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Interview no. 765

Ruth Nash King

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Ruth Nash King (1920 -)
INTERVIEWER: Charlotte Ivy
PROJECT: History of Blacks in El Paso
DATE OF INTERVIEW: October 29, 1985
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted
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TRANSCRIBER: Rebecca Craver

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Born and raised in El Paso, attended Douglass School and colleges in Tennessee, returned to El Paso in 1964.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Discusses social and cultural activities of blacks in El Paso during the 20s, 30s, and 40s.

Length of Interview: 1 hour Length of Transcript 26 pages

Ruth King
October 29, 1985
By Charlotte Ivy
History of Blacks in El Paso

This is an interview with Mrs. Ruth Nash King being conducted October 29, 1985. Her address is 7925 Parral, El Paso. Her telephone number is 598-8260. This interview will concern black history in El Paso. My name is Charlotte Ivy; my address is 1409 Camino Alto; telephone 532-2376. My zip code is 79902.

I: Well, this is primarily to help me with my paper on black history in El Paso. So I made up some questions and then if there's anything that you think I haven't covered or any information that you have, then we can just kind of fill it in as we go along.

K: All right.

I: When did your family come to El Paso?

K: Now if you want me to get dates, I'll have to go back and try to get exact dates. Uh, my mother first came here I'd say somewhere around, between 1910 and 1915.

I: What was her name?

K: Her name was Rosalee Shanklin.

I: How old was she when she came?

K: Let's see. [slight interruption]

I: So your mama was about 20 years old when she came? And she came to live with her ...?

K: She came to stay with her older sister. It wasn't a permanent arrangement at that time. I think ... Anyway, she was ill and the

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family sent her out here to help.

I: What was her older sister's name, do you remember?

K: Oh, my goodness sakes. Just like that. Genevieve, I believe. We might have to go back over this and correct it. I think it was Genevieve.

I: And her last name was ?

K: Her married name was Townes. Her maiden name was Shanklin.

I: Well I can look in the city directory and get some information. Do you know what Mrs. Townes' husband did here?

K: No, I really don't.

I: And then your mama came in 1910. She was 20. What happened after that?

K: She came about 1915, somewhere along in there. What happened after that. Well, my dad was apparently already here, established because he was working for the railroad. He met her on the train. That's how they met.

I: On her journey out here?

K: Uh huh. [Yes]

I: What was his name?

K: Isiah Nash.

I: Isiah Nash. About how old was he when he met your mama?

K: Never did really know his age, that's a fact. He was much older than she was. I would say at least 10 or 15 years older than she was.

I: And he was a railroad porter?

K: Uh huh. [Yes]

I: A pullman porter?

K: No. He worked on the car, the coach train.

I: How long had he been here?

K: I don't know. I really don't know. In his conversations it was never clear to me and I never specifically asked at the time. I just really

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don't think about those things at the time. But he had been here for awhile before he met her.

I: Was this his home?

K: Oh, no. He's from Mississippi. When he met her he was living here.

I: Do you know where he was living? What part of town?

K: I think he was probably living in what is now considered South El Paso, like in Second Ward area.

I: Did he talk about his job? Was he a porter also when you were born?

K: Yes.

I: When did they marry?

K: They married about 1919. We can get that exactly. I wish you had told me you wanted dates.

I: Oh, that's o.k. Approximately.

K: Well, I was born in 1920, so they married about 1919. I was the first child.

I: He was a porter all through your growing up years?

K: Yes. He had retired very shortly before he died. He always said that they retired and died. He died in '58.

I: What was his job on the train?

K: He was a porter.

I: But I mean, what did that mean?

K: How can I describe it? They were sort of responsible for the order of the cars, so to speak. They passed out the pillows. They put out the little gadget to help the people off the train. He sort of backed up the conductor. Actually the conductor was the person who was supposed to pick up your tickets and check and be sure you were on the right train and what not, but lots of times, depending on how ambitious the conductor

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was, it might have been the porter that ended up doing the job, you see. That sort of thing. But basically he was I guess the same thing you would have in a hotel only, only on a train.

I: Did he ever talk about the Jim Crow car?

K: Well, it was a fact of life. I knew that much from my early growing up.

I: Did you ride in it?

K: Yes.

I: What was it like?

