

MINNIE JONES AND LORINE RODGERS SMITH

Interview 196a

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ABSTRACT: In this interview with Patsy Colbert, Diboll native Minnie Jones and her friend Lorine Rodgers Smith reminisce about growing up in Diboll's African American community, the school integration process, and race relations. A high school basketball star before racial integration, Ms. Jones graduated from Diboll High School one year after the process was completed. She spent most of her school days at H.G. Temple High School, Diboll's African American school, representing the school as Diboll Day Queen Candidate and Rodeo Queen. Mrs. Smith graduated from H.G. Temple High School in 1960 and spent all of her school days in the segregated education system, but had children in elementary school for the first year of full integration. She also worked at the Pine Bough Restaurant as a dishwasher for Mrs. Byrd Davis. Both women remember Mr. Massey, Mrs. Wallace, and Mrs. Schinke, among other notable Diboll educators.

Patsy Colbert (hereafter PC): Okay today's date is May 15, 2010. I'm Patsy Colbert and I'm here at the History Center today with Minnie Jones and her friend Mrs. Lorine Rodgers Smith. We are going to talk about high school integration at Diboll ISD and H. G. Temple School. Minnie if we can just begin by telling me when and where you were born.

Minnie Jones (hereafter MJ): I was born here in Diboll, Texas, March 14, 1950.

PC: Okay, and so you started to school here?

MJ: All my life.

PC: All your life. So, you've been here all your life, okay. And, what grade were you in when integration took place?

MJ: I had to be, what grade was I in? Did it start '66?

PC: 1965 was Freedom of Choice year, and then '66 was when the senior boys went over and '67 was high school integration.

MJ: I came over in '67.

PC: Okay, so 1967. And what grade were you in then?

MJ: I was in the eleventh.

PC: You were in the eleventh?

MJ: Yes, because I graduated in '68.

PC: So fall of '67 you would have been a senior.

MJ: Yes.

PC: You graduated spring of '68?

MJ: Right.

PC: So you would have been a senior and that was the first year of high school integration.

MJ: Right.

PC: Okay. What was your first knowledge of integration?

MJ: Well my first knowledge was when our brothers, Johnny, well my brother Johnny and I think it was, Verticee, when the football boys came over. And, then the sisters decided to come over and support our brothers.

PC: Okay.

MJ: That is how we decided to come on over.

PC: Okay. Had you heard about integration when the Freedom of Choice plan first started being talked about and going into being implemented?

MJ: On the news that integration was coming.

PC: Okay. And what about your parents, how did they feel about integration and how did they relay that to you?

MJ: Well I came from a family that we never looked at color, so it really didn't matter. We had no fear of coming over.

PC: Well good.

MJ: Because, my grandmother had always taught us that there are good and bad in all races, but you just treat people the way you want to be treated. So, when integration came about we were happy about it, you know. This was like, it was like trail blazing, making history, and that is the way we felt about it.

PC: Okay, well good. So, your parent's reaction to integration, they were not fearful about it. Did they have any concerns?

MJ: No, they didn't have any concerns about being in jeopardy or what might happen to us. We saw what was happening when Dr. King, you know, the beatings and the dogs sicced on the blacks and the fire hoses used on them, but none of that entered our mind when we started discussing coming to school over here.

PC: And tell me your parent's names.

MJ: Marcellus and Vera Jones.

PC: And, what did they...I'm sorry...what did your father do for a living?

MJ: He was the owner of his cleaners. He owned Diboll Cleaners.

PC: Okay.

MJ: My mom worked for Temple.

PC: Okay, so they had been around the white race, interacting in the community then with their business?

MJ: Yes, they were long life residents here in Diboll.

PC: I know when I came to Diboll in the eighth grade I remember Mrs. Stubblefield would always send one of the boys over to the cleaners to get her clothes, you know. All the teachers, you know, over there used your dad's cleaners. I remember that very well. That is great. So the first year of high school integration in '67, which was your senior year, how did you feel about going to the Diboll white school?

MJ: Just felt like it was an adventure. Something to do to set an example for the rest of the kids that would be coming this way. Because we knew it wasn't going to be going back. We were going to have to go forward. So, why not go ahead and try to make things easier.

PC: Okay.

MJ: Which, they said my brother Johnny, they said, made integration more peaceful because he was a peaceful child. If anything got stirred up he was right there to calm it down.

PC: Right, I know from the record your brother, Johnny Jones, went over to the Diboll white school in '66 when they integrated the athletic program. I know that we've heard great things about your brother with his sports career. They just had a smooth year

according to what we have heard but, what do you remember him sharing with you about his experience that first year?

MJ: Everything was wonderful. All the guys that he played on the football team they loved him. He got along with all of the teachers and the students.

PC: Good.

MJ: There was no problem.

PC: Okay. Do you have any recollection of why they ended the athletic program at the Temple High School and brought the athletic boys over that first year?

MJ: I don't know. I really don't know what happened with that.

PC: Okay and how did your fellow students feel about integration? Did anybody share concerns with you or can you recall how your friends felt?

MJ: Not anything negative. We had...the transition was pretty smooth.

