Keep the Heritage Alive!

Claude Hursey

Claude Hursey was born in Mississippi, the son of a Greek father and an African-American mother. His mother brought her son to Bloomington when he was about thirteen. His memories of Bloomington at the time of the World War I and after are very strong. He worked in the baggage department at the railroad for many years, but he is better remembered for his long association with the Third Ward Club.

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Additional Information:

- Claude Hursey about Revy (Revelation) Rhoades
- Bibliography

Keep the Heritage Alive! HOME

MCMH Home

Transcription of Oral History

Narrator: Claude Hursey
Interviewer: Mildred Pratt
Date: March 30, 1988

Side A

CH My name is Claude Hursey.

MP Your place of residence.

CH 913 W. Monroe Street, Bloomington.

MP When did you come to Bloomington?

CH I came to Bloomington in 1918.

MP Where were you living before you came to Bloomington?

CH In Mississippi.

MP And do you remember the name of the town?

CH Okolona, Mississippi

MP And you came when?

CH Well, we came to St. Louis in 1916 and stayed about four months. We went back to Mississippi and came back to Champaign and stayed in Champaign until August, 1918. And then we came to Bloomington.

MP How did your family decide to leave Mississippi, do you remember?

CH Well, we had a brother that lived in Champaign, and we had a sister that lived here. So they just decided they wanted us to come up. My mother and myself and my other brother George.

MP And did your father come with you?

CH No, my father died in 1916. He was in Athens, Greece.

MP Was your father born in Greece?

CH Right.

MP What do you remember about your father?

CH I just remember seeing him and everything.

MP He went back to Greece?

CH Yeah, one of my brothers, Andrew, went back to Greece with him.

MP And did your brother remain there?

CH Four years, and then he came back to the states.

MP Was your father in business? Would you tell me about your father's business ventures?

CH Well, he had a store and everything down in Okolona, Mississippi. He had some farms and stuff like that.

MP Do you remember when your father married your mother?

CH No, I don't.

MP You don't remember that. And you don't remember how your father happened to come to this country from Greece?

CH No, I don't.

MP I guess he came with that flood of immigrants, perhaps, in the late 1800's. You think so?

CH I don't have the slightest idea.

MP What was his name?

CH George.

MP What was his last name?

CH Cologero. C-O-L-O-G-E-R-O.

MP And he had some business ventures in Mississippi. Was it a grocery store?

CH A combination, just a general store.

MP Was this a town a small town, or was it a fairly large city?

CH It was a small town.

MP Were there a lot of Black people who lived in that town?

CH There was quite a few.

MP Was your father's the only business there? Was it the only Black business in the town?

CH There was two Colored stores in the town. MacIntosh had a store, and Gillum had a store. General store-sold a little bit of everything.

MP And you had customers-Black and white customers came to his store?

CH Sure.

MP Did your mother work?

CH She only worked in the store and the restaurant. They had a restaurant. She took care of.

MP What kind of food did they prepare in the restaurant?

CH Fish and chickens and stuff like that. Just general food.

MP Any Greek food?

CH No, I don't think they had no Greek food.

MP And how many children in your family?

CH Fourteen.

MP Fourteen children. And how many girls and boys?

CH I think, there was four girls-let's see (papers are being shuffled) four girls and eight, nine boys. Ten boys, I think, yeah. Four girls and ten boys if I'm not mistaken.

MP And do you know how your sisters happened to come to Champaign and Bloomington?

CH Well, my one sister came after my other sister moved from here to Champaign, then she went to Champaign from Mississippi.

MP Did you go to school in Mississippi?

CH Yeah.

MP And what grade were you in when you...?

CH Well, I went to what they called the "free school." I think I was only about twelve years old. I think I was along about the fifth or sixth grade.

MP I have not heard the term free school. Would you explain what that meant?

CH That meant you didn't have to pay. It was a public school, but there they called them free schools. Then they had one college they called Industrial College. You had to pay tuition to go to that one. Down there-these elementary schools they call them free school down there.

MP Did your mother remember anything at all about slavery?

CH Not that I know of.

MP She never spoke to you about it.

CH No.

MP Your mother-she would have been alive during slavery, wouldn't she?

CH Well, she died in 1930, and she was sixty-nine years old. Yeah.

MP She never said anything about whether she was a slave, whether her family members were slaves?

CH She never said anything.

MP Would you suspect that perhaps they were free, always free Blacks? You don't have any idea.

CH No, I don't.

? Did she ever say anything about the confrontations between Blacks and whites? How the whites treated the Blacks at that time?

CH No.

Continued on
Next Page

Keep the Heritage Alive!
HOME

MCMH Home

Keep the Heritage Alive!

Kathryn Dean

Transcription of Oral History - Continued

MP Now, this was World War I.

KD World War I. I remember how when my uncle came back from World War I, I jumped on his back, and he rode me around. I was eight then-eight or nine. I remember once when I was living with one uncle, the Scrivners, on a farm out near where the Camel Back Bridge was, they said someone set the place on fire. I don't know, but that's what they claim. I remember my cousin and I were bundled together and set out away from the house, and we sat there wrapped up in blankets watching this house burn. My early childhood was being raised with a couple of cousins.

MP In this-in Bloomington?

KD In Bloomington, un-huh. No, in Normal. I guess both of them were in Normal because Uncle Pearl lived in Normal then. He lived there on what is now Church Street.

MP That's near where Mrs. Calimese lives.

KD I lived in that house.

MP You lived in the Calimese's house?

KD For about maybe a year or so as a child. Well, uncle rented that house.

MP Did he rent it while the Calimeses were in charge of the Home?

KD I didn't know anything about the Calimeses, but I do know we lived in that house for about a year. There was a church right across from it, and I went there to Sunday School there.

MP Yes, I know. That is the same church that is there now.

KD I think it is.

MP Were there quite a few Black people in that community-in that area around Church Street at that time?

KD No, we were the only ones that I can think of because, you see, where we lived on 606 South Main Street, the Malones lived back on Kingsley Street.

MP Now, Malone, is that-there's a kind of a monument or something on Kingsley where that's the first Black person.

KD first Black house was built.

MP Is that the person you refer to-the Malones?

KD Yes.

MP Do you know the first name?

KD No, I can remember there was an Edith. I just don't remember the Malones.

MP Yes, all right.

KD They were up around the back from us. I can remember they used to wash my hair for my uncles and things like that. I was a little girl then. Just some of those things I remember.

MP Where did you go to grade school?

KD I went to Metcalf until I came to Bloomington. Then I went to Lincoln School. I came to Bloomington in [19]21 to live with my mother and my stepfather.

MP I see.

KD I attended the Lincoln School.

MP Now, did your mother work? Did your stepfather work?

KD No, they didn't work. They had a kind of a rooming/boarding house, that type of thing, because my father-stepfather, I called him Father-was kind of a cook. They served meals from the house, one of those things. We lived here and down the block or so was the sporting part of the town.

MP I see.

MP Oh, the entertainers?

KD The entertainers would stay at our house. Of course, we didn't come in close contact with them because our house was situated so that we were on this side of the house. That side of the house was the kitchen and dining room, and upstairs was the rooms that people rented, one of those things. And back over here was our living room and two bedrooms where we lived.

MP Do you remember any famous people who came in for the vaudeville?

KD Oh, right now I just don't, but I do know that they came to Bloomington, and they had no place to stay. People kept them in their home.

MP You say they had no place to stay?

KD They couldn't stay in the hotels.

MP Black people could not stay in the hotels?

KD See, then if we did go to the theatre, we had to sit up in the balcony, those things. Either up in the balcony or-down on Front Street there was a little show, and we would have to sit way down in the first two or three rows, something like that. But at the Majestic, we had to sit up in what they called the "crow's nest." I guess, we went to the show on Saturdays as kids and sat down in the front, something like that. Sundays we went to the park with the rest of the kids, something like that. We went to the band concert, but we didn't listen to the band concert. (laughs)

MP Tell me about the band concerts. I've heard something about them.