K: To me it was no problem at the time. I didn't realize that it was a problem. I do know that on at least one occasion, probably more, he went to New Mexico and purchased tickets for us on a Pullman car and then when the train got to El Paso we got on the Pullmans and went to Chicago or wherever it was. So we bypassed the Jim Crow car, but I have ridden in the Jim Crow car.

I: The dividing line apparently was El Paso when you were coming west.

K: Uh huh. West or North. As soon as you got to New Mexico, then there was no problem. There was no Jim Crow cars.

I: On the train, what did you do if you wanted to eat or drink? Was there service provided?

K: There was service provided. You could go into the dining car and they had one end of the car with curtains between you and the rest of the passengers and you could sit there and you could eat. You'd have the same thing every one else had, but you had to be in a restricted area.

I: And the restroom facilities. Were they?

K: In your coach.

I: Was your mother educated?

K: No, she was a high school graduate. Country school. And my dad only had

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a third grade education.

I: But they could read and write?

K: Oh, yeah. My dad could read and write and he started taking music about the same time I did. I should say he never got past about the first or second levels but he enjoyed it. Well, I mean the idea to me was that he was still learning, so to speak, and he did keep abreast of what was going on and I'm sure that he must have taught himself to read over the years.

I: When you starting taking music, how old were you? A little girl?

K: Yeah, a little girl.

I: Did you take from a black teacher?

K: Yes. Her name was Mrs. Caveness.

I: And was this piano?

K: Yes.

I: Did she live nearby?

K: Well, I could walk to her house for my lesson.

I: Were there many music teachers here in town?

K: I can give you the name of one who is still here and she might could tell you how many there were. I don't know how many there were really.

I: What I'm interested in finding out is about the professionals, how many professionals we had in the black community here. And the teachers, from whatever information I've been able to get out of some of the books, a music teacher was considered professional along with other teachers. Not necessarily a music teacher in the school.

K: Well now most of these were also I think school teachers.

I: Did they teach music in the school or they could have taught other subjects.

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K: They would have been teaching, other than vocal music, they would have been teaching other subjects I'm sure. We didn't have any piano music, instruments in the school at that time. We did have choirs, of course, and this sort of thing.

I: Did you have a piano to accompany you in school?

K: Oh, yes.

I: But you didn't have any facilities to ...

K: to teach piano in school, no.

I: When you got sick, or your daddy or mama, where did you all go for medical care?

K: We were never, with the exception of my dad, we were never hospitalized while I was growing up. I'm guessing they would probably go to the county hospital. My dad working for the railroad, they had facilities at Hotel Dieu for railroad employees. That's where he could go.

I: But not for their family?

K: Well, as I said, I wasn't very observant. I don't know if families went there or not. We didn't go as a family but we never needed hospitalization.

I: What about your mama when she had her babies.

K: At home. They were delivered by a doctor. Dr. Nixon delivered me. Me and my sisters, yeah. He delivered us all.

I: Do you recall the name of any of the railroad doctors that your daddy ever mentioned?

K: No, I don't. What I can do I hope, I'm not sure, for a long time at least until they closed the house where we grew up, my dad used to keep all of his bills, things like that. My sister and I may have gotten rid of 'em, but there would be names on them is what I'm saying and claims to the

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insurance company and this sort of thing. I remember seeing them, but I don't whether we kept them all these years.

I: Interesting bits of information in boxes.

K: I thought it fascinating reading when we were down there trying to get things together to close up the house.

I: When your family would go out for entertainment, where did you go? In the evenings or for a day trip out with your family?

K: Day trip out with the family might be, frequently was on Sundays seemingly, to go to visit farm friends down the valley, we called it, down at Fabens, McNary.

I: Did you have a car?

K: Oh, yeah, we had a car. We always had a car.

I: What kind of car did you have, do you remember?

K: It was a monstrosity, with curtains on the side. What was that thing? And then later on we had a little Ford, with little spindly wheels. Seems like that old thing was a Packard. Great big thing. You'd get lost in the backseat practically. And then later on a Ford.

I: Did you go to movies or to Juarez?

K: Sometimes we would go to Juarez to eat, we would have a meal in Juarez. I know now it was because we couldn't go here. But at the time it was just an outing to me. I did not go to the movies very much. I was definitely discouraged from going because we had to go through the side or back or whatever it was and sit in the balcony. And so I tell my husband now that's why I'm not a movie fan. I didn't grow up with the tradition of attending movies. There was one point here where one of the black teachers attempted to open a movie theater for us. It didn't succeed but she did try and we would go to movies there. She had sort of a large

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house where she could have sort of a small theater. Her name was Mrs. Phillips. I can't remember her first name. She was one of our school teachers.

