

Jules Harrell oral history interview summary

MT State Historic Preservation Office—African American historic places in Helena, MT

With funding from the National Park Service

Total interview time 50 minutes and 06seconds

Summary developed by Alan M. Thompson, Morrell Creek Associates, PO Box 9737, Helena, MT 59604

July 2016

Helena residence affiliation: 1076 North Ewing Street, 1068 Rodney Street (grandmother's home)

1:01 minutes-15:51 minutes—

-Born November 19, 1949 at 1076 North Ewing Street, Helena, MT

-Father—Arthur Samuel Harrell-born in Helena, MT Mother—Mary Alice Trahan Harrell-born in Louisiana

-Siblings- Arthur jr. (older brother) Janet Harrell Campbell (younger sister)

-family members migrated from Tennessee to Meeker, Oklahoma then Montana. Grandmother Mamie Anderson Bridgewater born in Ft Hauchuca, AZ then came to Helena, MT with father who was in the 24th Infantry

-“so many relatives lived in the Helena area.”

-Octavia Bridgewater-longtime Nurse at St. Peter's Hospital, Uncle Herbert worked at Elk River Concrete-

-Grandfather Harrell previously railroad Porter/ Cook and was -Janitor at Marlow Theatre. He also developed theater concession enterprise and a catering business in Helena. Later disabled with Diabetes. Passed in Helena in 1956

-great grandmother passed in Helena in 1950

-One of father's brothers passed in 1948, talented man, Biology student at Carroll College, pilot, boxing, fencing, died in a plane crash.

-discussed civil rights movement, middle 1960's, urban unrest, school integration

-White southern resistance- University of Mississippi

-“seemed like older people in family tried to shield us “Many family discussions around meal tables.

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15:51-25:28 minutes—

-Hidden fear among blacks and whites that federal government may devise a plan to relocate southern blacks to less populated states in western states

-Pleasant Hour Club-Helena club affiliated with the Montana Federation of Colored Women's Clubs

-proactive discussions of social and community concerns noted in minutes of meetings. Group raised money to support causes outside of Montana too. Raised money for youth educational scholarships

-Montana Federation of Colored Women's Clubs also sent representatives to regional and national conventions

-recalls group photograph of community members at Nathaniel Ford's residence at 913 Cannon where female was reading an article from the Pittsburgh Courier, an African American newspaper to group

-Pleasant Hour summer picnic at Rimini was a major event to community. Other MT Federation of Colored Women's Clubs and family members from across Montana would attend.

-childhood memories of fishing and exploring the streams

-Family holiday gatherings

-Grandmother at 1068 Rodney Street would handle Thanksgiving

-Aunt Octavia Bridgewater handled family Christmas meals- abundance of food.

-recalls that after preparing and hosting Christmas Dinner Octavia Bridgewater would go to St. Peter's Hospital and work a full shift

-Seemed like holiday celebrations were not important to his father but he would take family to forest to find their Christmas tree. Mother was more artistic and made holiday card displays

-Aunt Octavia was a constant memory peg in his Helena memories.

25:28 minutes-39:50 minutes

- Mother and father met while they were in college at Xavier University in Louisiana

-father did not participate in fraternal or social organizations

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25:28 --39:50 minutes—(continued)

-Father and his brother served in WWII- sent many items back their mother from India and Iran (chairs, prayer rugs, and pictures)

-Knows less about Samuel Bridgewater's service surmises that Sam Bridgewater probably never really recovered from his war wounds from the Spanish American War.

-recalls story of Mamie Bridgewater's statement when she was in Salt Lake City to meet Sam Bridgewater returning from the Spanish American War **"It was the saddest, happy day I have ever seen"** as a description of seeing wounded soldiers returning

-Mother cut many African American's hair in Helena. Remembers biweekly visits from many

-interaction with other African American community members included: Leo Calhoun, Ella and Ad Banks with daughter Bertrand "we called Mr. and Mrs. Banks" aunt and uncle", Norman and Maxine Howard, son Ray Howard, Mattie Williams and sons, Oscar Jones family (had five boys)

-“in those days we listened to what older people were talking about Remembers the “real force” description of Arthur Ford, an Engineer affiliated with the NY City Water Commission

-Jules' godmother was Mrs. Duncan from Butte, MT

-Jules' childhood ended when his father passed from a heart attack when Jules was 14 years old in 1963

-seeing the amount of people that attended his father's funeral "I didn't know if the line of cars would ever stop" Expression of community grief that he had never seen before

39:50 minutes-50:06 minutes

-Gardening- "can't remember when my family didn't garden" portion of back yard was dedicated to garden. Corn on the cob

-“the Rhubarb patch was our snack”

-my father's mother Mary Emma Harrell really appreciated the Montana outdoors. She had knowledge of plants and outdoors

-Father studied Sociology at Xavier. He and I spoke about my developing interest in the mind and body

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39:50 minutes-50:06 minutes (continued)

-studied mental Health issues at university of Illinois the topic of stress and asthma were explored in my Master's work

-seemed always interested in Mental Health while at Carroll College our classes visited the patients at Warm Springs

-Nephew Richard Harrell Jr. helped arrange for Al Campbell, Howard University Neuropsychologist to discuss our work with members of the Helena College Psychology Club

-for people to have a rich sense of the past is why he is interested in this oral history project

-recalls his mother taking his wife and oldest daughter to visiting Alma Jacobs in 1970's at 1205 Highland Street in Helena. Mrs. Jacobs' mother visited with them about her teenage and young adult experiences as an Americo Liberian.

End of Interview session