KD Well, the city band would always have a concert on a Sunday from three to five o'clock, and that's where everybody went on Sunday afternoon.

MP And there was no problem with Black people being able to sit wherever they wanted to for that concert?

KD Oh, you were probably sitting on the ground or something like that. There was a few benches, but we didn't pay any attention. We just got together with a bunch of kids.

MP Just for fun?

KD For fun. As soon as the concert was over, we started for home.

MP What was school like. You said you went to Metcalf and to.

KD I don't remember too much about Metcalf School, but in Lincoln School I had no problems with school.

MP Now, Lincoln was a grade school?

KD Grade school.

MP Grade school and high school-where did you go to high school?

KD Bloomington High.

MP Bloomington High.

KD which is now the junior high.

MP Oh, I see.

KD I went to Lincoln School from the time of fourth grade to graduation because when I left Normal School, I was supposed to go into the fifth grade. They decided I should be in the fourth grade.

MP I see.

KD So, then I got in the fourth grade, and I had no problems with school.

MP Now, you graduated?

KD I graduated in 1925 from the grade school and went into the high school.

MP What did you do after high school?

KD After high school for a while-well, while I was still in high school, I worked in a grocery store.

MP Do you remember the name of it?

KD Utesch's Grocery Store. There's a picture of (inaudible) in there. I went in there to just help around in the store sacking potatoes and dusting and one of those things. Eventually, I was helping in the bakery on Saturday nights because all of the bakery goods were sold at half-price, and things like that. And sometimes I helped the clerks, you know. My stepfather was a very good friend of Charlie Utesch. He hired me, and he said he didn't "give a damn" what everybody thought. So I was hired, and I worked down there through high school. Then after he died in 1930, of course, that was a different story. Then I didn't have a job. There was times I would even go to the bank-take the money and go to the bank, one of those things.

MP When you said he didn't give a hoot, I assume...

KD because I was Black.

MP You were Black. Does that mean not many places were willing to hire Blacks?

KD In that capacity.

MP In that capacity, yes.

KD So, that was 1930 when I left there. Then, I went to a shop on Center Street-I don't remember the name-and run the elevator, and by that time I guess the Depression was coming. I was in Chicago for about three months, but I couldn't get a job, so I came home. Then I didn't work until in 1934.

MP Because you couldn't find a job?

KD That's true.

MP Tell me what it was like.

KD We didn't have any problem because my mother had some money left from my stepfather and his mother. So we really didn't have any problem. I mean we didn't suffer during the Depression. We weren't rich, and yet we weren't poor because we helped other people out. You know, they'd bring food stamps and things to our house, and my mother would give them a piece of change or something like that. Because during that time we even had a doctor and his family-well, wife and child-living at our house who were on relief.

MP Is that right? Because they couldn't pay?

KD They couldn't make it. That was during the same time the dentist was in Bloomington. I think they came around the same time. But this dentist had an office on the west side of town. But at that time, people just didn't have the money to exist. They were on relief.

MP You were saying that people came to your mother.

KD Oh, neighborhood people that we would know came with food stamps or a shoe stamp or something in exchange for some money.

MP Explain [the stamps] would you?

KD Well, you were allowed so many pairs of shoes or something like that. But when they were on relief, they got so much food, canned food or something like that. They would bring some of it to our house for some money.

MP Yes.

KD And my mother would give it to them.

MP Now that.

KD Well, during the bank change, my mother lost quite a bit of money and never did get it all back. We still didn't suffer because even after she died, I think we still got a little money from the bank. My stepfather he just knew all types of people-the rich, the low, the middle-class-he just knew them all, and he catered to all of them. I know there was times when the Booker T. Washington Home, which is across the street from me now, and he would take-we had a horse and wagon-and he would go to the grocery store, Utesches, and get vegetables that were bruised and leftover bread and stuff like that and take it to the Home. He knew farmers who would bring a lot of things in-vegetables and things like that or rabbits and things, but what we didn't use was taken to the Home.

MP So your father-your stepfather was very well known in the community. Do you know if he was involved in politics in any way? Do you remember?

KD No, I can't say he was involved in politics, but everybody knew him. Every judge, every lawyer, and everything else

because I do know in 1921, I think, he was arrested for bootlegging. 1921. well, like he didn't serve any time, one of these things. But everybody knew him-the judges, the lawyers, the doctors. His mother was a fortune-teller, and she lived at 606 South Madison. I stayed nights with her until the time she died which was 1925. She lived alone so I spent my nights there, and in the morning I'd get up and go home. At night before dark I'd go back. The neighbors next door were the McClelands, and we became very good friends. And to this day one of the girls-we are still very good friends.

MP This is the McClelands that lived next door to the fortune-teller?

KD Yes. Well, where are we now?

MP We are at the point where you said you didn't work until 1934.

KD Then in 1934, my sister in Springfield got married. We had a kind of big wedding for us, but it was at my aunt's house who lived at 606 South Madison. After her mother died, then she and he husband came back to Bloomington and lived in her mother's house. My sister was married there, and that is where I had my twenty-first birthday party in that house. I got a job working for Mr. and Mrs. Wight.

MP Is that W-H-I-T-E?

KD W-I-G-H-T. I worked there from 1934 to 1940. But I did the cooking. That's where I learned to cook. I didn't learn sewing because I got sewing in high school, but Fridays was always mending day. She had a laundress, and she had a woman who did the heavy cleaning and someone to do the yard. But I worked for her for six years.

MP Your basic responsibility was cooking?

KD Cooking and the house. I made the beds and dusted and those things.

MP Did you live with the family?

KD No. I stayed at home.

MP You stayed at home?

KD And went back and forth.

MP Now, the Wights-did you know what was their occupation?

KD He was a lawyer and had quite a bit of farmland, but she did nothing, of course. When I went there, he did nothing then but go to his club because he had, I guess, retired from being a lawyer. That's what he was, a lawyer. They had quite a bit of farmland. Sometimes, I would go to the farm with them. I think the farm was in Ellsworth. When I left, they were very unhappy, and she often said she wished she had given me more-because I was only getting, I think, ten dollars per week.

MP Was that the going rate?

KD When I was working for her then?

MP Was that the going wage?

KD I guess it was. Anyhow that's what I was getting, ten dollars per week, and I left there to go to State Farm for $12.50 per week.

MP How did you happen to get the job at State Farm?

KD My godmother worked at State Farm, and what she did was keep the medical room clean and check the restrooms, one of those things. Then she left there and went to Geneva as a housemother. So I got the job.

MP That's Geneva, Illinois?

KD Yes.

MP Do you remember your godmother's name?

KD Lela Morris.

MP And so she recommended you for the job?

KD And I got the job. Of course, in later years I started making more money, but then in 1945 when they started adding on to the buildings, mysister came and, of course, we were maids. We needed a job, and it was paying pretty good, so we thought. Then I stayed at State Farm for thirty-four and a half years.

MP You were doing the same type of work?

KD Oh no, no, no. Eventually, I got to work as a file clerk. I was running the elevator when-I got sick. I was running-my blood

pressure went quite high. Then when I retired I was running the elevator at State Farm.

MP Please go ahead.

KD I think, I stayed at State Farm as a maid until after Caribel-and we had two, three white women came on doing the same thing. Then when I left that to do this file clerk, I guess that's when they started bringing them in. I guess in the sixties. Must have been the late fifties. No, the fifties-fifty-five, fifty-eight or something like that. Because I remember-that would be sixty-one. I guess I was a maid until sixty-one, something like that. I guess it was sixty-two and sixty-three when all of these changes were taking place all over.

MP What changes are you referring to?