I: Do you recall the name of the theater was that you did attend?

K: Yes. I went to the Crawford on Texas Street and there was one on El Paso Street. Do you know El Paso well enough to know the street that goes down beside Paso Del Norte? There used to be a Colon Theater in there. It was the last one I remember there. But there was something else in there that was not Colon. It was not segregated either incidentally. Even in those days it was kind of bad theater, but it was not segregated.

I: Was it a Mexican theater, Spanish speaking?

K: Yeah. It had a Mexican name. I could go there sometime, but I used to really have to beg to get to go to the movies. Didn't go too often.

I: What did you all do for vacations. Did you leave town?

K: Yes, we would usually leave town because we had the privilege of riding on the train with my dad's pass. We could all ride free on the passes. And my mother had family. When we were very small most of the time we went back down in Texas to her family. And other times, she had a sister living in the Los Angeles area and we would go to see her.

I: Did your mother work outside the home?

K: No, she didn't.

I: Did you all have a radio?

K: Yes.

I: Did you have a phone?

K: Yes.

I: Do you remember when the movie came out, "Gone With the Wind?"

K: Yes, I remember, but it was years later before I saw it. I didn't see it

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when it was first released.

I: There was a lady here in town that tried to get the theater to open up its doors to the black community here because she felt they should see the movie.

K: What year was that, do you know?

I: I was thinking it was 1939 or 1934, I'm not sure about the date.

K: I think I probably saw it in Nashville after I'd gone there.

I: Do you remember the streetcars here? Did you ride them?

K: Yes. Sometimes.

I: Do you remember sitting at the back?

K: Yes. I knew I had to sit at the back.

I: Were there signs that said you did?

K: Yes. If I remember correct, on our streetcars here there was a little something up against the side. I don't want to confuse you, 'cause in New Orleans you move the plate, you move the back. If you get on and the seats behind you are filled, you just move the sign forward and sit down, just like that. But I think ours was just a little stationary sign.

I: Was there ever a boycott of the streetcars here because of segregation?

K: I understand that during the war years - I wasn't here - some of the soldiers from Ft. Bliss did, I don't know what you call it, it wasn't a boycott. They just got on and sat down.

I: Was this during World War II?

K: [Yes].

I: So they just decided they were going to sit where they wanted to and people just allowed it?

K: Apparently it didn't cause too much of a disturbance, I don't know. I wasn't here.

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I: How do you feel about growing up here?. Apparently from what you've said so far, you didn't realize you couldn't go to restaurants here.

K: Not consciously, I really didn't. It seems there were one or two places we could go down in South El Paso, and to me, I mean, it's just like you hear the jokes all the time about people didn't know they were deprived. I felt I had a pretty good life, you know overall, until I grew up and left and came back and looked at things differently. But I had friends in my own neighborhood and we played usual children's games. We had parties, picnics, and this sort of thing and I just thought that's the way it was .

I: You went to Douglas School?

K: [Yes.]

I: You started out there in the first grade?

K: [Yes.]

I: What was it like in school there? What were the courses that you took?

K: Well, I guess in elementary school we took the usual reading, writing, and learning to spell, social studies.

I: So you had all the basics like the white schools did.

K: Oh yeah, this was considered a very good school. The graduates from our school had no trouble getting into colleges because they felt we had good backgrounds. We did. We had very good teachers, I think, and I'm sure they went out of their ways many times to make little extras for us. Because people are always surprised, when I talk to people my own age in other areas, when I tell them we had black history in our school. They think that is most unusual, but we did have a black history course in high school.

I: That's wonderful. Was there one particular teacher that taught it?

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K: Yes. Her name was Mrs. Collins.

I: Was her husband by any chance a barber?

K: No, her husband was a doctor.

I: Oh. What year was this?

K: Somewhere in the first half of the 30s, I guess.

I: Where did you shop? Oh, there's something else I want to ask about the school before that. Did you have a sports program in the school? Football team, baseball team?

K: Uh, I'm pretty sure we played each other.

I: Within the school.

K: [Yes]. 'Cause I can remember playing basketball, things like that, but I'm pretty sure it was teams that were built within the school. I don't believe we played other schools, at the time I was there. I think this happened a little later on, but not while I was there.

