

LAVERNE JOSHUA

Interview 229a

August 4, 2011, at the History Center, Diboll, Texas

Patsy Colbert, Interviewer

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Patsy Colbert, Laverne Joshua reminisces about growing up as an African American girl in Diboll and experiencing the racial integration of Diboll Schools. She recalls several racially motivated instances of fighting and name calling at the high school but says everyone settled into the new routine after the first several years. She speaks highly of her mother, crediting her with the motivation to ignore the cruelty, find the good in most people and get her education. She speaks of the positive impact of Mr. Massey, Mr. Ramsey, Mrs. Odessa Wallace, Coach Spencer, Coach Porter, Coach Simmons, Cindy Maddux, and Mary Ingram. She also talks about her brothers Clay and Thomas and their experiences with integrated football (Thomas) and Little League Baseball (Clay). Ms. Joshua also recalls helping raise money for Diboll Day, particularly the year Debra Washington was the first African American Diboll Day Queen after integration.

Patsy Colbert (hereafter PC): Today's date is August 04, 2011 and I'm Patsy Colbert and I'm here at the History Center with Laverne Joshua and we are going to do an oral history interview today pertaining to the integration of the Diboll schools. So, Mrs. Joshua if you will just begin by telling me when and where you were born.

Laverne Joshua (hereafter LJ): Lufkin, Texas.

PC: And when were you born?

LJ: June 13, 1952.

PC: Okay and where did you begin school at?

LJ: Temple High School here in Diboll.

PC: Okay.

LJ: First through the ninth grade I think it was...eighth grade. What was '65?

PC: First through the eighth?

LJ: The first year of integration.

PC: Okay, I was going to ask you what grade were you in when integration took place? Do you remember specifically?

LJ: Had to be, I want to say eighth grade because I remember my ninth grade year already being there so, about seventh or eighth grade.

PC: Okay, so when the integration process took place then you would have been on the junior high?

LJ: Yes.

PC: So, did you stay there at that school then?

LJ: No, I transferred over the first year they started.

PC: So, you came to the other campus.

LJ: Yes, Diboll High School.

PC: Okay, because the first year of full integration...is that your phone?

LJ: Yes. I'm going to cut it off.

PC: Okay, just turn it off that is fine. That is okay. So, the first year of integration they had made the H. G. Temple School they made that the junior high.

LJ: The junior high school.

PC: So that is why I'm asking did you attend there or did you come over to Diboll High School.

LJ: I was at Temple High School first then junior high.

PC: So you did stay there on that same campus, okay.

LJ: Yes, the junior high.

PC: So, actually your first year of integration you didn't have to change locations or anything is what I'm saying.

LJ: No ma'am.

PC: So, you got to stay at the same campus, okay. And what year did you graduate?

LJ: In 1972.

PC: Okay, what was your first knowledge of integration that it was going to take place?

LJ: Well, Mr. Massey was the principal at the time. Willie Massey was the principal and we had went to the gym and had a school meeting and they told us what we had to do. The ones that wanted to transfer over could and the ones that didn't want to could stay at Temple until full integration got into effect.

PC: Okay, so that would have been like in '65, was the first year of Freedom of Choice.

LJ: '65, yes, Freedom of Choice.

PC: So, you think it would have been that first year.

LJ: Yes, '65 or '66 something.

PC: So, he was actually telling you what your options were and that you could go and...

LJ: Yes.

PC: Did...how did people respond to that?

LJ: Well a lot of people really didn't want to because they felt like the white kids wouldn't accept us. But, I was for it, you know my mom always taught us you face things head on and make the best choices you can make and make the best of the situation.

PC: Okay, now is that how you came to know about integration or had you already heard about it before Mr. Massey's assembly?

LJ: We had heard about it, you know, but full knowledge was when Principal Massey had the meeting in the gym with everybody. We had to make a choice.

PC: Okay, and what did your parents tell you about integration? What were their thoughts and any specific instructions that they gave you?

LJ: No, just like you know all people are not cruel and my mom had a lot of white friends and she would say all people are not the same. You got some that are going to be racially, you know, won't accept you, but then you got ones that will, so just make the best of the situation. If you see where you are going to run into a problem with one walk away, don't argue because now is not the time for that. I want you to get an education.

PC: So she really pushed the education.

LJ: She pushed education, yes she did.

PC: That is great. Now you mentioned that your mother had white friends, can you tell me about that? What was your, growing up as a child what was your interaction or seeing your parent's interaction with the white community?