PC: Okay. What do you remember as a good experience through it all?

MJ: Mr. Greer, Mrs. Schinke? Wasn't it Mrs. Schinke?

PC: Yes.

MJ: Mr. Ramsey was a very nice person. Mr. Douglas, I remember him as being a nice teacher. Seems like to me these teachers didn't see color they just saw students. They just wanted to help educate. They always will leave a lasting impression on my mind and on my heart.

PC: Well good, that is great. And, when you came to the Diboll white school, how did the white students react towards you?

MJ: Most of them were pretty nice, you know, you are always going to have a few that would use the N word, but I think I might have heard it once or twice. But, other than that everything was...I'm sitting here now looking at Margo Chumley and Carol Nash and Ronnie Emsoff and those people and Ronnie Jordan, they come back to my memory that they were nice people and they welcomed us with open arms.

PC: Well that is wonderful. That is great to hear. Now, before integration what were your experiences as far as being around the white community?

MJ: Well, before integration Lorine and I were just talking about the Pine Bough. And I say, yes I remember that. We had to go to the back door to order our food. We weren't

allowed inside. And, then we had a movie theatre here and we had to sit upstairs and the whites sat downstairs.

PC: Right.

MJ: We weren't allowed to sit down there.

PC: And that was just part of segregation, you know.

MJ: Right.

PC: Within all communities that was the normal. But, you were treated well when you went to those establishments?

MJ: Yes we were.

PC: Great. What did you learn from the integration experience that may be long lasting? That you've carried with you.

MJ: I learned that there are going to be ups and downs and it all depends on knowing who you are and what you are that will get you through life.

PC: That is great. What was your typical school day like say in your elementary years? Tell me what your typical school day was like at the H. G. Temple School.

MJ: Oh it was fun years. It was fun years. All the teachers and the students we all got along real well. I can remember when...I was pretty well an A student over in the elementary school, and whenever Mrs. Massey or one of the teachers had a meeting to go to, instead of having subs, they would always get one of the high school students to come and attend their classes. And, I was one of the students that they would call. I would be the teacher over the kids.

PC: Oh, that is wonderful.

MJ: So, I always remember that and had no problem out of the kids.

PC: Do you recall any...can you just share with me your memory of the teachers you had and name some of your favorites or maybe your actual teachers that taught you at H. G. Temple?

MJ: Well, like I said, Mrs. Massey, Mr. Massey, Mrs. Gilbert, Mrs. Inez, Mrs. Simmons, Hughey Allen.

Lorine Smith (hereafter LS) Was Mr. Ross there?

MJ: Mr. Ross, Mr. Jeffero, Mr. Overstreet, Mrs. Barlow. Now when Mrs. Barlow came we did not have a drill team. She was the first teacher that came through and started a drill team for the football team. And, I can remember us – the girls had, the line had on green and before that we had to compete against each other to see who was going to be the head majorette. And, we had to compete and march down the basketball court. And, I won. (laughter)

PC: Oh okay.

MJ: So, I was the head drum major of the drill team.

PC: Okay, and do you recall what year that was? I believe on the print out there from the 1968 annual it's...

MJ: '65-66.

PC: '65-66, and that was the first year of it?

MJ: That was the first year we had a drill team.

PC: Okay, and did they still have it?

MJ: I believe that was the only one.

PC: No, that was the only year because '66 then is when they ended the athletics, okay. So, that was a lot of fun, something new.

MJ: That was a lot of fun. And, I'm looking here where I was chosen as the Rodeo Duchess back in '66. And Mr. Namon Calhoun – he loved horses and he had a horse called Midnight and that was my horse. After school every evening I would meet him at the H. G. Temple School and he would teach me how to ride Midnight. The first night, well my mom and my dad went to Mrs. Crafts. Mrs. Craft had beautiful clothes, and I can remember my mom buying me a light blue satin pants with a white satin shirt. And we rode in – all the queens rode in and the next day. Mr. Namon Calhoun came and he said, "They said that your daughter is overdressing, she needs to tone it down some." (laughter) I guess I was out dressing the rest of the queens you know. It was Linda Garcia representing Dunbar and I represented H. G. Temple High.

PC: Okay, so that was a rodeo queen, but was that an actual rodeo that took place locally?

MJ: Yes, the Angelina Benefit Rodeo that they have here now.

PC: Oh okay. So, they had the queens and you represented H. G. Temple School?

MJ: Right.

PC: Now, how were you selected for that?

MJ: I have no idea! I can't remember. I think it was the teachers.

PC: Okay.

MJ: I believe it was the teachers that selected me.

PC: Now, did you go to Mrs. Crafts store with your mom?

MJ: Yes.

PC: And, how was that experience going to Mrs. Crafts store in that time frame before integration?

MJ: Oh, we always shopped at Mrs. Crafts so it wasn't like, you know, the first time or anything.

PC: Oh okay. She was a wonderful lady.

MJ: Yes, she was.

PC: Okay. Did you have a favorite teacher?

MJ: Mrs. Massey has always been my favorite teacher. But, I guess when integration took place I could say Mrs. Schinke was.