KD Well, I mean affirmative action and like that. And so of course, State Farm was changing, too, along with the rest of them.

MP So, then State Farm started hiring Blacks in secretarial type work?

KD Now, when we were doing maid work, my sister and I and one other person were the only three Blacks in State Farm. We were the only three. Then in sixty-five, I guess, when they started this affirmative action, then they started bringing them in then. Then there were quite a few of them,

MP In secretarial type positions?

KD Well, they were at the time probably just getting file clerks and then doing some secretarial work, but they weren't called secretaries. Melba Moore she was one of the early ones brought in. Mary Hursey was another early one brought. There were several. I can still remember some of the early ones who came in. I think Mary has been there fifteen years or something like that. Some of them are still there, you know, in that capacity, but, of course, they've advanced 'cause there was room for advancement. When we were in there, there just wasn't. Of course, it was a job, and I just didn't ever think about wanting to leave. I was just content. I was married the first time, in 1943 when everyone was getting married to the soldiers, one of those things. But we were divorced in 1945. Then I married in 1952, and he passed in 1961. He had leukemia. He passed in 1961. That was Virgil Dean, and he had been married before and his wife had passed. His father was one of the earlier policemen in Bloomington.

MP Is that right?

KD Jacob Dean.

MP Now what time was this when he was-approximately?

KD Oh, I don't know. It's on those records you've got. It should be in some of the records you've got.

MP Oh, all right. That will be it. Yes. All right.

KD I guess that's when he lost his leg, when he was a policeman. I guess my life wasn't just terribly exciting, but yet and still it wasn't humdrum.

MP I can see that it wasn't. Now, how did you happen to move from a position of being a kind of domestic, cleaning person at State Farm to file clerk? Did you get any special training for that?

KD No. But then during adult education I took typing.

MP And that's while you were in the position of cleaning person or when you got the job?

KD No. It was when I got the job.

MP Then you went back to school to...

KD Because it was just answering the telephone, you know. 3-8-0. I can hear it now and taking work orders, you know. Someone might have a light out, and you fill in the blank, and the man would take the order and go do what had to be done and that kind of thing.

MP And then after that position?

KD And sometimes when the secretary was ill or something, you'd move over there and take her desk and do something like that. Then eventually my sister got that particular job.

MP And that is when you began to operate the elevator?

KD Oh, I don't think I operated the elevator over four or five years.

MP This is a difficult question for you to answer I'm sure, but when you worked as a maid for the Wight family, was this generally the kind of work that most Black women who worked did at the time?

KD Some of them were day workers. They did heavy cleaning, one of those things. I didn't do heavy cleaning. I think that the hardest thing we had sometimes was when she had company. Maybe there might be eight or ten people. Sometimes there would be some help, and sometimes there wouldn't. That's possibly the hardest thing. It wasn't hard work because there was no hard cleaning, no window washing. In the kitchen area you'd just wipe it up. They had a cleaning woman who did all the heavy work.

MP You were saying that most Black women who worked, in general, they worked in service?

KD That's the kind of work there was-service.

MP Is it your impression, and this again is difficult for you to answer, that any of those women, who worked in service, were competent or were trained adequately to take any other kinds of jobs or were they pretty much stuck with that? Do you think that Black women got stuck with that regardless of what their training was?

KD I think they were stuck with that until wartime when the factories opened up in order to take them because there wasn't too much for them to do. There was one woman, I remember, who worked in a beauty shop in one of the-I guess it was Newmarket-one of the big stores. My sister, when we were coming up, she worked in Emma Smith's bath parlor which [Emma Smith] had for these rich people. And my sister worked there for her. That was the only job she had in Bloomington. My sister in Springfield, that is. Now, my sister Caribel worked on recreation, that type of thing, in the forties.

MP You were saying some of the women once World War II got started, went to work in some of the war factories. Is that-from Bloomington they.?

KD Well, at Eureka Williams, you see. You could work there, and I guess-I don't know what year General Electric came to Bloomington. I know that these women were hired wherever they were doing defense work. They were hired and worked there. I had a pretty good job, so I thought, and there wasn't any point in me changing. I was content where I was because when we first started out we had to work five and a half days a week. Then eventually we got it down to five days a week.

MP So when you began to work at State Farm, you worked five and a half days a week?

KD Five and a half days a week. The half-day was on Saturday.

MP Then later only five days per week. When you worked in service, how many days a week did you work?

KD Oh, you had Thursday afternoon and Sunday afternoon off. Sunday afternoon I'd break my neck to catch the two o'clock train to Springfield.

MP That's where you spent your weekends in Springfield, right?

KD Well, I didn't go down for the whole weekend because you had to be back Monday morning. There was a train that would leave at two o'clock, I think, and I'd get that two o'clock train. I'd take that one coming back left at two something in the morning.

MP And be back in time for...

KD I spent many a Sunday down in Springfield because my sister lived there.

MP Oh, yes.

KD I lot of my friends lived there. I think I had more out-of -own friends than I did Bloomington friends.

MP How would you account for that?

KD I don't know. We run around in a group out of Springfield. Of course, I had acquaintances here. I think I had only one real close friend, and then she moved to St. Louis. Most of our friends were out-of-town friends.

MP Do you think that is because you had relatives who were located in different sections of the central Illinois area?

KD Well, only one. My sister was in Springfield, but all of the kids would come to Bloomington. I say "kids" because that's what we were, and we just run in a group. Most of them were some of the fraternity boys from Champaign, and the boys from Springfield. We just run in a group. Nobody dating anybody. You just run around in a group or a pack, if you want to call it that. But you didn't get into any trouble. You didn't do anything you weren't supposed to do. And then we'd go to dances, and I guess that's why we got close to a bunch of Springfield people.

MP Transportation was pretty available?

KD Pretty good. We didn't have any car, but you rode the train. Of course, my stepfather had a car, but he always took us. We did not go out alone then. In fact, I didn't date until I was nineteen years old.

MP Was that pretty much what the practice was?

KD Well, our stepfather was strict, and we just did not go out with boys, and we did not go out at night. And coming up if we went to BYPU, which was the Baptists, we could do that on a Sunday night, but there was a neighbor lady who had to take us. When we had parties like Halloween parties and things like that, she'd take us to that. We didn't go alone. We just didn't go alone to anything. I was nineteen years old-after he died.

MP When you began work, your first job was after high school, right? How old were you when you graduated from high school.

KD I started-my first job I was seventeen.

MP You were seventeen then?

KD Yes.

MP So, when you graduated from high school and began to work you were.

KD Nineteen.

MP Nineteen. But you were still at that point living in the home, and therefore your parents were responsible for you.

KD I lived in Normal in probably two different houses. Then, I lived at 511 South Wright Street from [19]21 until [19]52, and from [19]52 on I lived where I am now.

MP I see.

KD So, I really don't know what moving is. I've only really moved once in my life, and that was in 1952 when I married and went to 1202 West MacArthur.

MP So the house you're in now.

KD belonged to the Deans. It belonged to my husband's parents. Well, not his parents. It was his father and mother. It did belong to his parents. Then they passed on, and it belonged to he and his two sisters. We bought the two sisters out. So then it became our house.

MP It became your house. So that is a very historic house then, isn't it?

KD Well, yes. I have the original deed to that house, and I think on that ground was a mill of some kind. It wasn't a house at first.

MP Who constructed the house?

KD I don't know.

MP You don't know.

KD I took the original deed uptown to the bank. It was constructed in 1901.

MP There is one thing I want to ask you before I go. I want to talk about any clubs, civic clubs, social clubs, organized by Blacks in Bloomington, let's say, from the earliest time you can remember. Do you know anything about if there was an underground railroad in Bloomington or Normal? Do you remember any talk about that.

KD Well, they say that our church was, Wayman A.M.E. Church.