I: What about when you wanted to shop, get your hair done. Where did you go?

K: Well, to get our hair done, we went to black shops. But to buy clothing we went downtown. There were no other stores to go to, so we did go downtown, I'm sure. I think the only thing that really set us apart was that they had separate bathrooms and drinking fountains.

I: Were you allowed to try the clothes on?

K: As far as I know, yes. I can't remember ... I can remember trying on shoes for sure. And I'm sure we tried on dresses, too.

I: That's one thing I had heard was different here. That blacks were allowed to try on clothes.

K: Yes. As far as I know I've never heard of any instance where ... I mean, I was not confronted with it that I know of.

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I: You talked about having your hair done in black shops. WERE these in the barber shops or were there black beauticians?

K: Black beauticians.

I: Where did they get their training?

K: I think lots of them went as far away as San Antonio, did their training and then got their license.

I: Did they provide the service out of their home?

K: Frequently they provided the service out of their home and some of them would set aside a space within their home to do it and two in our neighborhood that I know of had shops that were home was here and shop was here. But they did have a shop with wash bowls and a counter for their instruments and what not.

I: Do you have any idea or can you remember how many people you knew that were beauticians?

K: I think there were quite a few.

I: So there was more than just one or two here?

K: Yes.

I: What about employment opportunities for a young person growing up. If you wanted to have some money?

K: What kind of jobs?

I: Were there paper routes?

K: The only black paper delivered that I can remember was the Pittsburgh Courier. And that was a national paper, not just a local paper. They would be shipped in here and some of the kids would have them.

I: Some of the shops that were owned by blacks that you remember going into, do you remember the kinds of shops?

K: I can remember that we had a druggist here who had a drugstore.

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I: Grocery store or meat market?

K: Seems like ... I can't remember a grocery store.

I: What about barber shops?

K: There were barber shops.

I: Did they serve both whites and blacks?

K: I don't think in the same shop.

I: Not in the same shop.

K: There were some barbers who worked in white shops and some worked in black shops.

I: Who do you remember being the most successful blacks in the community when you were growing up? What did they do?

K: The teachers.

I: And there were quite a few teachers?

K: Yes. Because the whole school system for blacks were taught by black teachers. First through high school, we were all there in the same building. In addition they had a manual arts teacher who taught trades to the boys. The principal was black. The whole group was black teachers, and they were I think the persons who had the most influence in the community.

I: They were the ones that you say would be the leaders in the community.

K: Yes.

I: What about Dr. Nixon?

K: We did not realize growing up that he had. It's after that that you look back, but to us he was just a real nice guy who was our doctor. I don't know what my parents thought about what he was doing, but I had to read about it after I grew up.

I: Do you remember discrimination being talked about around you at all as

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you grew older or was it a topic of conversation among the teenagers or the older people?

K: It was a topic of conversation sometime more or less in kind of a humorous thing, but it was sincere, it was deep, it was felt I'm sure. Someone might make a joke about "What do you think is going to happen. You think the black is going to rub off on you or something." This sort of thing.

I: How do you view growing up in El Paso opposed to someone maybe that grew up in Dallas, the way you were raised and community you saw as El Paso as opposed to the way they were raised in Dallas and what they had to face?

K: Well, when I went away to school and met people my own age from other areas in the country, I realize we didn't have it so bad. That there were things that had happened to them and the experiences that they had had that I had not had and I think the group I was a part of had not had, so that we more or less attribute ours to the fact that there were so few of us that nobody really bothered too much about just a small group of blacks in this community. I don't know if that's just our way of rationalizing it or it was true.

I: You know the KKK did not pay any attention to blacks in this community.

K: No, they were after the Mexicans.

I: And the Catholics. So for some reason, it could be the size of the population - I'm sure it had something to do with it. Were you ever afraid here because you were black?

K: [No].

I: And you don't think your parents were afraid?

K: No, they never gave me that impression.

I: I have really felt like El Paso really has been different. And also I

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think, I'm doing some study as far as San Antonio is concerned, but I think having the Mexican, the multi cultures has probably helped also. Did you have Mexican friends?

K: I lived nextdoor to a Mexican family that I played with when I was small. As we grew older, when it was time to go to parties and things, we had gone our separate ways. But I did have Mexican friends, pre-school and early school.

I: Did your separation from your friends as you grew older, was that because of your color or their culture? Because you went to different schools or ?

K: We went to different schools and really sincerely underlying it, I think it was color.