PC: Tell me about your typical school day, what it consisted of the first year in '67 when the high school was integrated and you attended the white school. Tell me a typical day that year.

MJ: To me it was like any other typical day.

PC: Just any other day.

MJ: Just going to school and meeting your friends, and talking with your friends and going to class.

PC: Were you comfortable?

MJ: Very comfortable. As a matter of fact, I work with Larry Jansen, Sandra Bailey, and Richard Martinez and today, you know, we still talk about Diboll. Larry Jansen played football with my brother Danny so, all four of us work together now and it's just like being at home talking about our school years.

PC: Oh great. And, where do you work now?

MJ: For Oncor Electric Delivery.

PC: Okay. And, tell me about after graduation did you attend college?

MJ: After graduation I went to Prairie View A&M University and I majored in Elementary Education and minored in Art. After I graduated from P.V. I taught school in Houston at Peterson Elementary School. Then I had some other jobs in Houston and finally came back to Diboll in '79. I moved back here in '79. I did subbing for Diboll Independent School District and it was December of 1991 Texas Power and Light, they were not Oncor then, Texas Power and Light called me and told me I had a job. So, I started working for them.

PC: Okay, so you gave up the teaching career.

MJ: Right, been with Oncor going on my twenty-ninth year.

PC: Okay. It sounds like from all the activities that you were involved in that you liked school pretty well.

MJ: Oh yes, I loved school.

PC: Now you mentioned a little bit earlier going to the movie and the Pine Bough Restaurant, do you recall any other experiences, you know, going to the grocery store or any other establishments in town? How were you treated after integration if you went to any establishments?

MJ: You know as you look back over Diboll and although we were integrated in a sense we weren't integrated. You kind of agree?

LS: Yes, 'cause you had too. It was just like everybody knew everybody, white and black. It wasn't any rowdiness here at all. I worked at the Pine Bough when I was sixteen.

PC: Oh really!

LS: On Sunday the line was down the street. I mingled with all the, what was her name, Mrs. Byrd?

PC: Yes, Mrs. Byrd Davis.

LS: And, so it was just...it wasn't anything.

PC: Well that is great. Just your normal...

LS: Like you hear of the far cities that had all the...

MJ: The riots and the fighting.

LS: That was just like in another world.

PC: Well that is great.

LS: You know it didn't happen.

PC: And, what year did you work at the Pine Bough, what years would that have been?

LS: I was 16, I was born in '41.

PC: About '57.

LS: Yes, I worked down there washing dishes. I worked after school and on Sundays and I made forty-seven cents an hour.

PC: Okay. Oh wow!

MJ: And see, I babysitted for Don and Dwonna Wier. They bought that big beautiful home down in South Meadows and Don and Dwonna, they were lovely people. And they let me have a, to get back and forth to work they gave me a '66 convertible mustang. Oh man, you know, I was hot stuff then. (laughter)

PC: Oh yea! (laughter)

MJ: They let me have that car, and I was just all over the place. Go to work and come back with the car and in the evening time just take a drive, so.

PC: Well that is wonderful.

MJ: And Pop Rich and Sissy Rich, when we were over at H. G. Temple High, they never missed a game. They were right there on the front row. They never missed our games, they were right there to give us support.

PC: Now Mrs. Lorine, if you will tell me what year you graduated from H. G. Temple.

LS: 1960.

PC: Okay 1960. And you grew up here most of your life?

LS: All my life.

PC: Tell me about those H. G. Temple games that you just spoke of Minnie. Where did they play at and just tell me about the sports part of H. G. Temple. I know they had great football teams and basketball teams. And, we are going to get your basketball days in just a little bit, but tell me about those games at H.G. Temple School. What do you remember about that?

LS: Did y'all play on the ground?

MJ: We started on the ground. But, you are talking about the football team.

LS: We had a good one. I don't remember too much about the football but the basketball, because I played basketball.

PC: Okay.

LS: We would play on the ground; we never did play in a gym.

PC: You played on a dirt court.

LS: On a dirt court and I mean it was cold. We didn't realize it now, like freezing outside, we was outside playing ball. And there were lines on the court just like...

MJ: On the inside.

LS: And we never thought anything else about it.

MJ: Just a way of life wasn't it.

PC: Did y'all play other schools?

LS: We played other schools. We played Camden, Wells, Corrigan, Livingston.

MJ: Pennington.

LS: The teams they play now we played them back in the day.

PC: Okay.

LS: And, we played on the ground.

PC: On the ground, okay.

MJ: And our football team, they used to play Trinity. They used to play Elkhart and I think Groveton.

PC: You mentioned the Rich family coming over and watching, were there other people from the white community that came over to the H.G. Temple games?

MJ: I don't remember any other. I just remember those two because they set...

LS: Y'all were in the gym then.

MJ: We were in the gym then.

LS: Soon after that y'all played in the gym.

MJ: I started on the ground too.

LS: Well then they had the gym over there?

MJ: Yes, but I don't remember any other whites coming to the game. I do remember Mr. and Mrs. Rich being there.

