

Ohron Houston Clark

A Transcription Of An Oral Interview

907 N. Lincoln Avenue
Urbana, Illinois
July 6, 1983

Interviewed by
Patrick Tyler and
Melinda Roundtree

Champaign County Historical Archives
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Introduction

This interview is with Mr. Houston Clark, a resident of the Royal Fontana Nursing Home. Mr. Clark has lived here in Champaign since 1917. This interview is being conducted on July 6, 1983, at the Royal Fontana Nursing Home, Urbana. The interviewers are Patrick Tyler and Melinda Roundtree, representing the Urbana Free Library Archives department.

Note:

The transcription of this interview is incomplete because many of the words could not be understood. The transcription is accurate and as complete as possible; whenever words could not be understood, underlining was used.

Ohron Houston Clark Interview

Side A

Tyler: Houston, our first question, we would like, the first thing we would like to know about you is your early life, where you were born and raised, your childhood.

Clark: Paducah, Kentucky. I went to school there till I was in the sixth grade. You know, played around with other kids. _____ folks brought me here to Champaign. I lived in Champaign and I got shot _____ in 1917. So that's that time _____. I was playing war, me and another boy. _____
_____. That was his nickname. I went to Marquette School, Gregory School, Colonel Wolfe School, Central School and Champaign High School. I didn't graduate from high school, but I went to ninth grade. _____. Oh, _____ folks moved to Cleveland, stayed in Cleveland oh, about a couple years. _____ working a job, working in a garage, worked in a garage quite awhile, worked one garage 25 years. Then that job at the fraternity house, worked there 25 years. _____. Drove them down to Texas, was gone about two weeks, and come back and our nephew and some more people _____
Madison, Wisconsin, _____ for a while and they transferred them to South Dakota, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and stayed up there for about two years. And I decided to quit my job and I quit, come back to Champaign. And I been back here ever since. Getting along pretty good, I don't know. _____
_____ he had shot his, I don't know his wife or lady friend, caught him Christmas, they was making this Christmas recording, he cut her throat, that's what

happened, he cut her throat, killed her. And they put him in the jail and they hung him _____ ever hung in Champaign over at the courthouse, between the courthouse and jail, they hung him.

Roundtree: What was his name?

Clark: I can't hail his name but everybody called him Christmas.

Roundtree: Christmas?

Clark: Um hum. _____. I remember that. And I was on the side of the scaffold and had a brand new _____ right there between the jail house and the courthouses. I was already _____ and saw them build the scaffold. I didn't see the hanging. I _____ a lot of people wanted to go and see it. I guess, a big crowd. I didn't go over there. But I saw the scaffold _____ and I heard them say he walked out on it and he got so far that he, they pushed him off or something, and the rope around his neck before he hit the ground, and the rope snapped his neck.

Tyler: Do you know why they hung him?

Clark: Yeah, he, he, he killed his woman. I don't know it was his wife or lady friend or what it was. He cut her throat, just cut her, just about cut her head off. I forgot what it, don't remember what it was all about. Just one of those things that happen.

Roundtree: Do you remember about what time, what year this is?

Clark: Oh, quite a few years ago. I couldn't remember the year now. I was pretty young myself then. _____. I was in my 20s or 30s, somewhere along in there _____.

Tyler: When you first came to Champaign, what was the reason your parents moving here?

Clark: Well, my dad had a job at the railroad, he worked the _____. He got a job at the roundhouse. He was making more money there than he was at Kentucky. _____ in Kentucky so that was why he moved up here. He was staying at my cousin, my cousin's house for quite awhile down Ash Street. After I got shot, the boy lived next door to me, the boy that shot me, was playing, playing war. There was a war going on then. _____. Go in the house where this boy lived at, his grandmother, folks decided to buy, buy a place. So she sold the place to my mother and father. It was \$750 at that time. That was quite awhile back. _____ sold it cheap to us 'cause we had had nothing done to the boy _____ . So we moved over to that

house and stayed there. And I sold the house just about a couple of years ago and I bought a house and I got married and me and my wife bought a house and had to move, moved on the lot. Two houses on the lot. I sold it a few years ago.

Tyler: Your houses. What street were your houses on?

Clark: Ash Street.

Tyler: Ash?

Clark: Yes, 600 block, 608.