MP Wayman A.M.E. Church?

KD That's what they say, but I have no idea. But our church is where they first printed the first Sunday School literature-in our church, in Wayman. It is the only church that has been on the same spot because when it was built, it was nothing but prairie then.

MP So, you would say that's the oldest church in Bloomington?

KD That's been on the same spot since being built.

MP On the same spot?

KD Well, it's 150 years old where the church is.

MP Let me ask you this. You said you think the church was used as an underground railroad. Would you have any idea where I might be able to find some sources?

KD I don't know unless there is anything in the historical society.

MP The church does not have.

KD No. Our church never did keep very good records for some reason. So much would be left to this person to take care of

and then somebody else. They just didn't keep very good records.

MP I think that they would likely not have kept records about underground railroads because it was kind of illegal. What about social clubs or civic clubs or Black organizations?

KD The Colored Women's Club was formed in 1901, and that is the oldest club in Bloomington still in existence. I'm secretary so I know that it's still in existence.

MP Who founded it, and could you tell me a little bit about it? What it's purpose was?

KD Well, it's a federated club, and I can't tell you who founded it. It's part of a district, then state, and then national-it's part of a national organization.

MP What's the name of the national body?

KD It's called the National Association of Colored Women's Club. Then in, I believe, 1903 the Progressive Club was formed. I think it's the next oldest Black club, and it's still in existence.

MP Is that for women and men?

KD No, just a women's organization. A group of twelve women got together and just formed this social club for something to do. It's still in existence because I belong to that. Then I guess the next oldest one would be the Three C Club, and I couldn't tell you when it was formed.

MP And that's women's only, too.

KD That's still a women's club.

MP Is it pretty much a social club?

KD It's a social club, too. Nothing but a social club.

MP Those are about the only Black women's organizations that you.

KD Well, early ones, yes.

MP Did they perform any civic responsibility or social welfare functions of any kind to your knowledge?

KD The Three C's and the Progressives didn't. They were strictly social. The Colored Women's Club did various things, but I couldn't tell you what they did in those years. In can't speak for them until 1952.

MP When you were involved?

KD When I joined, one of those things. But I don't know of any other Black women's organizations in the early years other than just little clubs that probably didn't last.

MP What about Black men's clubs, social and civic?

KD They were the Elks, the Masons, and the Young Men's Club that was from the YMCA. That was a social get-together. There might have been some that just didn't last.

MP Do you know anything about a Chauffeur's Club?

KD No. That was before my time.

MP What about any Black bars or.?

KD "Jugs". (laughs) They had them. Of course, I didn't go to them until the fifties. The forties, I guess. There was one down on West Washington Street. There was one up over what is now Lucca Grill. I think that was Turner's Social Club. Of course, there was the one under the railroad tracks which is still there. I haven't been to that for years and years and years. And then, I think, I heard them tell of another one. (inaudible) Of course, there was the Social Center Cafe up on East Street. The Rush's had that. We used to go to that quite a bit.

MP The Social.

KD The Social Center Cafe.

MP What happened there?

KD Well, the Rush's had a big house. Of course, it's gone now. That's where the city hall and them are in that property now. They had a cafe in the basement. We went there quite a bit. In fact, we even had some parties there. I can remember their daughter-in-law would have a party in the cafe.Then there was another cafe around on Main Street on that side of the viaduct. I don't remember the name, but it didn't last too long. Then there was one on this side of the viaduct. Things like that that we went to.

MP I'm glad you remembered the one on East Street because several other people had made a reference to something being there, but they didn't remember the name.

KD Well, it was the Rush's Social Center Cafe. It had to be there a long time because it was there in 1916, and I know we were going to it-in the forties we were going to it. So it had to be there a long time. And Ike Sanders, I guess, was the one who had the one on South Main Street. He was married to the woman whose name is now Anna Clark.

MP Oh yes. She told us.

KD You see, that was there in 1916, and Fred Rush had this cleaning place. When I knew it, I think, it was over on Center Street. (inaudible) I don't know anything about it then. What else did we do? Oh, in the forties we would attend those "moonlight" dances which were over on the east side of town. There was a place-I guess it was near where Sunset Center is now, Sunset Hill is. It was a big kind of a dance place out there-open air. We would go out there from midnight until five o'clock in the morning. There would be dances. Kids would come from out of town for that.

MP Now, was that operated by a Black organization?

KD Yes. They'd rent the place.

MP Did you experience what you would define as discrimination?

KD Well, in the movies and restaurants. There was no place to eat, and you couldn't try a hat on. I think that was about it where I was concerned.

MP What about employment? Did you experience what you would define as discrimination in any of your efforts to get a job?

KD I didn't look for a job until 1934 when I went to Mrs. Wight's.

End Side A

Side B

? I was interested in the clubs the men belonged to like the Elks.

KD Elks and the women had the Bronze Temple, but they weren't integrated.

? They weren't integrated.

KD At the time, we had a hall up on Front Street. It was a place to go on Saturday nights. It was in the fifties when the lodge finally went down as a lot of things do in Bloomington. They just don't last. I don't even remember the name of the Elks. But I know the women's was Bronze Temple Number something. Then of course, we had the Masons and the Eastern Star which went downhill, and then, of course, in later years the Masonic Lodge was revived in Bloomington. In fact, I guess there's two now. There's the York one and Prince Hall. After the Eastern Star folded, I did not take my membership anywhere else although my sister did take her membership to Decatur. And of course, she still has it in Decatur, but things have a way of starting in Bloomington and then just going downhill.

MP Now, your sister was active in the YWCA, right?

KD She was president of the YWCA.

MP Now, how long have Black people been able to participate in the YWCA? To you knowledge, has it always been possible for Blacks to be members of the YWCA?

KD Oh, in the fifties.

MP That's when it was open to Blacks?

KD To my knowledge. The kids went before that because they were-what were the girls in earlier years? My sister and them took up tap-dancing in the "Y" when they were still in high school. So they were going to the "Y" then.

MP So the "Y" was open then?

KD When they were in high school, I know they were going to the "Y". Girls' Reserve, I think they were the Girls' Reserve then, and they were in high school. I'm sure they weren't swimming then, but they were going to the "Y". And the men were going to the YMCA-the boys were.

MP Can you think of any organization, which was organized by Blacks at any point before the sixties where the basic focus was to help deal with problems Black people had in Bloomington, for example, like going to a restaurant or the theater. Do you remember, at any point, if Black people organized to try to deal with these problems?

KD All I think it came out of the NAACP and that type of thing which was, you know, a national organization. I don't know of any local something because we could all belong to the NAACP and just work from there.

MP There was nothing before that?

KD Not to my knowledge.

MP We talked about your church experiences. I think you answered that when you said that your family made contributions to the Booker T. Washington Home. Can you think of any other personal or family experiences related to social welfare like contributions, membership on boards, etc.?

KD No, not until later years. My mother just didn't become involved in anything. She stayed at home, and that was it. We always knew where she was.

MP Was that pretty much what women who didn't.

KD Who didn't work? Well, I think they did because even during the Depression years, she was always there. A lot of kids- young people- would come to our house to play cards, and she baked pies. We were just at home. We didn't do too much going away from home unless it was out of town.

MP Do you think that there was any difference made? How many brothers did you have?

KD I had none. We were all girls, and I was the oldest.

MP I was going to ask you if you thought that your parents made any special differences between you and your brothers in terms of their aspirations for you or careers, but you can't speak of that since you didn't have any brothers.

KD No, they encouraged us to go to school. I know I had to read the newspaper to my stepfather until I got to the place where I think I hated the newspaper. I think he always felt I was skipping something. That was one of my jobs. I had to read the newspaper to him. Then, of course, I had to read it to my grandmother. They both could read, but it was still my job to read it to them.

MP Why did they want you to read it to them?