PC: You are talking about the basketball games.

MJ: The basketball games.

PC: Okay, but I was referring to the football games, the boy's football games. Do you remember if the white community came over?

MJ: I can't remember that.

LS: I can't remember if we had one, but I'm sure we probably did.

MJ: Oh yes, we had plenty football teams, but I can't remember.

PC: And, getting to your....

MJ: Yes they did because they would have to walk. Our boys would have to walk from across the track over here to play football. We didn't have a football field. We used this one over here.

PC: Okay, so the H.G. Temple football team played over here on the football field that the white boys played on before integration we are talking about?

MJ: Yes, before integration.

PC: Okay. Let's talk about your basketball days. I know you were a great basketball player. So, did you start playing basketball your freshman year?

MJ: I really started in seventh grade.

PC: Okay, tell me about that.

MJ: I think I was playing basketball, practicing with the high school girls and they asked me if I wanted to play. Back there I guess it was legal for you to do that.

PC: In the seventh grade?

MJ: In the seventh grade.

LS: I did too, I started in the sixth playing with the high school because I was tall, but I was slender, but I was good! (laughter)

PC: So Mrs. Lorine, in your sixth grade year you were coming over playing with the white girls?

MJ: No, H. G. Temple.

PC: Oh, I'm sorry. You were playing with the high school girls, H.G. Temple girls, okay.

MJ: Same with me.

PC: Same with you, got you. So, you were in seventh grade but you played with the high school girls. And, I guess that was okay with UIL, or maybe they didn't have a lot of those rules then. (laughter)

MJ: That is what I'm saying. (laughter) I don't know if UIL had those kind of rules or not. But, I do remember going home and we were having a family dinner. We were all sitting at the table, my five brothers and my mom, and dad and myself and I said, "Dad they want me to play high school basketball." And, he was like, "Well I think you might be growing up too fast. I don't want you to play." I think I cried and I finally got my way. (laughter) And, he said, "Well okay, you can play." So, I started playing in the seventh grade, high school in the seventh grade.

PC: Okay, and I know they had some winning teams.

MJ: We won sixty-six straight games.

PC: In those years that you were playing?

MJ: Yes.

PC: From seventh grade until your junior year that you're referring to?

MJ: Right. Yes,

PC: Wow, that is wonderful. When school...when they integrated the high school and you came to the white school they did not have girls basketball your senior year. Is that correct?

MJ: That is correct.

PC: And how did you feel about that?

MJ: It was okay, yes it was okay. I felt like I had played enough. I had done my time.

PC: Okay.

MJ: Even then, you know, I didn't have nowhere else to go because the black colleges didn't have basketball teams. I think Mrs. Wallace was trying to do some research and I believe Panola might have had a girl's basketball team, but since I had chosen to go to P.V. they didn't have a girl's basketball team. So, it was time for me to just leave that behind and pursue my education.

PC: Okay, that is one thing I've wondered about with doing your research of your basketball. Were you disappointed that you didn't play basketball your senior year and maybe that didn't enable you to be recognized or be able to go onto college and play basketball? But, you had already researched that and you knew that was not going to happen because you chose Prairie View?

MJ: Right.

PC: Okay, that is wonderful.

MJ: They just said I was a Michael Jordan born before my time. (laughter)

PC: Okay. Seeing your record I've always thought 'wow, you should have probably been a pro-basketball player or at least went to college on a basketball scholarship.' And, I wondered if because we did not offer girls basketball your senior year, if that caused you not to get a scholarship.

MJ: No, it was just the colleges that I had planned on attending did not have basketball.

PC: Well that makes me feel better. (laughing) That is great. Let's compare...in comparing the facilities, tell me the difference in the H. G. Temple facilities and the Diboll High School facilities when you transferred over.

MJ: Well, as far as...I'll have to say, you know, we got the leftovers. We got the books that were sent from the whites to the blacks. But, as far as the school, you know, our school was decent. It was nice.

PC: Did you notice anything outstanding that you remember?

LS: We had the school we got over there when she went.

MJ: From comparing H. G. Temple School to Diboll High School it wasn't like apples to oranges. We had a nice school. We didn't have a gym at first but then they built us a gym and but everything else like the books and things like that they were second handed, but they were still in good condition, readable.

PC: Okay. Tell me again about your basketball days of when you went to playing on the gym. You mentioned at first you played on the dirt.

MJ: Right.

PC: But then in your high school days, then they got the gym and you played on the gym? Do you remember that? Do you know what year they got the gym? Do you remember what grade you might have been in when they actually got the gym?

MJ: I know...

LS: Was it '60 or '61?

MJ: I can't remember. I know we were in the gym when I hit the 73 points and that was in '66.

LS: I had went to New Jersey and I came back, y'all were practicing in the new gym.

MJ: What year was that?

LS: In 1961.

PC: So from the time you started playing basketball in seventh grade and before integration they got the new gym, somewhere in there.

MJ: Yes, somewhere in there.

PC: I guess that was a big, exciting time, to get a new gym.