Tyler: When you first came to Champaign as you grew up what kinds of things did you like or dislike about Champaign?

Clark: Well, being a kid, I don't know, I just, I liked _____ coming out of the South, one thing that I wasn't used to was going to school with white kids. That was kind of, you know, something different for me, being how we didn't play with white kids in Kentucky down there. Back then, went to school with white, you know, white kids. Folks always were, they was all white teachers. There were no colored people around then, not back then, not in schools _____. I know I got along fine and pretty good grades. But I've seen Champaign grow quite a bit. I remember most, most all the streets in the north end of town was dirt streets, like in the

north end of town, quite a few streets in Urbana was dirt streets. _____ in rainy weather or in winter time the wagons would get stuck out there in the mud trying to go through the streets, hauling coal _____. They'd get stuck and us kids, we'd get out help 'em, you know, pull, roll the wheels, get the _____ pull out of the mud and all and a few years later on come on and started paving the streets here, yonder and there. Pretty soon they got about all the streets around Champaign and Urbana paved now. _____.

I remember when they, University Avenue was, was flat, see across clear over to Champaign where you, where you go on subway to go on the railroad track over there on University Avenue. That was all level. There wasn't, only subway there was in Champaign was the Washington Street subway. It was on Washington Street. That was the only subway there was here. _____ in all place else trains run, it was on the level. Trains going by you had to stop and wait till the train get by so you can get across. They started raising track along about Paxton some place for the subway zone. _____ they raised the tracks up to where you see, where they are now. I worked down there, shelled out, wheeled the sand and gravel out of cars and we had _____ things up on top of the cars up there. And we go up there and we'd load the wheelbarrow, load it on down to the mixer and down there and dump it in the mixer and they, you know, mix it and stir it up. That's when they build them pillars and things _____ subway then. Worked there quite awhile. I don't know. I did a lot of work around here.

I worked in the kitchens and I worked on the railroad, and the roundhouse up there. _____ cold water _____. Big steam engines, big ones

would come in, come in, them 2900s, they was almost twice as long as the _____
1500 engines, almost twice as long as they were. And I worked with them, you know,
as far as labor work would do. I know _____. They had
what's called a _____, little, little engine pulled the car from the roundhouse down to
the station down there picked up the men that worked for the roundhouse and take 'em
back and forth at certain time of day and night, carry 'em back and forth to work.
_____. They cut that out and started on the streetcar that a way and they
built that bridge up there _____. _____ see cars up
on this side over here and you get off, and you'd walk over this bridge over here to this
side where you work at _____ roundhouse up there. Of course, if you worked
on that side of the track, you, back what they call a rip track, why you, you had to cross
that bridge to get down there where your work was, where your office was, where you
going to check in for work. I don't know.

Tyler: I was wondering a lot folks we have interviewed that talk about the prejudice that
was here in Champaign. Did you experience any of the prejudice?

Clark: Yeah, there was prejudice, a lot of prejudice here. There's still a little prejudice
here now, but not as bad as it used to be. Of course, you went to school with white
kids. Most all the colored people here, oh say, in one, back in the north end of
Champaign and they went to school and the other kids, mostly white kids, they went to
school in kind of the southern, south part of Champaign. They wasn't no colored people
lived down there. They most all white kids. This one time, I had, after I got, come out of

the hospital and started back to school, well, the grade I was in, I had to, they put me, they sent me down to Colonel Wolfe School. Well, I was the only black person down there and that was kind of bad. I didn't know how to play and like with them. I only stayed there for a little while. I didn't have to go that long. Then they sent me to Gregory School. That was over on Randolph or State street over there, so I went over there. I went to school over there quite awhile and transferred from there to Central School from there to high school, so not much schooling but kids come up, kids come on up.

Roundtree: You have children?

