

Kathy L. Reed oral history interview summary

MT State Historic Preservation Office Project—African American Historic Places in Montana

With funding from The National Park Service

Total interview time seventy five minutes

Summary developed by Alan M. Thompson, Morrell Creek Associates, PO Box 9737, Helena, MT 59604 May 2017

Great Falls residence affiliation: 708 8th Avenue South –24CA1748 and-- 24CA1747--- 711 8th Ave South.

1:00 minute-13:00 minutes—

- Kathy L. Reed born-- July 19, 1959 Great Falls, MT Old Columbus Hospital
- Father—Eddie Lou Reed—born October 12, 1929, in Straven, Alabama. Died in Great Falls in 2008
- Mother--- Eva Pearl Hudson Reed—born 1930 in Wilton, Alabama. Died June 1989 in Great Falls, MT. Kathy still talks with mothers’ twin brother George Earl Hudson who lives in Alabama
- Kathy recalls her grandfather Brown (mom’s side) worked for the railroad in Alabama as a coal loader
- Grandfather Brown had land in Alabama and relatives are still on the land.
- Kathy’s mother Eva went to college at Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical School to receive a Phlebotomy Certificate. She worked for a Dr. Hubbard in Alabama prior to marrying Eddie Reed
- Father (Eddie Reed) grew up in coal mining camps outside of Birmingham, Alabama
- Kathy’s grandfather Jessie Reed worked in maintenance for the then Alabama Girls’ Industrial College (now University of Montevallo) The school was established in 1896 and was the only public Liberal Arts college in Alabama. .Jessie Reed was previously a coal miner
- Kathy remembers family stories of how her father proposed to her mother in Alabama
- Kathy recalls her family often visited their relatives in Alabama about every three years. (last time she went with family was in 1977 after her high school graduation from Great Falls High.)
- Kathy attended Longfellow Elementary and Paris Gibson Middle School before attending Great Falls High
- Eddie Reed’s father was Jessie Reed and his mother was Mary Reed. After Eddie Reed graduated from Shelby County (Alabama) Training School in 1948, he joined the Army in 1950
- Eddie Reed was honorably discharged from military service. Reed began his professional baseball career. He played with the Birmingham Black Barons, Memphis Red Sox in the Negro American League. Reed also played for a number of teams in the Cleveland Indians and Los Angeles organizations.

1:00-13:00 minutes continued

-In 1955, Eddie Reed married Eva Hudson at the Shelby County Courthouse in Columbiana, Alabama

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- In 1958, Eddie and Eva Reed moved to Great Falls and Eddie began his career with the Great Falls Electrics and community life in Cascade County
- Eddie and Eva Reed rented from Mrs. Taylor (an early Great Falls African American community member) the family would later care for Mrs. Taylor in her old age.
- After retiring from baseball Eddie Reed worked for the Paris of Montana and Town and Ranch Self Service Furniture

13:00 minutes -32:00 minutes

- Kathy recalls Mary Fontana Zale and her son Gary, the Ricketts and their son John.
- Other neighbors included Peter and Adele Fontana, Mr. and Mrs. Junious L. Cook, Mrs. Katie Knott and Mr. William Knott. Mr. Knott was known to dress nattily and loved to go to the local horse races.
- Reed siblings Dexter, Mary and Mark did yard chores in summer and winter for Bill Knott
- Mr. Knott often had holiday meals with the Reed family
- Kathy recalled how neighbors watched out for neighbor kids
- Also remembers Mrs. Agnes Parker as church organist at Union Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (AME)
- Kathy states she felt secure and safe and had a good childhood growing up on the Southside of Great Falls
- Kathy says she assumed other classmates grew up like her
- Kathy recalls a big tree and a vacant lot as a favorite meeting and play place for neighbor kids. Played hide and seek, built snow forts, played baseball. Her parents had a contract with a local window shop because her siblings often accidentally broke neighbor's windows playing baseball.
- Kathy remembers being active in Camp Fire Girls and her friend Debbie Waltari's mother being a Camp Fire Leader
- recalls getting old refrigerator boxes from local store and constructing forts from them and using them as sleds in their stairway of the house
- Talks about the number of neighborhood grocery stores on the south side of Great Falls (Starlight Superette, Matchetts)
- Eva (mother) was a Playground Assistant at Mary, Dexter and Mark's school) was approached by school Social Worker to consider a boy and girl for possible foster placement in the Reed home
- Kathy recalls family meeting initiated by mother to discuss bringing new brother and sister into family

32:00 minutes-75 minutes

- Kathy recalls a meeting of the Montana Federation of Colored Women's Club Dunbar Art and Study Group members and meeting at her home
- Women wore hats and gloves for afternoon tea –Robert's Rules of Order guided meetings
- siblings were relegated to upstairs while Kathy was on kitchen duty assisting her mother
- some of the attendees includes Ms. Hill, Mrs. Olean Green, Mrs. Emma Smith, Mrs., Agnes Parker, Mrs. Alma Jacobs, Mrs. Naomi Smith and Ms. Bootsie Bowers
- Kathy helped clean and prepare mother's home for the occasion. "Had to wash dishes twice" for event

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- Father was an officer in the AME Church as well as member of the Prince Hall Masonic organization. He also played billiards and was on a bowling league
- Mother participated in Eastern Star and various community organizations
- Kathy remembers Mrs. Katie Knott's beautiful Iris plants
- As a youth and adult Kathy was inspired by participants from the Dundar Art and Study Group
- recalls many community members pushing importance of education to her and her siblings
- speaks fondly of Alma Jacobs distributing discarded library books to neighborhood youth during summer breaks
- Kathy remembers legacy of literacy developed as a youth because of Great Falls Library
- In 1977 Kathy enrolls at Eastern Montana College—she knew she wanted to work in Special Education- lived in a 24-hour quiet dormitory; but also played Women's Rugby
- Kathy contributed to the Student Union Activity Board at EMC; learned how to do contractual agreements because of her work with a films and lecture committee
- Kathy saw college as a wonderful learning experience and continues to remain in touch with many college colleagues
- speaks to her current students about the positive environment of attending a small campus for higher education
- Kathy speaks briefly about her Master's Degree experiences at Northern Montana College.

Interview concludes at 1 hour and 12 seconds.