MJ: It was, it was and Mr. Massey, I have to give it to him, he was our coach. And he made sure we had beautiful suits, green and white suits with the tiger on the back. We also had the athletic bags that most kids didn't have. So, he made sure that we were dressed real, real nice.

PC: Okay, and when ya'll traveled to out of town...

LS: That is all right for you all. We had band suits. (laughing)

PC: You had band suits Mrs. Lorine?

LS: We took some band suits and made us some basketball suits.

PC: Okay. Did one of the teachers do that or one of the moms?

LS: Mr. Massey, I don't know who made them, but it was some old basketball...that is how we changed the colors. It was purple and white when I was going, in the beginning and, then that is how green and white came.

MJ: Okay.

LS: Because he had some old...I don't know where he got the band suits from. (laughter) He had some basketball, and they were nice, they were nice. Whoever made them, whoever he got to make them they were real nice. We had the shirt and the shorts.

PC: Okay, well that was leading to my next question. How and when the H. G. Temple colors changed? Because, we have been asked that specific question and we've actually researched that. So, I'm glad you brought that up. Can you tell me what year that might have been? Or, just a time frame maybe, what grade you were in at the time that you got the green and white suits.

LS: I know it's a picture of some girls.

MJ: They said the sixties.

LS: It was before the sixties. I graduated in '60.

MJ: Okay. What color was it then?

LS: You know we have this thing about purple and white, to green and white?

MJ: Right.

LS: ...when we have the reunion. So, in one picture I have on purple and white.

MJ: What year was that?

LS: I don't know what year. It's in one of these yearbooks

MJ: Was it in the fifties or sixties?

LS: I can't tell you, I don't know.

PC: We will have to look for that photo and we'd like to have a copy of it.

LS: Somebody has it because I've seen it at the reunion. Someone have it, I don't know if Jim have it or what. But I'm standing there with Earline and Ruthie Lee I think, with them with the purple and white uniforms, the pants and the...

MJ: Now they didn't buy us tennis, we had to buy our own tennis.

LS: No, but they made...that is how the purple, to green and white.

MJ: From green and white.

PC: That is wonderful. I'm glad you brought that up, that is great. We finally got some clarity on that.

LS: I'm surprised you hadn't heard that.

MJ: No, I didn't know they took band suits and made you all uniforms.

LS: Someone, I don't know where he got them from or what. He probably ran up on some material, old band suits. Ask R. B., he'll tell you about it. He knows about it. We always have that running thing.

PC: Somebody might have been getting rid of some old band uniforms and Mr. Massey got them and got them made into basketball uniforms.

LS: So, that is how we ended up with the green and white.

MJ: And, when you mentioned R. B. I got to thinking about R. B. and Charles Mack and Charlie Burton, and all those that played football for H. G. Temple High they had winning teams.

LS: Oh yes.

MJ: They were very good. But, like I said, they would have to come over here and play football. Yes, but we had a real winning team over there.

PC: Now, did you say band uniforms or did you say basketball uniforms?

LS: Band uniforms, they made them.

PC: They made them. So they took band uniforms and made basketball uniforms.

LS: Yes.

PC: Okay, that is what I understood at first but, I wanted to make sure I understood you correctly. Do you remember seeing...

LS: I don't remember, but like I said, but if I could see that book. I don't remember what year.

PC: Okay, we'll have to look for those photographs maybe.

LS: My memory is sort of...I'm listening to Minnie on a lot of things that I forgot.

PC: Yes, that is wonderful. That is what makes these oral history interviews interesting and why they are important because they do help to spark our memory. We want to record as much history as we can about the H. G. Temple School. Do you remember having H. G. Temple yearbooks?

MJ: I don't. I don't remember.

PC: Do you remember Mrs. Lorine?

LS: Yes, I do. That is where those pictures come from.

PC: Do you have any?

LS: No ma'am, Jim, someone has a book. Jim I think, Jim had a lot of pictures that we would place on the wall when we had our class reunions.

PC: Okay, but like your graduating years, say you graduated in 1960 did y'all have an H. G. Temple yearbook?

LS: Oh no, I don't think so.

MJ: I don't ever remember our school.

PC: That is what I mean, a specific high school annual like they have today. Now, we have the little books y'all put together for the Alumni Association, you know, when y'all have your reunions. We have those and they have some photographs in those. But, we have two yearbooks, one 1955 and one 1967 that somebody loaned us and we made copies of them. But, we are just interested in knowing if they had an annual every year like they do now.

MJ: No.

LS: No.

PC: Tell me about your first year, your high school year and you were nominated co-sweetheart in 1968. What do you remember about that process and how that came about?

MJ: That came about that we had blacks on the team and we had whites on the team and the black football players said they wanted a black football sweetheart and so Mr. Ramsey...they agreed. Since, it was black and whites on the team they would have black and white queens.

PC: Okay.

MJ: So I was nominated, the football boys nominated me.

PC: Okay, so it was the students of course, did the nominating and voted I guess.

MJ: The football boys nominated.

PC: The football boys nominated you.

MJ: Right.

PC: Okay, and we talked about your drill team, '65-66, you just had that one year with Mrs. Barlow?