Clark: No, I don't have any children. I been married three times. My first wife, she had I think three kids. One of 'em died in Madison, Wisconsin. We was with some white people and of course I was working Chanute Field and me and her was courting. And she, his wife, the people she worked for, her husband, he was an Army officer up at Chanute Field. I guess I got a job up there through him. So I was going with this girl and she worked for this man so I got a job at Chanute Field. _____. Me and her were getting along good and they decided, well, they transferred him to Madison, Wisconsin, and I wanted to go on account of she was going. I got transferred. That's where I _____ her, Madison, Wisconsin. We stayed there quite a while. In Madison, Wisconsin. Transferred me to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, transferred him, so I went along with him, went to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. That was quite a, quite a experience for me. I never saw that much snow in my life. I _____ snow up

around my waist going to catch the streetcar, or bus, to go to work. I had a pretty good job driving truck and I didn't get out of it to load it or unload it or nothing like that. It was, all I did was drive it. They used prisoners a lot of times to load the trucks and they had a guard on there with the prisoners. Go wherever it was supposed to go and drive and load the truck. Get to where you was going and unload the truck. I _____ a big state truck and I drove a coal truck _____ coal truck. I'd drive to the coal chute where the car, conveyer, drove my truck up and take it on to where it's supposed to go. It had to be shoveled off, well, I'd take prisoners with me. Then _____ go and pull the lever, and lower the tailgate _____ raise the bed up and dump the coal _____ pull the lever down and lock my gate, go home back to the coal yard. I had a pretty good job. I had a job when _____ up there a little while put me to work in the office there and I used a mimeograph machine to run off stuff, papers and things like that they had printed off and run them off on the mimeograph machine.

Roundtree: You said South Dakota?

Clark: Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Tyler: I was wondering, were jobs here in Champaign-Urbana as open as other places that you had traveled?

Clark: Yeah, see there wasn't many, wasn't too much work around Champaign. Fraternity houses, a lot of people worked fraternity houses. They was cooks, and porters _____ at fraternities and sorority houses. And railroad work and all. There wasn't, well, there was construction back in them days, a little construction going on there. Later on, the construction got where it got pretty good, got pretty good jobs. When they built Chanute Field up there, the men got jobs up there, working at Chanute Field and built that field up there, my dad, my uncle, and a whole lot, there were quite a few colored people worked up there. _____. Chanute Field was quite a job up there _____. Wasn't too much work in Champaign. Working on a railroad, work at one of the fraternity houses. Guess I did the best I could, scattered around.

Tyler: How about, let's talk a little bit about the community, the black community of Champaign-Urbana. How has the black community changed since you were growing up?

Clark: Well, changed, I don't know. They look like they mix a whole lot now than what they used to. Colored people all stayed lumped together. They didn't fool around with white or something like that. Stayed pretty well together. Once in a while it was accepted, but not very much. Colored had their own places to go for pleasure of all kinds, kids and all that. They stayed in their place and sometime they get mixed up with some white kids. Schools, they get mixed up in schools _____. Went on, got older, growing on up, they started having, you know, white men started

going with colored women around and then colored men started going with white women, things like that, mixing up pretty good, like it is now.

Tyler: Was it accepted?

Clark: Hmm?

Tyler: Was it accepted when they mixed up like that?

Clark: Oh, yeah. Well, there was very few places, white places where Negroes could go. If you were white, you was able to go to all the places. Come out on the east side out there and they go anyplace out there but the Negroes couldn't go out to their places. Very few white places you could go to. It works that way. You see your girlfriend, a nice white girl, she'd go on a date with you, or something like that you could.

_____ You stayed your distance back in them days. You got to hide it. It's all over now, you see it all around everywhere now.

Roundtree: Did you ever go to the theater? Some of the people we talked to they said that blacks sat in one section.

Clark: That's right. In the Orpheum Theater down here, they, blacks went down as far as far as W. See? It was alphabetical. It was alphabetical. Back here was W, _____ W, X, Y, Z. That's for, that's where the Negroes sit at, you know. It

was on the north side of the theater. That's where it was, back in one little corner. All the rest was white. _____.

_____. In the Rialto, you go upstairs, go upstairs and sit up there. That went on till they built the Virginia, Virginia Theater. It started that you had to go upstairs in there but later on they started going anyplace you want, you want to sit at. I think that's the way it is now. I haven't been there in years. _____.

Tyler: I was wondering, when, you were here at the time when, you know, the Douglass Center, the Frederick Douglass Center, were you here when it got started?

Clark: Yeah. I came, I don't know if I was here _____. Some kind of group got together and _____ for the Negroes to go, kids and like that to go, and that's where, it got started that a way, got _____ started this group going. Started it up. _____. I can't say all about it but now, you know, I went there _____. I don't know. Look like when they started up _____ because most of the kids _____ for different things and it just wasn't my _____ I wanted to do, I just, run around quite a bit then. I was pretty well _____. Had a car. I got out of town most times.