KD I don't know. I guess they did it in order to make me learn how to read.

MP To teach you to read?

KD Yes, to teach me to read. My job was to read the newspaper. They had the Bulletin and the Pantagraph, and we'd get two newspapers, and I'd have to read them.

MP Well, that's one way to do it.

KD One of my sister's jobs was to keep the victrola going. You know, put the record on it and wind it up. Our holidays were always big events like Christmas, Fourth of July, and all like that. Just big events, you know-make something big out of it.

MP So, yours was a very close kind of family?

KD Yes, it was. I remember one year I got some roller skates. I must have been twelve or something, and the other two didn't get any roller skates. But before the day was over, they had roller skates. I remind them of it to this day that they nearly wore mine out, but yet they got their own roller skates.

MP They got their own.

KD Yes. My stepfather had Somers Drugstore open up and get them some roller skates. And that was on a Christmas that was just as warm. I can remember out roller-skating, and they were using my skates, too, but they got their own pair before the day was over. We were a close knit family. Even now, we're just as close even though there's only the three of us now. I'm the oldest in my family. We had no uncles and no aunts, nothing like that. We've just always been a close knit family.

MP You didn't have any children?

KD No, and my sister in Springfield didn't have any children either. Just my sister here.

MP Well, I think I have asked everything that I wanted to ask you. Is there anything that you remember?

KD As I said that it just went on? It was just any easy-going life, I guess. Of course, you had to have had some hardships like everybody else, but they must not have been too much.

MP Would you say that yours was a typical kind of life for a Black family when you were growing up, or was yours an unusual one in the sense that your economic situation was better?

KD Well, I know some of the kids had harder times than we did. I mean their-both of their parents were working. Ours wasn't. I don't know where the money come from. My stepfather didn't work.

MP But he had a business.

KD He had a business. My mother didn't work.

MP So, yours was not a typical Black family as far as you are concerned?

KD Well.

MP In that you didn't you have a major economic problem even during the Depression?

KD No, during the Depression we just didn't. There was always enough food. We always had clothes to wear. Of course, my sister, when she was working for Miss Smith, she wore the best shoes there, but we all had shoes on our feet and things like that. And food, we were never without food. Might not have been the best food, but we had plenty of food and plenty of clothing. We didn't have to pay rent.

MP You owned your house.

KD Yes. I've always been in a house that some part of the family owned. My stepfather owned there, and his mother owned over there. And we owned in Normal. Where I am now his family owned. Just never had to pay any rent.

MP As I understand it, though, in the old days, most Black people owned their homes as opposed to renting.

KD Well, I can think of people who eventually bought when they cleared out that area down there. I can remember people who bought several places down there.

MP When they cleared out what area?

KD The "red-light" district area.

MP What was the red-light district?

KD The sporting district.

MP What, what.?

KD It didn't bother us because we might go to the store for somebody, but they were down there. We were up here. We didn't come into contact with them. That was on Moulton and Elm. Blacks went in and bought down in through there. Then of course, it was eventually torn out which is now Woodhill. Because the picture of the house where we lived-they had a Black and white photo of it taken, and it still hangs in the office of Woodhill.

MP Would you say you lived in a Black community, an integrated community, or a community that was predominantly white in various places where you lived?

KD Well, in Normal, it was mostly whites around. Then when I got to Bloomington maybe three or four [Black] families in that area. Then eventually it become all Black except on East Street where there were whites. So, it used to be Black down here, and white up through here. It wasn't a big Black community where we lived.

MP So, it was a fairly integrated, right?

KD Of course, when I got up on this end of town, it was Black, but then there was still some white in there. I just really have never known an all, total-Black community. They were just scattered all around. We kids, we were on the east of-Main Street was the division line. We were the East Side kids. Over here was the West Side kids. The West Side kids and the East Side girls, you know-you just didn't mix.

MP There was a major distinction, right?

KD Oh, yes. There was the East Side and the West Side, and we were East Side. And the West Side boys would come over where the East Side girls were, but there was a division.

MP What was the basis for the division?

KD I don't know.

MP That's interesting. It had nothing to do with race?

KD No. Black kids-East Side and the West Side kids, and we were the East Side. Most of them, you might as well say, were on the West Side.

MP Most of the.?

KD Of the Black people were on the West Side. The East Side people were where we were and on Empire Street. You know where Empire is? They were East Side kids. But most of them was on the west side of town.

MP And you don't know the basis for that distinction?

KD No.

MP The people on the West Side had more money, more education.?

KD No, I can't say they had any more, but it was just where they lived.

MP So, as you grew up there was the distinction? This distinction continues to exist?

KD I don't think so. I don't think it has since maybe the forties. But when we were in high school, it was the East Side kids and the West Side kids.

MP Was there an animosity between the two?

KD Not animosity. You just knew who was the East Side and who was the West Side.

MP You didn't associate too much?

KD Not too much. At least the girls didn't, but you knew who they were. You could almost name the East Side girls on your hand. That was in the forties-thirties rather.

MP That's interesting. Well, thank you very much for this information, and if anything else occurs that you think we should know.

KD If I find any other clippings, I'll let you know. I think you ought to find a lot of stuff about people in that material.

MP I know, I've gone through it. I've found a great deal, that's right, but we don't want to miss anything.

KD That was gathered when they started doing that before, you know. They never did finish it. Mrs. Munro brought the material to Caribel because she knew it would be taken care of. 'Cause I looked through some it. There were several duplicates of stuff.

End Side B

Previous Page

Keep the Heritage Alive! HOME

MCMH Home

Keep the Heritage Alive!

Lue Anna Sanders Clark - About Ike Sanders & Black Business

Narrator: Lue Anna Brown Sanders Clark (about Ike Sanders and Black Business)
Interviewer: Mildred Pratt
Date: Unknown late 1980s

Side A

MP Now, your husband's full name was Isaac Sanders, and he was called Ike.

AC Yes.

MP When you met him he had a business. Would you begin and tell us where that business was located?

AC When I met him, he had just sold his business. It was down on South Main Street, right downtown. It was on Olive Street downtown down there under the viaduct.

MP How long had he operated that business before you met him?

AC For about two years.

MP What was he doing before he started that business?

AC Well, he lived in Boston, Massachusetts. And he come back here, and he started his business. And he had a business before he left. He had a restaurant before he left. [The restaurant] was here. He started the first restaurant in Bloomington. And his wife died, and he had a sister in Boston so he went out there. And he was out there awhile, then he come back to Bloomington. He sold his business here after she died.

MP To whom did he sell it? Do you know?

AC I don't know. When he come back here, he rented another place down close to the square downtown. And the man he rented it from-the city people didn't want him there because he was Black so they-the man that he rented from wanted him to give the lease up with just nothing, you know. So he told them he would give the lease up if he would pay him the lease. So he didn't want to pay. And met one of his friends-he first went to the lawyer, and the lawyer told him to go to the bank and get $25.00. That's what the rent was. And then, take it back and offer it to him in gold. And if he didn't take it the third time he offered it to him, he wouldn't have to pay because gold was standard money. So he went and got the money, and he was on his way down there, and he met one of his friends. And he asked him if he would walk back to the office with him. He didn't tell him what he wanted because he probably wouldn't have went. So he got up there and he said to Mr. Dolan, "Mr. Dolan, here's your rent money." And he offered it to him. (inaudible sentence) He knew Mr. Ford."Oh, Mr. Ford, what'll I do. What'll I do?" And Mr. Ford didn't know what was going on. So he offered it to him the second time, and he didn't take it. And the third time he offered it to him, he did. Then he paid him for his lease. And when I met him, he wasn't doing anything at that time. I guess it had been three or four months. I seen him in his building. I passed there one time and seen him in there, but I didn't know who he was. Then I met him, and we went around together about-well, I met him in May, and I don't remember when he started down here on Washington Street.

