dead or not but he left and the Benjamin's they're all dead. Denman Phillips was quite an entrepreneur and I'm proud of Stokes, Mr. Stokes and Ester. You know they had the apartment building over there off Gable.

Ruth: You mentioned Lawndale. Did you go down there to have gatherings and things?

INTERVIEWEE: Mhmm. That was our evening outing and you know we'd walk down there, it wasn't far from Mobile where I lived. Everywhere we'd walk, because most of us people did have cars. My father and mother would come down there and do you know we could walk out of the door and not lock it. Just walk out and when we'd come back we just come on in. It was just , it was fun. There was a stage there and they played ball and they had skits you know little programs. That was our evening outing. Reverend Mills talked about that at this funeral. Yes, Lawndale playground.

INTERVIEWER: What happened to that?

INTERVIEWEE: Well it just died. The Mr. Mills that was in charge that kept it going, he died you know and the younger people didn't keep it up, they just didn't do it.

INTERVIEWER: I wonder if you remember some of these people here, here's the list: Rev. I.W. Bess, I think that was A.M.E. wasn't it?

INTERVIEWEE: I remember that name I didn't know him.

INTERVIEWER: And I believe Rev. Brails was also at that church

INTERVIEWEE: Oh yes, I remember him.

INTERVIEWER: What do you remember about him?

INTERVIEWEE: Well you know, there isn't much to remember I was little when he died but he was instrumental in helping to organize Antioch Baptist Church when it was on Douglas.

INTERVIEWER: I didn't realize that. How about J.D. Hopkins?

INTERVIEWEE: that name registers but I can't place him.

INTERVIEWER: I bet you remember Milton Fields

INTERVIEWEE: oh yes, well he was the lawyer, yes. I remember him very well. In fact he didn't live to far from where I was raised. Not too far.

INTERVIEWER: Since we can't interview them anymore, can you tell us a little bit about him?

INTERVIEWEE: No I don't remember, I don't remember but he was a lawyer; the only one I Waterloo. He lived very well and he was well spoken and we enjoyed being around he and his wife. He was somebody.

INTERVIEWER: Do you remember Mrs. Fields at all.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, oh yes. She was a lovely person and her mother. Mrs... what was her name? I can't think of her mother's name...right now.

INTERVIEWER: And then Doctor and Lily Ferguson.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Was he your physician or not?

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, he delivered Cliff.

Ruth: he delivered your son?

INTERVIEWEE: Mhmm, certainly did. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did you say that you worked at the Jessie Cosby Center?

INTERVIEWEE: Oh no, I was just in and out and volunteer. Vanilla, my best friend, she was in charge and I would do little things and there was always, there was a ceramic class there with Dick Washington, have you ever heard of him ceramic class and just little things. It was fun when Vanilla was a good director.

INTERVIEWER: Got some more questions Ruth?

Ruth: No, I don't

INTERVIEWER: Anything else you'd like to add?

INTERVIEWEE: No I can't think of anything.

INTERVIEWER: Well thank you so very much

INTERVIEWEE: thank you.