Tyler: Did the Douglass Center help the community, the children?

Clark: Well, it helped quite a bit. It helped the children quite a bit. I don't know. It was good for them to have something to do and places, you know. Baseball playing, keep them out of the streets as much as they could. It helped a whole lot.

Tyler: Were, let me see, you were here when Pearl Harbor was born, I mean, was bombed.

Clark: Yeah. Right here. I was at the time, I was at home, I laying down on the couch asleep. _____. At the time it was bombed, I was laying down asleep. My wife, _____, she woke me up _____. They bombed Pearl Harbor. I got up and listened to it on the radio. Didn't have T.V. _____ . Listened to it on the radio. Forget what year it was now. _____. I don't pay much attention to years or things like that no more.

Tyler: I think that was in, what, December 7, 1941.

Clark: It was?

Tyler: How about the other wars?

Clark: Well, in the World War, World War, that's where I got shot, in the World War I. I used to, I'd go down to the station down there, watch them trains come through. Most

would all be, blacks they bring out of the South. Trains _____ eight or 10 coaches. Got black men on there. Some crying, some laughing.

Tyler: Soldiers?

Clark: Yeah, they was going to, going on to Camp McCord, I think it was. _____ . You know, start training them up there. They had to be trained _____. Come out of the South. Southbound station, _____ one or two here. Go on up there. _____. Watch it come through.

Tyler: How about World War II?

Clark: Well, _____ I didn't pay much attention to it.

Tyler: Did you ever go fight?

Clark: No, I never was in, I never was in the service. Never was. I almost got into World War II. I was working, I was working for the government, driving a truck, _____. I was making about \$500 a month. They only paying \$30 a month, you know, in the Army. So I went to my induction center, wherever it was, and they examined me in all kinds of ways and I passed everything going on down the line going to, about the last, last place, you know, about ready to check out. Doctor's on the

other side of the room there, he saw me. Well, this side of my face was turned next to them. And they saw me and called me out of line. Way across the room. I went over to see what they wanted. _____ piece of paper. I done passed, I passed everything, all the examination, everything till I got over there to them guys and they took my worksheet, looked it over, started asking me questions. _____
_____ a chance for me to get out of this. So they asked me this, that and the other, and I told them about my ear. I done passed. I could hear in both sides but I told them, every time they asked me something, I had my head on this side to them when I answered. I said, what did you say?
_____. 'Cause I had _____ good way for me to get out of this thing. And I didn't want to go to \$30 a month. I was making \$500 a month. So every time they asked me, I said, What are you saying? This that and the other. They asked me about my ear. Could I see. I said, well, I can see out of this eye. Well, I can see out of it but I got 20/20 on my eyesight, 20/20 on my hearing. It was on that paper, written down on that paper. When they got through asking me questions, and I kind of backtracked myself there, telling them this, that and the other, and they started marking and scratching, marking and going on. Five doctors in there. When they got through with me, they had _____ go on back in line. Well, I was pretty well up in it, in the line, _____ when they called me out. Then I had to get, got in line, got way into it, got way back in it, end of line. _____ while getting up to the checkout place. There was some guy behind me and some white guy he was. So when I got there, I handed my paper in, bam, bam.
_____. Go ahead on. And this guy was behind me, stamped his paper

and he was behind me all along. Got to the second-to-last place, handed my paper and they hand me a ticket to _____. And this guy behind me, he passed and he said, boy, I sure wish I'd been in your shoes. (Laughter.) He passed and I was rejected.

And I, I been in good health practically all of my life. Only thing I ever had wrong, a _____ stomach, a _____ stomach. I suffered that quite awhile and I had toothache. The only reason I had a toothache was _____ eat candy I guess or something like that _____. I had two pulled _____. But I got tired of having teeth pulled and _____. So I went out and had them, had all them all pulled out. Had the man pull them all out. Pulled the top ones and I waited a few days and then come back and pulled the bottom ones. Got the false teeth. I wore 'em. I couldn't hardly eat with 'em at first but now I know, when I go to eat, I take 'em out. Last night I took them out, I forgot and put them back in, and left 'em laying on the table. And the guy who cleaned up there. I know he throw them away but I made him find 'em. I haven't got anymore. I get _____ anything I want to. Don't bother me about eating, steaks, potatoes, anything I want to. Popcorn. They _____ . I eat popcorn, peanuts. _____ . _____ . I ain't bother my ___ since. _____ Outside of having the mumps and the measles, _____ kinds of disease, outside of that, I never, I'm not bragging about it, but it's, _____ .