MJ: Mrs. Barlow right.

PC: And, then with the high school integrating then, did they have a drill team your senior year at the Diboll High school?

MJ: I don't remember, I don't recall.

PC: What did you participate in your senior year at the Diboll High School?

MJ: Let's see, Spanish Club secretary and I believe that was it. FHA and I believe that was about it.

PC: So you were comfortable with participating in the different clubs and organizations when you first came over to Diboll High School the first year of integration?

MJ: Oh yes.

PC: You were made to feel comfortable to participate in whatever you wanted to participate in?

MJ: Oh yes, they chose me as the Spanish Club secretary in '68, and FHA in '68. As a matter of fact after I went to college, I think it was Mr. Douglas that taught Spanish here,

I can't remember. But, after I went to college my Spanish was pretty good at that time that I could have gone to the University of Madrid as an exchange student and just by being sheltered all my life I guess and not, you know, being traveling I was like no, no, I'm not getting on no plane going to Madrid. That is one regret I have in life that I didn't take that opportunity to go to the University of Madrid.

PC: Now, I know that your brother Johnny Jones went to the Diboll High School when the senior football boys came over to Diboll High School that first year in '66 when they integrated the athletic program. Did he share any concerns with you, or do you remember anything about his first year at Diboll High School?

MJ: Johnny had fun. Louis Landers, you know all of those guys, they welcomed him with open arms. He was good at football, basketball and track. And, he helped put Diboll on the map in a sense with some of his accolades that he had. He was a real round good person and they knew that.

PC: Okay, so when they started talking about closing the athletic program at Temple High School and we know from the records and from the Free Press articles that August of '66 the school board voted to close the athletic program at Temple High School. And, it makes mention that they did not have a coach, that the coach had left. Do you recall anything about that situation?

MJ: Well that is something we never knew about. We don't know what happened, what transpired. We don't know what happened to our trophies or anything like that. All we know is, boom, this had happened. No one had told us why.

PC: So it was a surprise to you?

MJ: Yes, it was.

PC: Because y'all had had a good athletic program up to that time. Who was the coach at that time?

MJ: I believe it was, it could have been Mr. Overstreet. I can't remember who it was at that time.

PC: So, with your brother, Johnny, playing football and getting word that the athletic program was closing did he share any concerns?

MJ: No, he didn't share any concerns.

PC: Okay, so when they made the decision to integrate the senior boys that year he was okay with that decision?

MJ: Yes, he was okay with it.

PC: Did your parents have any fears or concerns about integration and them just integrating the senior boys that first year?

MJ: No, because like Lorine was saying, as far as a community it seems like we have always, in a sense, gotten along. So, making that step, making that transition didn't put fear or concern in our heart. It was just another step that had to be made.

PC: Okay, so your parents didn't share any fears or concerns. Were they against the integration process?

MJ: Oh no.

PC: Okay. And, we know that your brother, Johnny, was a great football player and basketball player and all around sports and that shows from the records. Louis Landers speaks highly of him and I know they were great friends. Did you miss going to school with your brother that next year? There was that one year that y'all were on separate campuses.

MJ: Well yes, you know, I had five brothers. Johnny, Maurice, Danny and Michael they all came over here also except for Maurice. He was the oldest so he graduated from Temple. But I still had my other brothers, Bobby, Michael and Danny and then they came over. But I wasn't able to see them participate. They all played sports here, but they were younger than I was but I went off to college I wasn't able to see them play in their sports like I did Johnny.

PC: Okay.

MJ: Maurice was good in football and basketball over in H. G. Temple because that picture they took of me hitting those 73 points that night, I'm holding the ball and that is my brother next to me. He had hit 30 something that same night. He was good also.

PC: What year did he graduate?

MJ: He had to be '66 I believe.

PC: So he graduated the year before your brother Johnny came over to the Diboll High school.

MJ: Right, Bo was '66 and Johnny was '67 and I was '68.

PC: And, still referring to Johnny on that first year of the integrated sports, when they traveled to out of town games and surrounding communities did he share anything about how they were treated being an integrated team?

MJ: No, he never mentioned if he was treated any differently than the rest of them.

PC: Okay. Tell me about Mr. Massey. What do you remember about Mr. Massey?

MJ: (laughter) I'll let Lo, she can tell you more about Mr. Massey.

PC: Okay, Mrs. Lorine what do you remember about Mr. Massey?

LS: Very intelligent.

MJ: Quite spoken.

LS: Quite spoken, never raised his voice, very good teacher, math teacher. He was good in math.

PC: Okay. How did he...

LS: He was fun. When he said something he meant business. He might have been smiling but he meant business.

PC: Right, okay.

MJ: He was a very good coach also.

LS: At that time in '68 I was a parent. So, my kids came over.

PC: You were still living here in Diboll in '68?

LS: Yes, they came over and started in the primary, whatever, the kindergarten over here. It wasn't...I didn't feel anything.

MJ: They never came home...

LS: They never came home with any problems.

PC: Okay. So in 1968 the first year of full integration, you had children in the Diboll white schools, the Diboll public schools?