LJ: Well my mom one of her good friends was Linda Mills and one of her sons, my brother and Steve played football together and whenever they would go out of town to games Mrs. Mills and Mr. Mills would come by and pick her up. We stayed on White Oak Street right across from Temple Elementary. They would come by and pick her up and take off and go to the football game.

PC: Okay, now was that the football games after integration you are speaking of? After your brother went over to play?

LJ: Yes, over to Diboll High School.

PC: You are speaking of your brother, Thomas Joshua and Clay Joshua.

LJ: Thomas, yes.

PC: So, what were your personal feelings about integration?

LJ: I really didn't just say...it was hard because I wanted to be accepted and I didn't know how the kids would accept me, but I finally got over there and got a lot of white friends.

PC: Well good.

LJ: And it was okay.

PC: Good, that was my next question. Did you make new friends that you did not have?

LJ: Oh yes.

PC: Anybody particular that made an impression on you in the beginning?

LJ: As far as students?

PC: Yes ma'am.

LJ: Deanna Ramsey and Suzanne Stubblefield, she was just wonderful and still today when we had our reunion a few months ago she was there. Still the same Suzanne!

PC: So, these are white students at Diboll High School campus that year when you first integrated that made you feel comfortable and welcome and a part?

LJ: Yes at Diboll High School, yes ma'am.

PC: What about the student body overall, you know, how was the feeling or the atmosphere?

LJ: Well I tell you, the first year we went over that is when Diboll had the gym right here. We had to come over there and do gym.

PC: You are speaking of the old green gym at the elementary campus which today is the Primary campus, but the gym is no longer there today. Ok, so you're speaking of that gym.

LJ: Yes, true. We would have like our...what would you call it. My mind is going blank on me this morning. We would be in gym and we would have to be practicing volleyball and all this but we had one girl in particular, I'm not going to call her name though, we were practicing volleyball and she got ready to hit the volleyball and she said "eeny meeny miny moe catch a N by its toe" and I just went crazy. My first fight at school and I hate it. I had to pay for it at home afterwards because my mom had taught me better but at that time the tensions was high. These little remarks really made you. It hurt you and it made you angry at the same time.

PC: Right. And so how was that handled by the administration?

LJ: We both had to go to the principal's office and I explained the situation and we both got expelled for three days. Me for fighting and her for saying the little remark she had made.

PC: Did you feel that was fair?

LJ: Yes, I did. I really did.

PC: So, you felt like it was handled properly by the authorities?

LJ: Yes ma'am.

PC: Okay, was that the only incident you had?

LJ: No, I had a couple of more after that but they were settled, about the same way.

PC: Anything you want to share about the other incidents, what they were or not?

LJ: Well how you walked down the hallway, which was crowded, and this one girl, I won't call her name either; she pushed me and called me the "N" word and another fight. I got expelled for three days but I paid for it at home again. Three strikes I was through because I knew the consequences I had to face at home with my mom. At that time my dad was down with cancer and she was having to take care of him and finish raising three kids and it was just tough on her but the third time it was no more.

PC: How did your mother handle the situation? I know as a kid myself if I got in trouble at school I was in trouble at home. (laughter)

LJ: At home hey, you got a good whooping, a good whooping and no football games, no nothing. You had to stay at home. That was the punishment.

PC: So, you hated to face the music at home.

LJ: Yes, I'd rather take a whooping at school than go home and take one.

PC: Right, I understand. (laughter)

LJ: I would ask Mr. Ramsey, I would say, "Give me three licks or whatever; I don't want to go home and have to face my mom." He said, "No, I'm sending you home to Mrs. Joshua." So, the third time was charm.

PC: That was it for you.

LJ: Yes ma'am.

PC: You learned to ignore any other incidents to stay out of trouble.

LJ: She would say, "I'm sending you to school to get an education not to fight and get in trouble."

PC: And you can appreciate that today I'm sure.

LJ: Oh yes, yes.

PC: Now, you mentioned Mr. Ramsey; real quick, any stories you wish to share about Mr. Ramsey?

LJ: I remember one time I had got into a little argument and he brought me into the office and sat me down. He said, "Laverne, you know, I can feel what you are going through right now and it's a lot of pain and a lot of anger that you want to release, but don't do it." He said, "Your education and your name will go farther than you will ever go." He said, "When you are dead and gone your name will be remembered." And that stuck with me. Mr. Ramsey was fair and Bill Greer was fair.

PC: That is great.

LJ: If they had any sentiments or anything I never saw it.

PC: Well that was great words of advice.

LJ: Wisdom!

PC: Yes, he was a wonderful man.

LJ: Yes, he was.