I: But it wasn't something at the time that you really ...?

K: That we really thought about but I think that color might have had something to do with it, I really do, coming from the parents perhaps.

I: Do you remember ...? Were you here in the 60s?

K: No. I went away to school. When I finished high school, I left and except for vacations or short trips, I didn't come back. 60s. Let's see. We came back here, '64. Yeah, I was here for part of the '60s.

I: There was an anti-discrimination ordinance in '62.

K: I wasn't here. I heard all about it. Even read something about it while I was away, but I wasn't here at the time.

I: Where were you?

K: Let's see. I was with my husband in Germany when the ordinance was passed.

I: Did you meet your husband here in town?

K: [Yes]. He was in the Army, stationed here.

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I: And when did you all marry?

K: '51.

I: What were you doing prior to your marriage, after you graduated from high school?

K: I went to a School of Nursing in Nashville, Tennessee. Harry Medical College. I graduated there and I received a Rockefeller fellowship for a year's study at the University of Toronto and then the stipulation was that you would give service in return for your fellowship, so I returned to Nashville and while I was working I enrolled in Fisk and did my undergraduate study in sociology while I was working. And so I just never came back to El Paso after I graduated from school. I met Freddy one summer when I came home for a visit.

I: Did a lot of kids that graduated from high school leave here to go on to college.

K: You had a question a while ago that I had meant to answer at that point. There were no opportunities here and I would say that I can't think of any of the group that I grew up with that went away to college that came back to try to make it here. I had two classmates who are still here but one went to college for one year, had to drop out after one year, and the other one did not go to college. And they got employment here and stayed, but the ones that went to college just at that time never came back. We knew there was just nothing for us, so we didn't come back.

I: Was the fact that there was nothing here for you because El Paso was small and there was little industry here to employ you or were the doors closed to you for employment?

K: I think the doors were pretty well closed to us.

I: What if you did not go away to college, what could you do? What did your

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friends do that stayed here?

K: One of the ones that stayed here got a job with Pittsburgh Glass and stayed there. He learned the trade and what not and retired from there fairly recently. And the other one became a Pullman porter and stayed here. He worked out of El Paso all of his life and I think he has retired now. And one went to the post office.

I: Did you look to the Army post here for employment at all?

K: I don't think so.

I: I know that you had your own churches. What about if someone died in your community, what happened? Who took care of the body?

K: We had a black undertaker. I can't remember how far back, but it seems about as far back as I can remember there was a black undertaker here. He had Banks Funeral Home.

I: Was his name Banks?

K: [Yes]. He was a preacher and an undertaker.

I: What church was he the pastor of?

K: Uh, they moved out here ... Uh, uh, uh. It'll probably come to me.

I: He was the one who took care of somebody when they died. And where were they buried?

K: There was a section - there is a section - of Concordia that was set aside for blacks.

I: Are people still buried there today?

K: I think there might be a few spaces still left. For example, we have a family plot there so that if we should ever want to any one of us, we could.

I: Who took care of that, say in the 20s, 30s, 40s. Who was responsible for taking care of the cemetery?

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K: No we have had I don't know if you know that they are going through a big hassle about who owns the cemetery right now. But the person who has been in charge of selling plots and what not also took care for a fee. Since the time my father died and was buried there, my sister and I have paid a yearly fee. There are other families that go out and do their own but for the most part it is a neglected cemetery.

I: So there was no organized care?

K: No, no perpetual care or anything like that.

I: Were there mixed marriages that you can remember growing up?

K: No, I can't remember any mixed marriages. I can remember some mixed couples that for all practical purposes the kids had a stable home, but the parents were not married.

I: They were not legally married.

K: No.

I: Did the children go to your school?

K: [Yes.]

I: So they were considered black?

K: [Yes.]

I: Were the mixed marriages primarily between ...? Well, tell me.

K: One was a black man and a Mexican woman and one was a black woman and a white man. In my own neighborhood these were the two I knew the most about.

I: Do you think that most of the mixed marriages were between the Mexicans and the blacks?

K: I don't know because as I said in my personal experience there was one of each. I don't think so. Just echoes of things that you hear when you're growing up.

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I: Are there any other memories [you have] that you thought were ever unusual about the way you lived different from other people?

K: So far as race is concerned? Is that what you are principally interested in?

I: Well, with your black community here. Did you feel like there was a community of people?