Tyler: How was the black community during the civil rights movement with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.?

Clark: Oh, they wasn't much, didn't have too much trouble around here.

[End Side A]

Ohron Houston Clark Interview

Side B

Clark: _____. Mixed up quite a bit more, I guess, white and black, but.

Tyler: It kind of opened up.

Clark: Yeah, it opened up quite a bit. He was, he went around practically all over the country _____.

Tyler: Did he, did Martin King ever come here?

Clark: I don't remember him being in Champaign. I don't remember that, whether he was here or not. He was a lot of places up this-away.

Tyler: And, what was the expression or to the black community when John F. Kennedy got shot?

Clark: Oh, I don't know. They wasn't nothing. They didn't pay much attention to it.

_____.

Tyler: How about yourself?

Clark: I didn't pay attention. The way I look at it is that it wasn't my business and I just didn't _____ let them organize. I didn't _____
_____.

Roundtree: You said you went to South Dakota. Have you traveled any other place?

Clark: Say where?

Roundtree: Have you went any other places in the U.S.?

Clark: Oh, I've been, I've traveled. I went to South Dakota. I went to school in Cleveland, Ohio. Folks moved up there and I went to school up there. _____ Columbus, Ohio, I started _____ so I was going to there and she lived in Columbus. So I, she had a job over here when I started going so, working with these people over here once in a while when she had time off, I'd drive over to Columbus. Her sister, or her aunt, it was her aunt I guess it was, _____ three or four days _____. Like I said, I went to school up in Cleveland. Outside of that, oh, I been, Joe's wife, he went down here in Georgia, Texas. _____ Galveston and the port and Houston, Texas. We stayed with his daughter in the daytime, stayed _____ Memphis, Little Rock, New Orleans. _____ my mother told me if I went down that way, that I had some cousins down there. I asked a guy at a filling station, down at the garage where I had the car greased

_____ . I had a little time while I was in Houston. Someone told me where he lived. I went out to the house, knocked on the door. A lot of people are, especially in the South, they're scared to open the door. _____ who it was knocking at the door. I told him who I was. I said, you don't know me. I don't know you, but you're my cousin. I'm from Champaign. I told him who my mother was and like that. They opened the door and let me in and we sat down and talked for quite awhile. _____. We stayed down there for about a little over a week. Went down one way and come back the other way. That's about, I never did much _____. _____ Springfield, St. Louis. There was some people in St. Louis now. I only got one uncle living that I know of now. I haven't got an aunt who's living that I know of and all my mother, she was the last one, her family's died. She was the baby, baby girl, baby of the family. And she was the last one to die. My father, he's got one brother living. I haven't seen him in years. There's been quite a few things _____.

Tyler: If you had the chance again to, to get an education, you said you only completed through the ninth grade, right?

Clark: That's right.

Tyler: If you had the chance to, you know, go back and complete your education, would you?

Clark: I would. If I had, had it all to do over again, I would act a lot better than what I did in my day. I played too much, going to school. I never, I got to _____ high school, the ninth grade, I think it was _____ explained how it worked, you know, letters and numbers mixed together. By me being pretty good in arithmetic, so good in arithmetic, everybody tell me, boy you get to high school, and start taking algebra, you be good. I thought I was going to be a shark and instead of me _____ I'm sitting in the back of the room, _____ a bunch of girls. I like playing with the girls. (Laughter.) _____.