PC: Well that is great. Now you graduated in '72 so the stories you just shared would have been from '68. That was the first year of full integration, so you are talking about '68 to '70 and you graduated in '72. So, those are the years that you are speaking of. Were the incidents you just shared with us were those the first year or...?

LJ: The first year, the very first year. I'll say the first couple of years. It took about two or three years to really get settled, but it got better.

PC: But the three incidents were all in the first year?

LJ: The first year of integration, yes ma'am.

PC: Okay, now is there anything you remember as a good experience coming through the integration process?

LJ: Like the first couple of years the football team how they...Coach Jim Simmons really let the black guys have a chance to play sports.

PC: Right, he was the coach the first year they integrated athletics which was actually '67. They brought the athletics over and then the seniors played in '67. You were still at H. G. Temple School that year?

LJ: No, I was at Diboll High School. I came over the first...

PC: When the seniors came over?

LJ: Yes, when the seniors came over.

PC: Okay, Coach Simmons was actually the athletic director at the time that they first integrated the football team. So, you remember that experience as a good experience.

LJ: Yes, he gave the guys, you know the black guys a chance to show their abilities and their expertise in football and I admired him for that because I can't remember who the white director was at the time, but Coach Jim Simmons was fair. He gave the guys a chance.

PC: Do you think integrating the football and the athletic program first do you think that played a part in the overall process of integration?

LJ: Yes, it did because it put Diboll on the map. Danny Baker was a quarterback at that time. Harold Phipps, Johnny Carl Jones, Otis Scott, Zack Smith, Vertice Hardy and Charles Moses were the first blacks to play football for Diboll High School.

PC: You think putting Diboll on the map just helped the whole atmosphere?

LJ: Yes, and it settled things with the integration too because the kids started mingling together, you know, different activities we had at school. It was good.

PC: Do you think the boys themselves did they set any examples that made the younger students want to come on over and see that it was going to be okay?

LJ: Yes, they did, they did. They really did because they saw that we would be able to play sports. That is a black kid's dream, you know, make it big in sports go on and get an education and make it big in sports. Those six guys made a difference.

PC: Okay. Now, what about the classroom experience? Once you came to Diboll High School, integration and you are in class with white students for the first time, tell me about the classroom experience. Anything you witnessed from your white friends or how your black friends interacted with the white students in the classroom setting?

LJ: The classroom setting it was okay, really it was okay. It was one experience and I won't call this guy's name either, but he made a remark, a very derogatory remark and this friend of mine she say, "Hey we are all here to get an education and I'm not going to let anything you say or do deter me from getting my education." She said, "Now when we are here on this campus we are here for school that is all."

PC: Now how about the teacher in the classroom?

LJ: Well she heard the incident but she let them settle it themselves. It wasn't a fight or anything, no loud remarks or anything but, she just stood back. I won't call her name either but...

PC: Okay.

LJ: ...it was Mrs. Joan Maddux, and she was a great experience for me too. She helped me a lot too.

PC: Was that the Home Ec. teacher?

LJ: Home Ec.; yes.

PC: Now, this question is a follow up to that one but how did the white students react towards you personally?

LJ: Well, I had some that didn't care for me because they knew how far to go and then I had some good white friends.

PC: Now, before integration and we talked about this a little with your mother, but before integration what were your experiences as far as being around the white community?

LJ: Well, back when I was younger over here in this shopping center Jay Boren had a hamburger stand. I think the store was Piggly Wiggly at the time but when we would go to order food they had the colored sign and the white sign. I didn't like it, but it wasn't anything I could do about it but I didn't eat at Mr. Jay Boren's. I said nope I am not eating there, they don't like blacks. I don't know what they are going to do to my food and I didn't order there.

PC: Okay.

LJ: But, Piggly Wiggly was at the time where I think Brookshire's is and Jay Boren had this hamburger stand right in the middle of the square there.

PC: So, did you shop at Piggly Wiggly?

LJ: Oh yes, my mom did. She would give me a shopping list and she would give me the money and we would walk and get groceries and come back home.

PC: Now, what about as a young girl, not during your school days as far as integration years but before integration, during segregation, where did your mother shop at the grocery store?

LJ: At that time we had a black guy, Doris Vinson, had a grocery market over there where the old Family Affair used to be.

PC: Okay.

LJ: It was an old building then and I'm thinking Fred Weeks owned this grocery store and Doris Vinson was his right hand man and that is where my mom did most of her shopping but her big shopping we would come to Piggly Wiggly.

PC: Okay, now Mr. Pavlic had a store over there.