MP Do you know what year you met him?

AC 1916.

MP 1916 is when you met him, and he had just sold the business?

AC We got married in 1917.

MP This was your first marriage, right?

AC Yes. I worked out in a private family, and we'd meet on a Sunday, you know. We'd go to church or something like that. And finally, we decided to get married.

MP And when did he start the second business? After you were married, he started the business, right?

AC Oh, he had the business going before we married.

MP Oh, I see. He had just got that business.

AC He wasn't out of the other place too long. He started the business down here on Washington Street.

MP Do you know how he got interested in the restaurant business? When did he- was he always interested in the restaurant business? How did he happen to get started in the restaurant business?

AC He was working for Adlai Stevenson when he was a young man.

MP What did he do for him?

AC He just drove him around. He was a chauffeur and stuff like that. And he helped him clean house and everything, and he said Mrs. Stevenson.

MP That's his mother-Adlai Stevenson's mother?

AC Yeah, that's Stevenson's-Adlai Stevenson's mother. She said to him one day that she wanted him to get the carriage ready and wanted to drive downtown, carry her downtown. So he got it ready and everything. He cleaned himself all up, and she went upstairs and threwed a big rug down and hollered down and told him to beat that rug. And it made him mad. He said he got so mad that he went in and told them to give him his money, and then he started a business after that. So he got all cleaned up and everything. Then she hollered to beat that rug.

MP That was insulting to him, right?

AC Un-huh. So she pleaded with him, and Mr. Stevenson pleaded with him, but he didn't go back. He started his business.

MP Did he have any relatives who had been involved in the restaurant business?

AC No.

MP He just had the idea he was going to start his own business?

AC Yes. Well, he started with another man. His name was-wasn't Skinner. Was it Skinner? I can't think of his name right now. But he started with another man. They opened up a nice place, and they had everything nice. He said this man went and bought a whole lot of tables and chairs and furniture, and he didn't approve of it. So he went along two or three weeks, and this man told him, "Now you can have the business because I don't think I want it anymore." So he had all that debt because they went in together. There was a man here that had a big furniture store. His name was Kirkpatrick, a rich man. They had bought it from Kirkpatrick. So he went down and explained to Mr. Kirkpatrick what had happened. So Mr. Kirkpatrick turned and looked at him, and he told him, he said, "Now, I'm going to mark this paid. You don't have to pay me anything. But don't you ever go into business with nobody else. Any business you have, you go in for yourself." So he never did go in with anybody.

MP Now, he had a barbershop. Did your husband cut hair?

AC He had a barbershop and the restaurant all together.

MP Who did the barbering?

AC His name was Joe Boone. He was a crippled man. And he was the barber.

MP And then did he pay rent to your husband?

AC No. I think Mr. Boone left and went to Peoria.

MP Why don't you tell me about when your husband started the business on Washington Street?

AC Well, he had it started before we was married. I wasn't in on that, but he told me about that. And the way he did that was, he called it the working man's club. Each person that wanted to go in had put their name down and had to give a dollar because they were. In other words, he collected a dollar from each one of the people that signed their name. It was kind of a private affair for awhile. You know how people are. They just rush in whether it's private or not. Then it got to be that everybody come. Then he had a man help (inaudible) and a man doing the cooking and serving. Then he had the barbershop. He had six rooms upstairs. He lived in the front part. And there were three rooms in back, and he rented them out. So we only paid $25.00 a month for rent.

MP Who did the barbering?

AC I don't remember what his name was. But this Mr. Boone was down on Main Street.

MP Do you know how much he charged to rent his rooms out?

AC Per room? I think it was $3.00. No, $1.00 a night I believe it was. I think that's what it was. And we had men. We didn't have no women. No women stayed there. Then after we got married, I was the only woman who stayed there. But we had our quarters in front, and these other rooms was in the back.

MP What hours did the business open?

AC We opened at 8:30 [A. M.] or 9:00 o'clock.

MP And what time did it close?

AC 11:00 [P. M.] or 12:00.

MP Who was responsible for the books, the accounting? Who kept the records? Who paid the bills?

AC He did.

MP He kept the books?

AC Un-huh.

MP You didn't help with the books at all?

AC No. Then finally he gave me the restaurant part, and so anyway he put me on the restaurant. That was my-then he had the drinks and barbershop and all that.

MP Oh, that's interesting. So you were in control then of the restaurant, and you kept the books.

AC I didn't keep no books, I just take in the money. I'd do the buying.

MP Did you make the menus?

AC Yes.

MP Where did you get that experience? You did the cooking?

AC I had a man there helping me cook. And he [Ike Sanders] would help me cook, too. We worked together.

MP Tell me-I think he had great faith in you right to give you that restaurant. Tell me what kind of food you served.

AC Well, we served mostly just cheap meat. We had beef stew. We had steak for anybody wanted it. Very few wanted it. (inaudible) Beef stew and steak and pig ears, and pig feet. We had a great big lard can full of feet and ears. Then neck bones. We had neck bones down on the bottom and the feet on the necks. Then the ears on the necks. Everybody said whatever you asked for, you'd just go to that pot and get it.

MP Who waited the tables?

AC I did. And he did too. Then the people was nice. Women would be around and if you got a lot of extra, they would just jump in and help you. Everybody was nice. And we had fish every Friday.

MP Who were your customers? Were they primarily travelers or people who lived in the community?

AC People in the community. People from all over town, Normal and everywhere. They had the shop going-the railway shop, and all of them.

MP The workmen came there to eat?

AC And they had the coal mine going, and all of those people came in.

MP White and Blacks came to your restaurant?

AC White and Black and Spanish people. We had a lot of Spanish people because they worked on the railroad. And they were (unclear).

MP So, would you say, your business did really well? It was a good business? Would you say your business was very productive? That you earned quite a bit of money from the business?

AC Yes.

MP But you had to work long hours, though.

AC Oh, yeah. We didn't really have no hours. We just worked until the people left. We'd get out early in the morning and walk all over town, you know. Get exercise.

MP Oh, you and your husband did? And then you would start work? Whose idea was that to do that walk?

AC Him.

MP Did you put your money in a bank?

AC Yeah, what we had we put in a bank.

MP You said Redd Fox came to your business? Would you tell that story again?

AC Yes. Well, he was just a boy.

MP About how old was he?

AC He must have been about-he might have been thirteen years or fourteen years old. They had a race riot down in Saint Louis.

MP What year was that about?

AC It must have been 1917, I think. And I forgot what the race riot was about, but they had a race riot down there. And a lot of people came from Saint Louis here and he come in there with a bunch of men, and he had a sack, a little brown sack with sugar and coffee mix. And he come up to me, and he said, "Lady, would you trade me a piece of meat for this sugar and coffee mix?" So I didn't know what to do. I had to ask Mr. Sanders. He said, "No, we can't do that." So I give him-I fixed him- we never did turn anybody down who wanted anything.

MP Did you have quite a few people who came in like that who did not have money?

AC Yes, quite a few long at that time.

MP Did you know he was Redd Fox at that time? How did you know he was Redd Fox?

AC Well, after I heard his voice and seen him, I just knew it was him by his singing voice. I wrote him a letter, but he never answered.

MP When did you write to him?

AC I just asked him if he was in Bloomington at that time, but I didn't get no answer.

MP Are there any other interesting stories of things that happened in the business?

AC Something funny going on all the time. Everybody knowed each other, and they were laughing and joking. We just didn't have to go nowhere. It was just like a show.

MP Did you have a bowling table?

AC No.

MP Pinball or how do you say?