_____ they gave us some homework, teacher gave us some homework to do, follow what I'm saying, you know, bring it back the next day. So I've got my homework so I'm, got to looking at it what I had to do when I got home, I'm looking at it. I didn't know one thing from the other, one word or one letter from the other. _____ Teacher tell us. I'm playing with the girls. I didn't, I didn't know nothing about it. So the next day went to class, I went to my other classes first, _____ so when it was time to go that class, I didn't have my homework, I didn't know nothing, I crawled out the back door. I didn't go to class. The teacher, Lottie Switzer, has a school here in Champaign now named Switzer, Switzer School named after her. _____ Switzer. Lord she was rough on you, rough on you. She had long arms. She really, she was a pretty good size woman. She wasn't no big, fat woman. She had long arms, arms hung down to about her knees. And she'd grab them big boys, and shake 'em, and slap 'em, you know, make 'em, you know, when they do something wrong. And I didn't want to go face her. I know what she was going to do _____ when I cut that class. I went to

school every day. Mother didn't know I quit school. I'm going to school. I'm going to school. _____ Go to school in Champaign. Well, you know where Champaign High School is. I walked last week to be with the gang on out there all the way to the school house where you going, you come from, you know, from the north up here, imagine going to the back door, side door there. And I walked that far. I wouldn't get on up to the door 'cause scared someone _____ Lottie Switzer be hanging around. I walked that far with the girls playing with them. And I turned around and go back. And I'd go back, probably go on Main Street, hang around there awhile. Doing that for several days. Finally my mother found I wasn't going to school. Said, if you ain't going to school, you're going to work. That's when I started working. I started working Southern Tea Room. _____ got me in there, started me washing dishes and scrubbing the floors.

Roundtree: The Southern Tea Room?

Clark: Southern Tea Room.

Roundtree: It's not here anymore, right?

Clark: No. I'll tell you where it was. You know where the Co-op Building is? The Co-op?

Roundtree: The Co-op?

Clark: Co-op, right here on the corner of Wright and Green. Big store there, where you can go, Wright Street, lot of stores down there. Well, there was a building right behind the Co-op. Building is still there, least when I was over there it was. Old lady Smith and old lady _____ they done run that. Well, I got a job in there, washing dishes and _____ around the place and cleaning up this, that and the other. I made \$12 a week. _____ kind of haggling _____ I got maybe \$15 a week. I worked around there, oh, helping in the pantry. Helped them make pies and cakes. I learned how to make some pies and cakes, nut bread. _____ I can make some really good nut bread. I worked around there, oh, I don't know, finally got tired of it. There quite awhile. Finally got tired. And started _____. Worked at the garage quite awhile. That building right across from the power and light company on University Avenue, that building right across the street from that, that corner. I worked there 25 years, in that one garage.

Roundtree: What did you do?

Clark: Well, it started out washing cars and cleaning up the showroom and dusting the cars off and like that. And new cars come in, I had to wash 'em, clean 'em up and put 'em on the showroom floor and that. And later on, _____ I got a foot up and got a better job, started _____ and white guy was ahead of me there. He

was washing cars, doing what I do, but he got, so after I come in and learned how to wash cars he started doing other work around there and _____ me washing cars. And so later on I, I got another guy washing cars and I started to make _____ shipped cars, cars shipped, you know, cars shipped in boxcars. Well, I learned how to go and help unload 'em, and have a gang with me. We'd unload the cars and bring 'em on back in. _____ wash 'em, polish 'em up, put 'em on the floor. _____. I worked at a pretty good job. Worked on _____ till I didn't have to work no more.

Tyler: What was the latest job that you had had recently?

Clark: Let me see. Well, I cooked for a while. I believe, cooking was probably about the last job I had. _____ cooking someplace _____ so long ago that I was cooking, I was the head cook. Oh, I started cooking at the Southern Tea Room and _____ down in there, several places. _____. Cooked at _____ one time. I was a porter there. And she got sick. Didn't see nobody in the place. I fixed breakfast and most of that day and she didn't really come. She called in she wouldn't be able to be in for a few days. I had, I fixed dinner that night and had to do porter work and come down and fix meals. She was gone for two or three weeks. I did the cooking and the porter work, too. _____ she come back. She come back to work _____. Then from then on, after I left there, I started,

I got a job cooking. _____. I started cooking _____ quite awhile. Got tired of cooking. Jobs around _____.

Tyler: A few last questions.

Clark: That's all right. Go right ahead.

Tyler: How has life been living here in the nursing home?