LJ: Yes, that was across from Dixon Furniture right now. We had, mother had a bill with Mr. Pavlic and I just saw Mr. Pavlic a few months ago at our reunion.

PC: Now he had a store over in the...

LJ: Right across the street from where Dixon Furniture used to be.

PC: Right, but in the earlier than that when he first came here he had a store over in the quarters, as we would say, before integration.

LJ: I can't remember.

PC: You don't remember that? I was just wondering if your mom shopped there.

LJ: Probably so but I can't remember that.

PC: Do you remember as a young girl...what year were you born?

LJ: In '52.

PC: No, the commissary was already closed then.

LJ: Gone then yes, I remember mom talking about the commissary.

PC: Any other interaction with white people before integration as a young kid that made an impression on you as a good experience?

LJ: Mr. Pavlic's grocery market and Mr. Dick Albrecht's Pharmacy. Mr. Dick was fair too because my mom had a bill at the pharmacy and a bill at Mr. Pavlic's grocery market.

PC: Okay, okay, all right. Now, did you have any fears as far as the integration process when like Mr. Massey's assembly where he gave the speech...

LJ: That is the word I was looking for.

PC: ...did you have any fears?

LJ: A little because you know some of the kids could be cruel and they would tell you to wait after school you know. I had some fears about that but I didn't just dwell on it. Hey what is going to happen is going to happen.

PC: Just the change, just fear of change. I know I never like change. (laughter)

LJ: It was okay for me.

PC: Now, what was a typical school day like? Was it any different than what you, you know, what were the differences as far as your school day when you came over to Diboll High School rather than being at H. G. Temple School?

LJ: Well it wasn't as many students at H. G. Temple at that time you know ,but when we transferred over to Diboll High School the hallways were crowded because there were more students there. There was a lot of interaction just walking the hallways trying to get to your classroom on time and not being tardy but other than that it was good.

PC: That is good. Were there any differences that you noticed in the facilities and the books and things like that?

LJ: Oh, the books at Temple High School were terrible. We got the throw backs from Diboll High School but when we transferred over all of our books were new. We got ready to put our name you didn't have to write a hundred names before you get to your own, you know, but it was great.

PC: Well good. So, that was mainly the biggest difference you saw that you had new books?

LJ: New books, new books.

PC: Wow that is great. Now, what did you learn from the integration experience that may be long lasting that you have taken with you?

LJ: That all people are not cruel.

PC: That is great!

LJ: It was hard, it was a hard experience but I overcame it with my mom, a praying mother that helped us out a lot.

PC: That is great. Is there anything, you know, when you look back what is the one thing that stands out in your mind as far as getting to what you just said, you know, people can be cruel and not all people are cruel?

LJ: No they are not.

PC: What is that when you look back on the whole situation that you think of as being that one thing that makes you draw to that conclusion?

LJ: That I was able to get an education. My mom demanded it. I had two babies. I stayed out of school two years but I came back and took part of my studies through...

PC: Like homebound.

LJ: ...homebound and did a half a year at school and a half a year at home but I got my education and that night I graduated all my family was there.

PC: That is wonderful.

LJ: She demanded you get an education.

PC: So, basically you were in school and you left school...

LJ: To have my two kids.

PC: ...a couple of years and had two children, went through the homebound program and then went back and graduated in '72 from Diboll.

LJ: Yes I did in '72.

PC: That is admirable. Congratulations, that is wonderful.

LJ: My mom demanded it. You didn't get too grown for her to say, "Well hey you are going to school and you are going to get your education." You get that and nobody can take that away from you.

PC: That is right. Now, anything about the homebound program that you want to share with us that helped you to get through that time.

LJ: I had a teacher that came out and like I said I did half my studies at home. A half a year at home and half a year at school and she would bring these test papers out and she said, "Now you go in the room and do your studies." She knew I was going to cheat a little bit but it was okay. I got my education.

PC: Who was that teacher if you don't mind me asking?

LJ: You know I can't remember her name.

PC: Was it Mrs. Ingram, Mary Ingram the counselor?

LJ: I took my in home, Mrs. Ingram helped me during my half a year at school but I had another lady she was from Lufkin that came out to do this homebound study.

PC: Oh okay, well that is admirable, that is wonderful.

LJ: Mrs. Ingram was a great help with me too in getting my education, she really was.

PC: That is great. Now, talk about your affections towards the school in general. Did you like school as a whole?

LJ: I'm not going to lie, I enjoyed just being away from home and interacting with other kids at school, but yes, I really did love it.

PC: Okay, because sometimes that affects how we interact at school with others, you know, if we don't want to be there, we don't like it, you know.