AC We had a pool table. I learned my second husband how to play pool, and Sanders learned me. My second husband used to come in everyday. He wasn't spending anything. He'd just come around and sit around. He couldn't play pool, and there were a couple of other women who could play pool. Mr. Sanders called him "Brother-in-law" because when he came to town, he was looking for his sister, and he didn't know his sister's married name. And he was guessing at it. (inaudible) some of the Nathans, you know. (inaudible) And sure enough, it was his sister. Then he come back in there, and he called him Brother-in-law. He had a name for everybody, you know.

MP So your husband had quite a sense of humor?

AC Oh, yeah. He was a funny type person. You could walk in that door, and he could call your name.

MP He was a very brilliant man, wasn't he?

AC Yes.

MP Did you own a car at that time? How did you get around?

AC Bus-no, streetcar.

MP How long did the business operate? When did the business close?

AC It must have been in 1919.

MP He opened that one in 1917, and it closed in 1919. Why did it close?

AC Well, this man bought the building. Another Colored man bought the building.

MP Do you know who he was?

AC Mr. Berton

MP Mr. Burton? B-U-R-T-O-N?

AC B-E-R-T-O-N. [Henry Burton in city directory]

MP He bought the building? He lived in Bloomington?

AC Yeah. So, they were friends, but he never come in to look at the building or anything. He just kind of undermined-when we knew anything, he had bought the building.

MP And what did he do with the building?

AC He rented it out. He cut it up into rooms just like it is now.

MP So, he didn't want your husband operating the business then, right? Your husband was leasing from him, right?

AC No, not from him. He was leasing from a white woman.

MP And this man bought the building from this white woman.

AC Un-huh.

MP So then what did your husband do?

AC We didn't do anything. We went out on East Empire and got a room. Then we stayed out there about a year. And then we rented a place down on South Main Street that just kept roomers. That's over where the viaduct is. There wasn't a viaduct there then. There is a big brick building there right about in the middle of the viaduct, and he rented that. And we moved there. We had three rooms. We stayed until he died.

MP I guess he was very sad about the business closing?

AC Yeah.

MP And when did your husband die?

AC 1939, I believe. (seems uncertain)

MP He didn't work anymore?

AC No.

MP And then you married your other husband. What was his name?

AC Alonzo Clark.

MP When did you marry him?

AC We married in 1950.

MP What did he do?

AC He was a porter down at the train station. He worked down there.

MP And you didn't do any more business? Did you do any business after that?

AC No. I got a job after Mr. Sanders died-I got a job at Livingston Store, and I stayed there twelve years. Then, after that the Depression come, and they had to let so many people go. So they let me go, and I didn't work no more then for about a year. Then I got the job working out in a private family, some rich people. (inaudible) Burt Read, they owned the Portable Elevator [Manufacturing] Company. I stayed with them for about two years, I guess.

MP But, you also had these young students, these young men who attended ISU living with you then, didn't you?

AC After I left Mr. Read's, I was living and working out at the university. I lived with Rev. Aubrey Hursey and his family out there in Normal where Mrs. Calimese lived. So he bought a house downtown and moved downtown. So I rented the house, and then I started keeping students. That was in Normal. I was working at the Soldiers and Sailors Children's School.

MP What address was that? What street did you live on when you had the young men who attended ISU.

AC It was on University and Church Streets.

MP That was near where Mrs. Calimese's house is?

AC Yes.

MP Yes. You weren't married then.

AC No.

MP So you rented that. These young men lived there. So you got a little bit of rent from them, and you worked at Illinois Soldiers and Sailors.

AC I didn't have to pay no expenses. I just stayed there.

MP So that was the end of your business adventure. I want now to talk with you about what you remember about World War I. And how the men from here went, left to go fight in the war, and what happened when it was over and, were women involved in any kinds of activities to help the men.

AC Well, there must have been about fourteen or fifteen-maybe more than that of our men that left all at one time. We went down to see them go on the train. And the trains was full of soldiers going and coming. One of the boys wrote back to Mr. Sanders and told him that he was in the trenches in France. So he owed Mr. Sanders a little bill. So Mr. Sanders wrote him back and told him to send his money to him. And he passed the letter all up and down the trench. The boys had a good time, "Old Ike Sanders is wanting me to send him his money." He just did it for fun.

MP Do you know the names of these fifteen men who went off to the war together?

AC Homer Skinner and Torrence Skinner, Howard Brent, Charlie Thomas, They called him "Sug" Thomas. And Mr. Stearles and Lucinda's brother. I can't think of his name.

MP Did Mr. Alonzo Walton go that time?

AC Yes, he was in the Army. Willie Sellers, that was Lucinda's brother.

MP So, you all went down there to see them off. Were the women organized to help the men, to send them cookies and letters and things while they were there?

AC Yeah.

MP What was the name of the group?

AC Fred Hutchinson Club.

MP Fred Hutchinson, that was the name of it?

AC Yeah.

MP How many members?

AC There was a doctor from Chicago who come down here and started this Fred Hutchinson Club. I forget his name.

MP Why was the club called Fred Hutchinson?

AC Why was it called that? I don't remember whether his name was Hutchinson or not. Anyway, we used to meet down at the McBarnes Building where we was at the other day. I think there was about ten or fifteen women.

MP Do you remember any of the names of the ladies?

AC Yeah. Mrs. Shavers, Golda Manual, myself, all the women that had anybody in there was there. So they picked out names who they'd write to and who they'd send cookies and things to. So we'd get together and we'd have all these cookies and everything, and we would send them. I picked out a boy by the name of John White. I knowed him all his life, and he used to write me letters back when he's in Africa. And he'd write me letters back and said the flowers are so beautiful and everything's so pretty and everything. He always called me Anna. We got a kick out of that because people was always calling me Mrs. Sanders. So we sent a lot of cookies and stuff. We marched through town once. I have the pictures over there.

MP When they came back?

AC No, the women marching through town.

MP And what was the purpose of that?

AC Just to let the people know...

MP that you were supporting the men. This was just the Hutchinson Club that did this?

AC Un-huh.

MP Do you have any of the letters that this young man wrote to you while he was in the war?

AC No. He's dead now.

MP And what about when they came back from the war? Did your group do anything when they came back from the war?

AC They all come back all except two.

MP What two did not come back?

AC The Redd-Williams Post. One of the boys his last name was Williams. The other boy was from Pontiac. They formed a club. They called it the Redd-Williams Post, and them the two boys who didn't come back. I don't think they got killed. I think they just died from some kind of disease. I don't think they got shot.

MP Did your group meet them at the train when the boys came back from the war?

AC I guess they did. They knowed they were coming. When they come back, they had a big dance.

MP Tell me about that. Who sponsored the dance?

AC I don't know who sponsored it. We had a place they called Chatterton Theater. It's torn down now. And, the boys and their wives.

MP That was for the Black and the white boys together-they had the dance?

AC Yes, but it was mostly Black, but there were a lot of white people there.

MP The Black group sponsored it?

AC Yeah. They didn't do much mixing back then. Of course, a lot of white people were sitting around.

MP Do you remember if any of these Blacks who served in World War I, did they receive any kind of awards for distinguished service?

AC I don't remember.

MP Did Mr. Calimese go-was he in World War I? Napoleon, Mrs. Calimese's husband, was he in World War I?

AC Yes, he was in there, too. `Cause I know she said he got sick, and they thought he was going to die. And he made it back to New York, and he was sick there a long time.

MP Now, this Mr. Donald Clark, do you know him?

AC Yes.

MP He served in World War I for a few months.

AC Was he in it, too?

MP Yes. He said for about three months, but he never went overseas. The war ended before he had to go overseas.

AC Yeah, they taken most all the men around.

MP Was that the only club-the Hutchinson's Club was the only club organized to your knowledge to help the men in service?

AC Yes.

MP In World War I?

AC Yeah.

MP What about World War II? Were they any clubs organized to help the men that served in World War II?

AC No, I don't think so.

MP You don't think so.

AC They kind of got used to wars and it was.