K: Yes, I really did. I was talking with someone after my first conversation with you and as we talked about various things that happened, I said she wants to know about growing up here and it's been so long since I've had to think about it, I don't know whether I'll have anything to offer. There was a social club here - and I haven't had a chance to follow through on it. I'm not sure if it was Phillis Wheatley. You've heard about Phillis Wheatley I imagine by this time. It may have been members of Phillis Wheatley, but I've gotten the name of a person who might could help you out on that. These ladies would sponsor girls in the community. And I remember that my sponsor's name was Mary Webb. Have you run across her before? Because the park that's there at Missouri Center was dedicated and named for her. That's what brought it up. I went back the other day to see if I could find the plaque or the name that had been there. When they remodeled the park evidently they took it down, so it is something that I'm really interested in seeing what can be done about it. She was the one that sponsored me. But what they would do, they would have little meetings. I imagine they were probably mostly on Sunday because these were mostly school teachers, and we would have little teas so that they could teach us the social graces, this sort of thing. Then we would have a party and get all dressed up. I can remember that one of the dresses that I had

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was a white organdy with ruffles on it. And then I thought it was a little unusual - it was nice, but it was unusual. And I think what they were trying to do was sort of try to fill the void for things that we couldn't do.

I: What about other clubs that perhaps your daddy or your mama belonged to. Did they go out and attend any functions?

K: No, they were mostly church. My dad worked very hard of course being on the ...?...and most of the time when he was not working was church activities. Both he and my mother because you know at that time they would have a full program at church.

I: What church did they belong to?

K: Second Baptist.

I: Did they teach Sunday School?

K: Oh, no. Neither one of them were capable of that type of activity. My mother was too much of a retiring person and my dad didn't have the educational background. So they were not involved as leaders in the church, but they were good members.

I: Do you ever remember any group that was referred to as an elite group of blacks or the Colored 400?

K: No, I've tried to find out since you asked me. I haven't found anyone yet that knows anything about that. Is what you're saying it was at the turn of the century?

I: That's the information I found out; it was the turn of the century. What about Mary Webb? Who was Mary Webb?

K: Uh, other than being a very active member of the community, I don't know. That's why I'm very concerned too. I want to find out some more about her because this dedication to the park came up when I was away. It was

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after I had finished high school and before I came back here and someone just casually mentioned one day that they had named a park for Mary Webb and I didn't follow through at that time.

I: So she may have been one of the very influential women in the black community in the 20s, 30s, and 40s. That's when she was your sponsor, right?

K: Yeah.

I: I think that's probably all the questions I have for right now. Do you have any documents or diaries or pictures or do you know of anybody that does that would be worthwhile saving for the black community here?

K: Yeah. Well, let me try to find something like that for you. The only thing I could think of off hand would be family pictures, but that would be of just family outings and get togethers and this sort of thing. Weddings,...

I: What was the home address of where you were raised?

K: 2925 and 2923 Madero; just east of Piedras, the first block east of Piedras.

I: Was there a black section of town?

K: There were more blacks living in Second Ward than any other part of town. There were a few of us scattered around in other areas. As I said before, uh, there was another black family on our block and there was an apartment house across the street and a black family next to [that]. The Abrahams had a store and apartment. The apartment faced Piedras Street and their tenants were not black. The store, then a black family, then two Mexican families, then us, then a Mexican family, on our side of the block. And then over on the next street there might have been two or three black families. We all lived in the same general area: from

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Durazno Street over to Tularosa.

I: But it wasn't really considered a black neighborhood like so many of the southern towns developed later?

K: No. Like my son when we went to Houston when he was small. He said "You just go for miles and miles and never see anything but black people." He had never seen anything like that because here you don't get that sort of thing.

I: When you mentioned going out to eat in town in two areas of South El Paso, were the restaurants that you went to owned by blacks?

K: [Yes.]

I: So we have black restaurant owners. Do you remember who they were, the names of the restaurants or the people?

K: I'll ask Freddy when we finish this and he can probably answer if you want to follow through on that. One was the Canton Cafe that was owned by Chinese. And a couple of black places down there.

I: So you were welcome in the chinese restaurants?

K: Yes. In that particular one. I don't know how many there were, but we did for that one.

I: What about hotels here?

K: There was a black hotel.

Side B

I: There were black people who had boarders?

K: I think there were some in that area of town that had boarders.

I: Were they more on a permanent basis or did they act as hotels also?