LJ: No, I tried not to take that attitude. If you had known my mom!

PC: She was stern sounds like.

LJ: Yes she was.

PC: Who was your favorite teacher?

LJ: I had so many that really helped me. Mrs. Joan Ingram was one, Mrs. Ingram and Joan [Cindy] Maddux, my Home Ec teacher, but Mrs. Ingram was a great help to me.

PC: Okay, are you referring to Cindy Maddux, is her name Cindy.

LJ: That is who I'm talking about.

PC: Is her name Cindy Maddux? Okay, I want to make sure we get the name correct for the recording.

LJ: Cindy Maddox, she was Home Ec.

PC: Yes, Cindy Maddox was the Home Ec. teacher. She was real sweet.

LJ: I don't know why I want to call her Joan.

PC: There was a Joan that was in the library, but I don't remember her last name.

LJ: I can't either. That is who I'm probably referring too. But, Cindy Maddox, she was a great Home Ec teacher.

PC: Oh excuse me go ahead.

LJ: Mrs. Maddux was a great Home Ec. teacher.

PC: Okay. Was there any favorite teacher in your elementary years, you know, when you were at H. G. Temple School?

LJ: Mrs. Louise Massey, she was stern but she was good. All of them really, Mrs. Inez Sibley, Mrs. Odessa Wallace and Mrs. Etta Wallace, they demanded that you get an education. Odessa Wallace was very stern on getting an education. She would say, "Laverne let me tell you something, you get an education, get it in your head and nobody can take that away from you." She say, "But, if you want to be lazy and just slack off go ahead and do it but not in my class. You are here to learn and that is what you are going to do." She was very stern on that, Mrs. Odessa Wallace was.

PC: Now, tell me about the H. G. Temple School, say your elementary years what like the playground and things like that, what did y'all have?

LJ: Oh, totally different, everything was on grass or dirt. We had the gym but outside you had to play volleyball some days when the boys were practicing in the gym we had to play outside on the grass. But, other than that...you know, it's nothing like it is now.

PC: Now, they built the new building in '53 so you would have started to school in the new building which wouldn't have been too old when you started.

LJ: No it wasn't.

PC: So, the facilities were good since you were born in '52, okay.

LJ: I was there with my older sister. She was ten years older than I was. I started my first grade school year there. I would walk with her to school and then when she would leave I would have a fit. She would have to come to my classroom and settle me down because everybody was on one campus. First through twelfth grade was on one campus.

PC: What was your sister's name?

LJ: Joyce Joshua.

PC: Joyce, so your brothers, were they all older than you?

LJ: No, Thomas is a year younger than I am and Clay is two years younger than I am.

PC: Okay so, you had two younger brothers.

LJ: Yes.

PC: So, these incidents you spoke of at school, you know, during the first integration years were your brothers on campus? Did they...

LJ: My brother Thomas was.

PC: Your brother Thomas, okay.

LJ: My brother Thomas was, so I had somebody there with me, some family. Clay I think he was in the last group to come over. He just wasn't ready for it but, Thomas was ready to play sports.

PC: Okay.

LJ: Then after Clay came over he got into baseball and he was good. He was the first black baseball player to come through Diboll High School.

PC: Now, did you come in the '68 year or did you come in Freedom of Choice year? I forgot to ask you.

LJ: Freedom of Choice year.

PC: So, you came before the mandated.

LJ: Mandated, and Mr. Temple demanded and the school system but I came on Freedom of Choice.

PC: So, because if you came the year before Clay, because he came during the fall of '68.

LJ: He was one of the last group to come over.

PC: But you came before is what you are saying, the year before that?

LJ: Yes.

PC: So, you chose to come over is what you are saying?

LJ: Yes, I did for Freedom of Choice year.

PC: Okay, okay. Now tell me about Coach Porter and Coach Spencer. I know they were the two main black teachers...

LJ: Only black.

PC: ...and coaches that were at the Diboll Jr. High and I think they played an integral part in integration.

LJ: A lot of kids lives.

PC: Did you have any personal experience with them that you care to share?

LJ: Coach Porter was another teacher that instilled "you get an education." They all did really, Coach Spencer and Coach Porter. And, like they all say "get an education."

PC: Were they...I know they were all pretty stern but, was it their expectation that stuck with you in your mind as far as getting an education.

LJ: They demanded it, that you get an education.

PC: I know you keep repeating that so, I know that had to be the impression that you left with. You felt like they demanded that of you?

LJ: They demanded that of all students.

PC: Okay, your parents, your teachers and Mr. Massey that is what they expected of you?