MP and it was nothing special. Un-huh. (tape is turned off)

MP Would you tell me about the Thomases?

AC There were two brothers, and they worked together in the blacksmith's shop. One of them was named "Wash" Thomas, and the other one was named. I can't think of it. (inaudible sentence) They shoed horses and things like that.

MP Did they have a very good business? Did you ever see their business?

AC I passed the building, but I never did see them working or anything.

MP Did they own the building?

AC I don't know, I don't believe they did.

MP But, they did a good business?

AC Un-huh.

MP Do you have any idea how long the business operated?

AC I guess it must have been in there a long time. I guess that's about all they ever did.

End Side A

Side B

AC I think [Willis Stearles] was over the men over there in France, and he was kind of-so the men said, he was kind of hard on the men. What I mean he didn't treat them too good.

MP Was he an officer?

AC Some kind of officer and when he come back here-when they all come back, he heard that some of them were going to get even with him, and he left here and went to Peoria and stayed there a long time. About a year, I guess, or so. Then, he come back and he married Mrs. Stearles. They were sweethearts from years ago. He married her. Then he got a job out here taking care of the animals in Miller Park.

MP Did the men ever do anything to him?

AC No.

MP But they said he was cruel to them?

AC That's what some of them said. I guess he's trying to hold a job, you know.

MP That's true.

AC They thought he was cruel.

AC Maybe he was just doing his job. So that's what they were talking about it.

MP What was his wife's name before she got married to him? Did you know he wife?

AC Un-huh.

MP What was her name before she married him?

AC I can't think of it. Catherine. (long silence) I knowed her father. He used to come and eat with us.

MP Oh, what did he do?

AC He was a house cleaner and things like that?

MP Did he operate a business?

AC No. He just worked around in private families.

MP I understand that she owned a house, did she?

AC Yes.

MP Do you know how she came to own that house?

AC Her father bought it.

MP How did he come to have that much money?

AC I don't know. He saved it, I guess.

MP From working?

AC Un-huh. He had a nice big two-story house.

MP Somebody thought that a white family in Kentucky may have helped them with it. You don't know anything about that?

AC No. He was a hard worker. I know he would come in, and his hands were just, just.

MP raw.

AC His hands were rough. He'd been given so many hard jobs.

MP How many businesses do you know, Black businesses, were operating when your husband owned his business-Mr. Saunders (sic)? Would you name the Black businesses that you know?

AC Let's see. "Doll" Watson.

MP Doll?

AC Doll Watson he had a place.

MP Doll? D-O-L-L?

AC Just like a doll.

MP D-O-L-L. Doll Watson owned a business. What was his business? Was it a restaurant?

AC No. It was a club.

MP And where was it?

AC Upstairs right down from-right across from the post office. The old post office? Down in there.

MP Was that on top of Lucia [Lucca's] Restaurant?

AC Yeah.

MP All right. That's the one I'm trying to remember. What others did you know about?

AC Of course, after Doll left, Bill Tinsley he taken Doll's-he bought Doll's place when Doll left.

MP And he operated it, the club?

AC That's the only two clubs. Then they had barbershops. "Bud" Nathan had a barbershop.

MP Mrs. Calimese's husband had a barbershop in Normal.

AC And Mr. Calimese had a barbershop out in Normal-two brothers. Then Mr. Dabney had a barbershop in Normal. They all catered to white people. Boone Meaderds he had a barbershop.

MP Where was his barbershop?

AC In different places. The last place he had was down on Center Street. Must have been about the 200 block on Center Street. He was always in some kind of business, Boone Meaderds.

MP What about cleaning businesses?

AC Different ones had cleaning businesses. Bell's father had a cleaning business and tailor shop. Delores's [Shavers] father had a tailor shop, I believe. He might have had a cleaning place, too. He was always in some kind of business. He'd be here [Bloomington]. Then he'd be there, and then he'd be in Champaign. He moved around. He didn't just stay in one place.

MP What about this Revelation Rhoades? Did you know him?

AC Revy Rhoades? He was a sign painter.

MP Did he have any other business?

AC No. He didn't have any other business.

MP Wasn't there a newspaper that a Black person operated-The Advertiser?

AC Yeah, Willis Stearles.

MP Oh, he had a-Willis Stearles?

AC Not the same Stearles. His brother [Carl]. He run a little newspaper, and Revy Rhoades had a newspaper for awhile.

MP What was the name of Stearles' newspaper?

AC I have one here, but I don't remember the name now.

MP Oh, you do have one of the newspapers? Do you know where it is?

AC No, I don't. I'd have to look for it.

MP If you could find it that would be great. I wish you could find it. So both of them had a newspaper. Did you know this man who had the Oil of Gladness business? Did you know him personally?

AC No, I didn't know him. I heard of him.

MP That was before your.

AC He had a nice business, so they say. He had people selling this Oil of Gladness. There was a man here by the name of Mr. Scroggins. He sold-that's all he did was sell that Oil of Gladness.

MP Oh. For Mr. Hoagland?

AC Un-huh.

MP Oh, I see.

AC He sold a lot of Gladness Oil in this part of town.

MP Did you ever see it?

AC No. I don't know how-the man who started it was a minister, and they left here, but I don't know what happened. I never heard of it no more. I guess they quit making it.

MP What did the women-did Black women have any businesses out of their homes? Like, did they take in laundry, do hair, or anything?

AC There were a lot of hairdressers around and things like that.

MP Any seamstress?

AC Not.

MP Not to your knowledge.

AC A lot of people could sew, but they just didn't have the business. I had a little upholstery business after I left the (inaudible). I upholstered chairs.

MP You repaired them for people?

AC Yeah.

MP Is that right? How did you learn to upholster?

AC When I was out to the Home (inaudible), and they had an upholstery class here. So I went and I taken that course for a couple of years. And when I left there, then I started an upholstery business. I upholstered a lot of chairs. People would bring their chairs here when they was in such a bad condition. So I just quit. And I was afraid I'd get dirt on them.

MP Oh, it was so difficult, yes. Were they mostly white people who brought you chairs?

AC Yes. I did six chairs for the lady across the street-dining room chairs. And I did six for Mrs. McGee. (inaudible) Everybody knew I was doing it you know, and they all wanted me to do it. (it becomes difficult to hear as they walk away from the microphone to examine some of Mrs. Clark upholstery work) Then they had another class of hat designing class, and I went into that.

MP Hat designing.

AC Un-huh.

MP Did you ever sell hats?

AC No. I never sold any. I used to make my own hats.

MP And the soap business-where did you learn to make soap?

AC A lady from Chattanooga, Tennessee-she worked out. She was here-her and her husband. They'll be here. They're coming to see me the twenty-third of this month, and they roomed with me. And the woman she worked for told her how to make it. She said she had to give $25.00 for the recipe and not to give it to anybody, but she gave it to me and so when she was living with me, she made a bunch of soap and sent it back down to Chattanooga. Then I learned how to do that. I used to like to learn a little bit about everything. A lot of things-I crocheted and embroidered and all that kind of stuff. But I did pretty good with these chairs.

MP Yes. You did primarily chairs, right? Yes. I can see.

AC They'd just bring them here, and I'd do them in the basement.

MP When did you get this house? How long have you lived here?

AC When I married Mr. Clark. He owned this house. His son will be here the first week of August.

MP Where does he live?

AC In New York.

MP He and his daughter will be here. The Lanes will be here the twenty-third, and they'll only stay two days, and they're on their way to a family reunion in Iowa.They want me to go, but I don't think I'm going. They done bought my reservation.

End Side B

Additional Information:

- Lue Anna Brown Sanders Clark - Tape 2
- Lue Anna Sanders Clark about Ike Sanders & Black Business
- Conversation with Anna Clark, Henry Brown & Luther Watson
- Bibliography

Clark
Home Page

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