Clark: Oh, it's been pretty nice. I, tell you the truth about it, I haven't got no _____. Nothing wrong with me. Way it happened, this white guy in here, used to come out on the east side, he wanted a colored woman, a colored woman. _____ He wanted a colored woman all the time. They knew him. Always a lot of colored gals around there to fool around with. He had a little money and they'd get his money off of him. You know, he _____ and all that kind of stuff so they'd go ahead and he'd come, oh, quite awhile after that, they, _____. Let's go out and see _____. Let's go out to see _____. _____ He got in the hospital, up there in the nursing home. Let's go out and see him. I said, okay. I come out with some guys. I didn't have no car then. _____ had a car, but wasn't driving no car. _____ Come out to see him. _____ And, so I'm sitting there talking and he was kind of out of his head. He wasn't doing very good. And some colored gal _____

_____. I was sitting there. The guys left and one of 'em come back and _____ to get you, take you back home. I said, okay, _____. And the guy didn't come back. Nobody come back. Well, I didn't know much about this part of Urbana, _____ this part of Urbana, didn't know anything about it. When they didn't come back, I thought, what the heck am I going to do? _____.

Well, they got a bed there. I laid down there and slept that night. Wait till the next day. Sitting around and sitting around _____ got me some cheese and crackers, stuff like that and ate it. Well, this _____.

_____. This guy, they took him out, took him, _____ dining room and put another guy in there. They told me going to put a guy in there, a preacher. Told me not to be cursing and nothing like that, he was a preacher. I said, okay. _____. This guy, he was in Danville and left Danville. Went to some place in Indianapolis somewhere brought him back to Danville and he died. _____. I just stayed on there, got acquainted around there pretty good. Found out how to go to the dining room get me something to eat. _____.

Both my houses were rented. I didn't, I don't know, I got along all right. I stayed on, stayed on. That's the way it worked out. It worked out. It's pretty good. But in a way, I don't, don't like it. I been thinking about getting out of it. I sold my houses and that went and got messed up some kind of way. Got me, well, I get Social Security and they take that, supposed to give me \$25 out of it every month. _____ \$25. They give you _____ this that and the other. Want to give you a couple of dollars. I said, you don't need it as long as you save up. I said,

man, I don't want no two or three dollars. Hand me two dollars I said, you take it and keep it. So he gave it, but I didn't take it. _____. I may have done a little cursing. I do curse once in a while, not very often. Till today that's where he, I just left his office when he called me to come up there. And I went up there, I was _____ asked me and told me to come up and get cigarettes. Well, you don't get no cigarettes and you got some up there. _____ Wanted to go up there and get me a package. _____ some are \$25. I signed up for it. Went up there and _____. All gone. All the people that wanted cigarettes was gone. _____ asked what I wanted. I want some cigarettes if I can get any. _____. _____ I want some cigarettes and some money. _____. But I ain't going to give you as much. How's about five dollars? Man, what am I going to do with five dollars? He gave me 10. Here's 10. I said, Okay, give me the 10. Now don't go out and get drunk and this that and the other and come back here drunk. And I said, okay, so _____. _____ twenty-five dollars out of my check every month. I only got 25 dollars, twice, once or twice and that was before Thanksgiving. And that's why I don't like 'em. Money rolls around, give me my \$25.

Roundtree: Did you attend any churches in Champaign-Urbana?

Clark: _____ . I was raised up in _____ church in Paducah. I went to that _____ . I went to Sunday School. Had a pin, had a round pin, and the next year, second year, had a wreath to go around it. And next year had a little bar to go underneath it. _____ fourth and fifth years bars to put on it but I wasn't there long enough _____ . Has to be most churches I went to. I went to church around here once in a while. I don't know. Sunday School around here when I was a kid it was always in the afternoon, around 4 o'clock, and I like to go to Sunday School in the morning and the rest of the day play around in, so I didn't attend Sunday School much. _____ . Fool around _____ . And mother she was a Baptist, she was a Baptist. I went down there to _____ buddy of mine. I went to Salem once or twice. I was never much of a church man. Not that I'm that all that much of a sinner. I wouldn't say I'm all that much for religion but I just tried to go along take care of myself and them that sins, mind my own business, I seem to get along a lot better. _____ .

Tyler: If you had, if you had a chance to say something to the youth, black youth in the community, what would you tell them?