LJ: Yes ma'am.

PC: You didn't want to disappoint.

LJ: I did not want to disappoint anybody and especially myself.

PC: There you go, there you go. Anything about Coach Spencer?

LJ: He was kind of quiet and laid back, you know. He had his demands but he didn't just throw them in your face, but he was a good guy, he was good. All of them really demanded you get an education. They insisted you get an education.

PC: Now, you mentioned your brother playing ball, did you go to the games to watch him play?

LJ: Oh yes ma'am.

PC: And, again Thomas that would have been the...he would have started playing ball the first year before full integration, the '67 under Coach Simmons.

LJ: Yes, Coach Simmons

PC: He played under him?

LJ: No, Coach Simmons was...he had left.

PC: Oh, Coach Simmons had already left. He played under Coach Wyatt.

LJ: Yes, under Coach Wyatt.

PC: Which was the next year. Okay so, you went and watched your brothers play ball. Was there any problems attending the games?

LJ: No, because the whites were on one side of the stadium and we had our places where we sat.

PC: Even after integration you still had your places?

LJ: Then everybody kind of started interacting.

PC: Anything that you remember about Clay playing Little League? I know he started playing Little League when they were trying to integrate the Little League.

LJ: Yes he did, it wasn't full integration at the time.

PC: And he shared with me his experience but I wanted to ask you about attending the games. Did you go watch him play?

LJ: My mom insisted on that one, giving him support. My whole family went, you know.

PC: And how were y'all treated when you attended the Little League games?

LJ: It was okay really, it was okay. After he finally got on the team and they saw how good he was everybody just...it was okay.

PC: Okay, because I think he when they first started integrating the Little League that was another new thing for everybody.

LJ: You know, he would come home and he would cry, "Mama why can't I play?" "Why can't I play?" "I go and I watch the other kids, the white kids play baseball" he said "I know what I can do." And they finally let him start playing and he was a better kid. He had something to do. It made my father proud to know that he was in sports.

PC: Well that is great. So, your mother attended the games?

LJ: Oh yes, we went as a family. My father couldn't go at that time because he was down with cancer.

PC: Now, what stood out to you the most when you first attended the Diboll white school, which would have been Diboll High School your first year? What stood out to you the most?

LJ: The first day we had to go to campus all the white kids were standing outside the front door jeering.

PC: Cheering, is that what you said?

LJ: No, "Go Home N."

PC: Oh, the first day?

LJ: Yes ma'am.

PC: Are you talking about the first day of full integration in 1968, fall of '68?

LJ: Yes, I thought it had all...

PC: The year before they had integrated the athletics and the boys came over.

LJ: The first year of Freedom of Choice...

PC: Freedom of Choice was 1965 and we only had one student Valerie Anderson. In 1966 there were about 40 students that went over all the campuses.

LJ: Yes, it was and the kids were just standing out...

PC: Are you talking about that year you think?

LJ: Yes, I'm thinking that was the year.

PC: That is the year you came over during that Freedom of Choice year?

LJ: We still had a little tension, you know what I'm saying.

PC: It was still a new thing.

LJ: Yes, it was.

PC: So, they were standing outside.

LJ: Yes, telling us to go home, but we went on to school.

PC: Did the administrators know they were out there doing that?

LJ: Yes, after it got so loud they came out and they broke it up.

PC: Okay.

LJ: But, that first year I'm thinking...

PC: Yes, I'm trying to... '65 was the first year of Freedom of Choice and we had one student, Valerie Anderson, to go to first grade. Then the next year '66 was when they voted to end the athletic program. That is when those six or seven boys came over and the male seniors basically for athletics. In '67 they integrated the high school.

LJ: Well that is when I think I'm referring to that year.

PC: Okay, that is when they integrated the high school.

LJ: I don't know what year it was.

PC: That is the year you started at the high school?

LJ: Yes, the first year of high school.

PC: Then fall of '68 was full integration when they integrated one through eighth grade at H. G. Temple.

LJ: Yes.

PC: Okay, '67 was your first year of integration then?

LJ: Yes, I want to say '66 or '67 somewhere along in there.

PC: That is the year you are referring to the chanting?

LJ: Yes.

PC: Okay, wow!

LJ: Yes ma'am.

PC: Now tell me about Mr. Massey, what do you remember about him?

LJ: Willie Massey? Oh Sleepy, that is what I used to call him. Mr. Massey was a great man, he really was and he cared a lot for the kids. He had an old bus and back then you could get into Six Flags with green stamps. I think about six books of green stamps you could get into Six Flags and he would load that bus up and Mrs. Massey would get all the green stamps that she could find and he would sleep. He never had a wreck. He never had a wreck but he would nod a little bit and I don't know how he drove that bus but he got us to Six Flags and back.