LS: Yes.

PC: Okay. So, tell me about your experience that first year.

LS: Well there is nothing to tell.

PC: Everything went good.

LS: It was just, we brought them over here to school and they went to school, come home.

PC: So they didn't experience any problems?

LS: They didn't have any problems.

PC: Okay.

LS: You know, they started as kids and mostly to kids everybody is the same, so they never had any problems. Even at five and six years old.

PC: Did you have children that would have registered in the first year of Freedom of Choice in 1965?

LS: No.

PC: Okay. The first year of Freedom of Choice in 1965 we had one student to attend the white school and that was Valerie Anderson. And in 1966 we had forty students across all campuses, forty black students that attended the Diboll schools during that second year of Freedom of Choice. Did you have children in the school district then?

LS: Let's see, my first child was born in 61.

PC: Not quite yet, it would have been the next year. Probably the first year of full integration then. My reason for asking was the years of Freedom of Choice up until full integration in the fall of '68 they sent out a form at the end of the school year. They sent a form home and the children, all the students of Diboll ISD had to register in the Freedom of Choice years from '65, '66 and '67. They had to choose which school they wanted to attend and they sent this form home and it had three choices on there and I was just wondering if you recalled that form.

LS: No, it was already in affect with mine.

PC: Okay, the fall of '68 then. Okay, well thank you for sharing that with us. Do you remember anything about Diboll Day activities before the schools were fully integrated? How did the black community participate in Diboll Day activities?

MJ: We had our black queens and they had their white queens.

PC: Okay, we have a photo of 1962 and 1964 of the black Diboll Day queens and that is how we knew they had separate activities. I believe you were a runner up in '65 for Diboll Day. How did the queen's process take place?

LS: Well who do you have? Didn't they have a Washington?

PC: No ma'am, that is later years, after full integration. Debra Washington was in the '70's and that was when we had the one Diboll Day activities. This would have been before full integration in '68.

MJ: Lula Mae and Cora Mack and someone else and myself I thought in that picture.

PC: I don't have the photograph here right this moment but I know one of them was Johnnie Mae Dixon or Johnnie Mae Gambrell. I'm sorry I can't recall the names but we know that they were separate. I was just wondering if you recall anything about how they went about that and how they did their...

MJ: The teachers chose the candidates for Miss Diboll Day.

PC: The teachers chose the candidates of who was going to run?

MJ: Who was going to run.

PC: Okay, and how did they determine the queen?

MJ: Who raised the most money. (laughter)

PC: Okay, just like the white queens. What activities did they do to raise money within the community?

MJ: I know my dad gave dances for me. I don't know how the other ones did.

PC: And you were a runner up in '65?

MJ: Yes.

PC: Actually it was every other year, and it was even years. So that is why that '65 date threw me off. I think I read where you were a runner up in '65 but...so they just had community activities and raised money just like we did. Did y'all participate in the parade or anything?

MJ: Yes we did.

PC: Was it a separate parade or was it the one, you know, parade? Did y'all participate in the parade with...

MJ: It was the Diboll Day parade. I think we were put in the back but we participated in the Diboll Day parade.

PC: Okay, so you do remember that. Was that the year you participated as a queen candidate?

MJ: Yes, right.

PC: Okay. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me that I have failed to ask about?

MJ: No, I believe that covers it all. We were very fortunate to live in a community where we came together. We are not fooled that there is not some prejudice, but you can't let that stifle your destination on how you want to go. Because, we do realize that prejudice is taught because when kids are brought into this world they have no idea of color. And it's still around, but as far as Diboll I feel like we have always gotten along compared to the other places that had a whole lot of adverse fights and so forth going on.

PC: Right, I think Diboll is very unique, you know, in a lot of ways. Mrs. Lorine is there anything that you care to share with me that I have failed to ask in regards to integration or regards to your school days, or to just Diboll community as a whole?

LS: It's just been a wonderful place for me to live and raise my children, and I've been around. I say, my father worked at Temple about forty years and everything was smooth. I mean it...

PC: And what was your father's name?

LS: Joe Rodgers.

PC: Joe Rodgers.

LS: He was named after, well they had the same name of the café man you was talking about.

PC: Were y'all related to that family?

LS: I don't think. I had heard something that we might be down the line or something, somewhere. But, it never was brought forth to me in any relationships. It was like we were all kin.

MJ: They were related to my aunt, the Rodgers that owned the café, they were related to Aunt Earnestine that lives in Houston.

LS: I have been asked that over the years but, my father and mom didn't talk about it. So, I don't know that we were.

PC: I noticed here on my notes, you graduated in 1960 from H. G. Temple School. And you attended H. G. Temple School all your school years?

LS: Yes.

PC: Is there anything about your early elementary days as far as the teachers, the campus, the facilities, that you could share with me to give us some insight on that time frame of H. G. Temple?

LS: It was very educational and it was a fun time.

PC: Who was the principal in your elementary years?

MJ: It wasn't Bradley?

LS: No, yes it might have been.

PC: You would have started first grade in late '48 or '49. Do you remember anything specific about your first grade year and starting to school?