Clark: (Laughter.) That's a pretty hard question. I don't know. _____ act right _____ . Go to school and get you an education, that's the main thing. Get you an education. And quit fighting, most kids are going to have fights once in a while

but just don't _____ go out and steal or nothing like that. Just leave other people's stuff alone. If you haven't got no money, don't bother. Kids don't have too much money just have to come on up till you get big enough to work and make your own money but _____ go to school.

Tyler: Was that the way _____ you was raised up?

Clark: Yes.

Tyler: There wasn't too much crime?

Clark: There wasn't a whole of crime in my days. I know _____ in my kid days at home there was all. I went to school. I played with school kids and us kids would play. And I had Paducah there, the curfew blow at 9 o'clock. _____
_____. There was quite a few colored kids around and we'd sit out, late at night, we'd sit out there on the _____ and tell tales, just talk about what the bear done and all that kind of stuff. _____. That curfew whistle'd blow and you'd see kids cutting. _____. You'd see a policeman on horse, on horse, he'd ride horseback. He'd be out in the neighborhood and all them other neighborhoods, he'd be horseback _____. You kids go on in. You wasn't gone in, they'd get after you, you better get going. Of course, I come here, they didn't have no curfew here. _____. My mother, she'd make me come in early at night. I didn't come in early, I got a whooping. I got a lot of

whoopings in those days _____. Oh, I didn't get hurt too bad. Gave me a good whooping. Did what she said _____. I got along very good. I did what she told me to do _____. She told me she worked. My dad worked, too. He worked at the roundhouse. My mother, she worked at other people's, did washing, ironing. _____ buy me something for my lunch that day, told me to come home and sit there at the back porch and the lady next door on the other side she would tell me it was time to go back to school. That's the day I got shot. _____ and I spent the money buying candy. _____ store about a block from the school. _____. Come home that day at noon. _____ Didn't have no money to spend money but I got my _____ pop gun. Go next door to this boy's house and started shooting, bang, bang at him. And he went in his house and he got his shotgun. Same gun he playing with all the time. He come to the door, bang, bang. Shot the gun shot through the door, had glass in the door. He shot through that and shot it in. _____. Right at noon. _____ 1917. So. That's the way _____. _____ If you don't something's going to happen to you. Don't mess with your mother or father tell you to do or something's going to happen to you.

Roundtree: So, you enjoyed living in Champaign-Urbana?

Clark: Hmm?

Roundtree: Had a chance, you think you'd come here _____?

Clark: Oh, I don't know. I like Champaign. Of course, I was raised up in Champaign, oh, since, _____ I would like to see what I've heard about Cleveland. _____
_____. _____ They had a little trouble over there. I thought about how glad I was _____ all the trouble they was having over there. Of course, I went to South Dakota. I lived in Madison. I liked Madison pretty well. I got acquainted around there. That was a pretty friendly town. _____ I wouldn't mind living in Madison. The weather is too bad there. Of course, South Dakota, it's not so bad. The wintertime, it's pretty rough. Of course, the cold up there is not like it is here. It's a dry cold. And I wouldn't mind _____. The dry cold, you can go around up there with not very many clothes on but you don't want to stay out too long. _____ 'cause you freeze and you don't know you froze up there. It's dry. But down here 20 or 30 below zero, you better have some clothes on. _____. I don't know. I just, I like it here pretty well. It got so that you can go most anyplace you want to go around here now and you're not much, you're not segregated _____ than it used to be. I go downtown to Main Street _____ sold ice cream and sodas and things like that in there and you couldn't go in there, didn't allow colored in there.

Roundtree: What did you say the name of it was?

Clark: Vriner's.

Roundtree: Vriner's?

Clark: Vriner's.

Tyler: Vriner's.

Clark: Vriner's. It started with a V. It's not, that's not there now but the name's still on the window. _____. I forgot what kind of nationality, what nationality it was that run it. You can go into those places downtown.

_____. Go in there and eat.

_____. Didn't have much of a crowd in there but nice place. _____. None of these places downtown, not no eating places, _____ places, _____ Vaky's,

_____ her dad, he worked at Vaky's. He worked and made ice cream and stuff like that. _____.

He couldn't go no place to eat downtown or nothing like that. Oh, I don't know.

_____.

Roundtree: Mr. Clark, we thank you for your time.

Clark: Sure, it's okay. Any time.

[End Side B]