PC: So, you are referring to him nodding off while he is driving?

LJ: Yes, we called him Sleepy.

PC: I have not heard that story. (laughter)

LJ: Oh yes, Mr. Massey was a sleepy and that old cigar hanging out his mouth.

PC: Now, was this just students that were going to Six Flags?

LJ: Yes, students and we had a couple of adults going with us.

PC: Did y'all have to find the green stamps to go or was there?

LJ: No, our parents back then collected green stamps.

PC: So just anybody that had enough green stamps to go could go?

LJ: Had enough green stamps could go, yes ma'am. Everybody was looking for green stamps.

PC: That is wonderful. I have not heard that story. That is great!

LJ: Yes ma'am, yes ma'am. We could get in with green stamps.

PC: What about him as a principal and educator?

LJ: He was fair and he demanded education too.

PC: I heard he was a pretty tough math teacher. Of course I had him too. I knew him too, I didn't have him, and yes I had him as a math teacher.

LJ: He gave you a problem you didn't solve it that day you take it home. He didn't care if it took you three days he wanted that problem solved and then he would go on and give you another one, same experience.

PC: We called him Fess.

LJ: Yes, Fess Massey, we called him Sleepy on the bus.

PC: Do you remember any H. G. Temple yearbooks?

LJ: No.

PC: Do you have any photographs of when you were at school at H. G. Temple?

LJ: No ma'am, we had a house fire and we lost everything.

PC: Did you participate in any extra-curricular activities after integration?

LJ: No because I wasn't athletic at all.

PC: Okay, all right. Did you have a personal experience pertaining to integration that you care to share that we haven't talked about pertaining to the integration process? You kind of already shared that about the fights at the gym.

LJ: No, just one other particular time Mr. Bennie [Bennis] Franks, we were in his classroom and this guy, I won't call his name either because I don't want people to know how cruel some of the people that we probably know together, were at the time but, this particular guy he walked up behind me and he said the "N" word. "I don't know why y'all had to come over here." I turned around and I told him I said, "Look I don't want to have to go home to my mother with another altercation, but I'm here because of the same reason you are and that is to get an education, back off and leave me alone." No more problem out of him. I saw him during our reunion and a totally different person.

PC: Those things never leave your mind though.

LJ: But, he did come to me at the reunion, he said, "You remember that day?" I said, "Yes I do." He is big as a hoss now but he is still good looking. I said, "Yes I do." He said, "It has taken me this long to find you and apologize."

PC: Wow that is wonderful. Were you grateful for that?

LJ: Yes, I was.

PC: Yes, I can see your emotion.

LJ: Yes, because I wanted to see him before I go to the other side.

PC: So, you never forgot that statement.

LJ: No, I didn't.

PC: And, he didn't either apparently.

LJ: No.

PC: Well that is wonderful.

LJ: A few months ago when we had our little reunion he apologized.

PC: And you are talking about this year 2011, he apologized for making that statement?

LG: He apologized.

PC: Wow that is a wonderful story.

LJ: Yes ma'am and it's been all these years that we haven't seen each other. I said, "Well thank you." I said, "Now, I'm satisfied." But, that stuck with me a long time, for years up until this year and I got that deliverance from that.

PC: That is great. That is wonderful.

LJ: And he did too because we had a great time that day.

PC: Good, that is great. He didn't forget it.

LJ: No he didn't.

PC: Well that is a great memory there. Now, is there anything else pertaining to school, attending the H. G. Temple School, attending the white school, any particular memory, a good memory, a bad memory, a happy thought that you want to share?

LJ: Another situation during I want to say '70 and '71 I didn't like the way they did the grading as far as valedictorian and salutatorian and that situation because we had a lot of good black kids that were great students. This one year this guy, Tom Dubose, was a braniac, he was a braniac and my cousin Debra Taylor they wouldn't give her valedictorian and she felt like it was because she was black and years later he told her that she was suppose to be valedictorian.

PC: But she wasn't recognized as valedictorian?

LJ: No, she wasn't.

PC: Wow, now I want to move to Diboll Day and I want to ask you if you remember anything about H. G. Temple queens?

LJ: Minnie Jones.

PC: Now this would be before integration.

LJ: Before integration, yes ma'am, Minnie Jones. We would have to ride in a car when she was a Diboll Day Queen. I can't remember what year but.

PC: Do you remember them being queens for Diboll Day?