LS: No.

MJ: Y'all had an older building though, didn't you?

LS: Yes, I was going to get to that. We had an older building. It was like a wood frame and we had...I can remember my older sisters, they had to put on plays. Just like in the movies, and they would act. We had some good actors and actresses and actors. And they had plays that seemed so real to me. So that was our activities. They would have it at night through the week sometime on a Friday. This one particular building we went to school in, it had a partition and they could take the partition down and make the auditorium, make it larger where we could have like an auditorium, when they called for meetings and stuff. What you call it?

PC: Like assemblies?

LS: Yes, assemblies, that is what I'm getting at. So, every time...it was a heater in there and every time it would go off it would roar, start roaring and the class that was in the other side would come through there, knock the boys down, come through and out the door they would go because, it would have this loud roaring noise. So that was our break. (laughter) Whenever the heater would, I don't know what it was, but it was just fun, enjoyable. We didn't think anything of it that we were going to school in this old building.

PC: It was just the normal?

LS: Just the normal. We didn't have any...

PC: How long did you work at the Pine Bough?

LS: I think I worked until I graduated because I only did it in the afternoons when I got out of school. I worked until close and then on Sunday through the lunch hour. I was washing dishes.

MJ: Forty-seven cents an hour.

LS: Yes, forty-seven cents an hour. In fact when I retired from Temple, Kathy, I don't know her last name, she was looking over my file and she said, "I see where you worked for Temple at The Pine Bough for forty-seven cents an hour." This was over at the big office. Well, when I officially retired at 65 I had to go over there and she was telling me, we were looking at my background, and she saw where I was working for forty-seven cents an hour. That was good money. (laughter)

PC: You retired from Temple?

LS: I retired from Temple. I worked twenty-five years out there.

PC: And where did you work?

LS: Plywood Plant and Fiberboard.

PC: Plywood and Fiberboard. Do you recall any experiences during those early integration years that you want to share?

LS: It wasn't anything, you know, it was just normal. We just accepted what went on because we knew that it was just like no one's fault. In fact, sometimes at the Dairy Kream we didn't just have to go to the colored or the white. We went to the front. We went to the white side too.

PC: Are you referring to the Dairy Kream?

LS: Yes, the old Dairy Kream.

PC: The one by the old Monk Warner Station?

LS: Yes.

PC: And is this during your school days you're talking about?

LS: Yes, during my school days.

MJ: I think the Pine Bough, probably the only segregated place we had, you know, and the theatre.

LS: That was all.

MJ: That we felt segregated.

PC: That you felt segregated?

MJ: Yes.

PC: And, that was during your school days?

LS: Because some of the out of town people we served them in the back, you know. It was clean, it wasn't, you know, it was just a little room and we had very few people come, even stopping here in Diboll. We didn't have any, maybe every now and then we would get some blacks to come in maybe going through town. We never did have...I don't remember ever serving any black home town people in the back.

PC: When the out of town people stopped by, how were they treated if they came in?

LS: We would be the ones to serve them.

PC: Y'all would go and serve them?

LS: The cooks and the workers in the back.

PC: But, they were accepted and...

LS: Most of them wanted a hamburger or something like that.

PC: Okay.

MJ: And they could come through the front?

LS: No.

PC: Oh okay, they came to the back and y'all waited on them. That is just the way it was and everybody knew that was the way it was, okay.

LS: We very seldom had a lot of people. Compared to a Sunday, like I say, the line for the white people would be out the door and down the street.

PC: Yes ma'am. (laughter) Now how would the out of town people know to come to the backdoor? Was that just the normal overall?

LS: Everybody just knew.

PC: Everybody just knew that is what you did, okay. And then the local people did the same?

LS: Yes, it wasn't many.

PC: It wasn't many. Well they had a lot of restaurants and different things in the black community didn't they?

MJ: Right.

PC: Can you name some of those establishments, you know, Mrs. Lorine during your early days, in your young days of places that maybe were in business?

LS: Rodgers Café was probably the only one I knew.

MJ: Mitchells Café, Joe Diamond.

PC: Okay. Well, you know, our goal here at the History Center is to collect as much information as we can about integration and of course we are always wanting to collect more history on the black community and H. G. Temple School. We are just really focusing on this particular project while we still can. It won't be long this will be...

LS: Well, like my memory.

PC: Yes ma'am.

LS: And other people know a lot more than I do, you know, that is older than me. You take our Auntie, Joy Mae, she could probably tell you a book.

PC: Yes ma'am.

LS: She has a lot of knowledge still and that is great.

PC: Now, are you referring to Joy Mae Smith?

LS: Yes.

MJ: My auntie.

PC: She is on our list. I'm planning to call her next week and try to set up an interview with her.

MJ: She knows a lot.

PC: Okay.

LS: Because they are going.

PC: That is right, that is right. Well ladies I really appreciate you all spending time with me today and helping us collect this part of our history. I thank you for participating in this interview.

MJ: Well, we thank you for asking me and I hope we helped in some kind of way.

PC: Yes you did! Thank you again.

LS: Thank you!

END OF INTERVIEW