K: They were families that would rent rooms so to speak, yeah, if you mean permanent.

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I: So it wasn't for people who were just passing through.

K: No. These were probably for single men who were working in this area and this sort of thing.

I: Do you remember what your mama cooked or what you ate? Did you eat Mexican food here?

K: No. Not too much here, although my husband accuses me of growing up on beans and tortillas. We ate mostly southern foods really. There were some southern dishes that we were not familiar with because as you know your parents decided what you eat and the things that my mother didn't like, she didn't cook so to speak. But I was familiar with ... Didn't eat too many greens because I had to learn how to cook greens after I married him. He liked them. But we ate string beans and peas and corn and tomatoes and macaroni and rice and steak and chicken.

I: So you weren't influenced by the Mexican culture then as far as what you ate?

K: No. We weren't, because she cooked the things she had been accustomed to as she was growing up.

I: Probably more so today we eat more Mexican food. Let's check on the social clubs then. If you think of anyone else besides the teachers.

K: Were you particularly interested in learning more about the people that worked on the railroads?

I: Yes.

K: I have a classmate as I mentioned before. I hadn't thought about him until today named Thomas Jones. I think he has retired, but he worked out of here as a Pullman porter during his working years. I might could find out how to get in touch with him. There is also a - he was recently ordained so I have to remember to call him reverend - Reverend Berry,

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Buddy Berry worked on the railroad for years. He knew my dad. He is younger, a younger man than my dad of course. I think my dad was sort of a mentor to him when he first started out. But he loves to talk and he could probably tell you a lot about railroading in this area.

I: Well, that would be great. I appreciate that. I want to thank you very much for the interview.

I: We were talking about the NAACP and L. W. Washington was one of the ones that helped.

K: Yes, I think that he could possibly be considered a charter member of the group here in El Paso as far as I've been able to find out and I know that he worked with the group for a long time and was very influential in its activities in this community. There was a junior branch here and I did belong. I can't remember too many of the details at the moment but
... .

I: You don't remember any of the functions, what you did?

K: I think one of the things he was successful in doing was to make sure that we had a day at the local public park. Washington Park was the big park at the time and I think some how or other we did have a day there. Maybe it was the 19th. of June or something. I can't remember now. I know there was some such activities there.

I: This program that you're showing me here is from the Chorall Club of El Paso and it states that it of a branch of the NAACP and it was held at the Second Baptist Church on May 20, 1919. Mrs. M. Hogarth, pianist and musical director. Mr. Leroy White was president, and Mr. L.W. Washington was secretary. The members of the club, one of the members was Mrs. Charles H. Caveness was your music teachers. Mrs. Lee J. Chisholm was

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the founder of the sorority?

K: Yes. She was one of the founders of the sorority that I belong to. That is Delta Sigma Theta. It's a national sorority, founded at Howard University in 1913 in Washington D. C.

I: Did you know of the activities of the NAACP when you were growing up? Do you remember anything that they were doing?

K: Not really. My parents did belong to that organization. My father firmly believed in it. I don't know how active they were. As I said before they did not assume leadership roles, but they did belong to organizations and take part in activities that they believed in strongly.

I: Do you remember anything about Booker T. Washington here in the community? Was there a day? Early on, like 1918, 1919, they had Health Week which was something that he really promoted and Dr. Nixon took part in it. I don't know how long it continued.

K: Well, that would have been possibly before I was old enough to really know what was going on.

I: I didn't know how long it continued, whether in the 20s or 30s.

K: Probably not into the 30s because I would have remembered that at that age.

I: On the back of this program there are some businesses listed. Purtle Tailoring Company.

K: He was a black in the community, I believe. Someone remembered his name but I couldn't find anything else about that.

I: At 603 East San Antonio Street. It says hand-tailored suits, cleaning, pressing, and laundry and Mr. Purtle was the owner. And First Class Drugs. Do you know anything about Williams Drugstore? This was at 106 South Campbell Street, says all kind of toilet articles, cigars, ice

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cream, cold drinks in season at Williams Drugstore. And then Joe Sheridan. Expert tailoring, cleaning, and repairing. Pants made in one day and this was at 314 South Oregon Street.

K: Yes, apparently there were businesses in that area.

I: All of these streets, San Antonio, South Campbell, and Oregon Street all in South El Paso?

K: All in South El Paso, [yes.]

I: Considered Second Ward?

End of interview