LJ: It wasn't Diboll Day they just elected a queen but she wasn't recognized as a Diboll Day Queen.

PC: We found in the records where they had separate queens races...

LJ: Yes they did.

PC: ...and this is '64 and this one is '62 so, I was just wondering if you remember anything about it. It kind of seems to go along with the school as well but they were representing Temple High candidates but it is for Diboll Day. So, I was just wondering if these years of '62 and '64 if there was anything you remember particularly about the queen's race?

LJ: No, not really.

PC: Anything about Diboll Day in general?

LJ: The first year we really did have a black Diboll Day queen, Debra Washington.

PC: Right, I believe that was '74 because I was in school then.

LJ: How old are you?

PC: I would have graduated in '76.

LJ: You ain't nothing but a baby.

PC: Just a few years younger than you. Now, Minnie Jones ran in '64 and she was the Temple queen just to go back to one of your statements earlier. Did you participate in Diboll Day activities?

LJ: We would help raise money.

PC: Anything particular about the years before integration though when they were separate and had separate activities?

LJ: We, the community was really involved back then too. The community was really involved and we helped raise money toward the Diboll Day activities and everything. But, we had separate floats and separate everything.

PC: Anything about the parade as far as attending the parade?

LJ: It was fine. It was fine.

PC: I think they had one parade but when the parade ended they had activities in the park for the white community and activities at Walter Allen Park.

LJ: We had to go over to Walter Allen, yes ma'am.

PC: Now, what about after integration and the first year that Diboll Day and they had just the activities at the white park?

LJ: As far back as I can remember is the year Debra Washington was crowned Diboll Day queen. Before that I can't remember.

PC: That seems to be the year that stands out for most people because she was our first black Diboll Day queen after integration.

LJ: Yes, first black after integration.

PC: We know before integration they did have them and Mr. Massey was actually the Diboll Day committee coordinator and Mr. James Rhone.

LJ: Coordinator, yes.

PC: Willie Ross, Herbert Allen and those. We know from the Free Press newspaper that they did have colored activities but it was separate and they did have their queens. But, that was...I never knew that. Did you participate in any particular Diboll Day activity that you remember?

LJ: The year Debra, the whole community just worked hard. Yes, my mom was on the committee, my mom was. Mrs. Fannie Washington, her mother, all the older women at the church was involved. We worked hard that year.

PC: Doing anything you could do to make money.

LJ: Yes ma'am we did.

PC: Do you remember who the coordinators were for her? Anything stand out in your mind with working and how everybody worked together?

LJ: It was mainly just the community. We didn't have a set committee, like Mrs. Fannie Washington, my mom Annie Washington.

PC: I think Mr. Shepherd was her chairman over her group. Do you remember anything about him?

LJ: I think he was. I remember Mr. Shepherd and his son Mark.

PC: Okay, is there anything you would like to share with me today that I have not asked you about?

LJ: No ma'am, not anything in particular, but I just thank God I got an education and a praying mother.

PC: Well that is wonderful. That is great. Anything about just growing up in Diboll in general that you care to share?

LJ: When we were kids we would always go to...my mom would make a grocery list and we would go to Mr. Pavlic's grocery store and he'd package up our meat and everything and he said, "Now Clay and Annie they done already told me what to give y'all but don't get anything that you are not suppose to." He said, "Now come on to the front." He would always give us candy or something, a cool drink to walk back home with. Mr. Pavlic was fair too. He was fair to the blacks and Mr. Albrecht was too because they gave us credit.

PC: And, this would be the Pavlic's Grocery over by the post office?

LJ: By the post office, yes ma'am.

PC: So y'all would walk, ride bikes or what?

LJ: My baby brother would ride the bike because he had the bike with the basket on it, Clay would, and she would give us the grocery list. "Now you go on up to Mr. Pavlic's and you make these groceries and come right on back home and here is the money." And my nickname was Bratnella.

PC: Say that again.

LJ: Bratnella.

PC: Bratnella. (laughing)

LJ: “You take this money, you put it in your pocket and you go to Mr. Dick’s and get my medicine.” I would always have to carry the medicine. We would make groceries and Mr. Dick’s would be the last stop on the way home and he would give us a cool drink too so we had two to suck on before we got home that mother didn’t know about.

PC: Now where did y’all live?

LJ: We lived out at the park by Walter Allen Park.

PC: By the park?

LJ: By the park.

PC: Okay, well Mrs. Joshua that is all of my questions that I have and I enjoyed visiting with you today and enjoyed the interview. I really thank you for participating in our project.

LJ: I thank you for allowing me to do it, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW