

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Della Dotson

COLLECTION: 4700.2552

IDENTIFICATION: Mossville resident

INTERVIEWER: Rebecca Cooper

SERIES: Mossville History Project - Field Interviews

INTERVIEW DATES: July 27, 2015

FOCUS DATES: 1950s-1980s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4488

Della Ann Rigmaiden Dotson born in Mossville on January 1st, 1948 to Joshua Rigmaiden and Norine Smith; lived on the Old Spanish Trail; has one full sister, Lola Bell Rigmaiden James; half siblings Wesley Rigmaiden, Carl Rigmaiden, Christine Davis, and Denise Rigmaiden are deceased; Mother L was father's first wife, Norine was the second wife, may have had another wife before them; mother from Indian Hills, Texas, and father's family from the West Fork area; grandparents in the lumber business on Calcasieu River; father a minster; he and Mother L founded Christ Sanctified Holy Religion in Mossville; met her mom in Texas while he was establishing a church; father built them an apartment to live in, may have been first rent houses in Mossville; buildings torn down after Sasol bought the land; original families; attended Mossville Elementary; recalls old school buildings; bussing; Mossville High School opened in 1955; father instrumental in getting school and recreation center built; Rigmaiden Recreation Center named after her father; Joshua Rigmaiden considered the mayor of Mossville; had a grocery store in their front yard; getting a TV; father a good provider, people came to him if they had a problem; would talk to Henry Reed and have it taken care of; people came at all hours to get someone out of jail; father died when she was seven; neighbors growing up; mother cleaned houses in Maplewood with other ladies from Mossville; mother taught herself how to drive; Interstate 10 being built; Praters delivered newspapers in their convertible Ford; Midway drive-in; Jim Lee managed the "colored" section; goat pulling a handmade boat around the pond her father built; churches in Mossville; twenty-five cents to ride the bus to Lake Charles; fair came every year; Kelly Webbers provided produce for the family store; Audrey Prater took them to Conoco Park to swim and to the Beaumont state fair; community was like a family; playing cards on the front porch; Beaux Collins made wine from muscadines; sugarcane mill; mom also worked as a school bus driver; Mossville a good school because had kids from several different areas; Mossville teachers young, but highly qualified; father acted as sheriff for Henry Reed, and was deputy of Calcasieu Parish; grandfather was white; white Rigmaidens don't want to accept them as kin; Paradise Club; importance of education; father had a third grade education, mother

had to work in the fields in Texas; mother kept up the Morning Cemetery graveyard; would use her own money for upkeep and maintenance; after she died, it has gone down; mother would feed the less fortunate, and continued to do so even when someone stole from her garden; Dotson's children are Deidra And David; sister's children; her mother's 1957 Impala nicknamed "the banana"; mother's other acts of kindness; Dotson helped her mother in any way she could, including cooking rice and frying meat; a tomboy; her sister, a retired teacher, owns James Funeral Home which she inherited from her husband; close-knit family; white man once told her that he understood how it felt to be black because he grew up poor; Dotson disagrees because she never knew what it was like to be poor, any more than he knew what it was like to be black; memories of segregation; "colored" sections at the movie theater and dairy queen; many worked for white people, but Mossville an independent community; father politically strong, campaigned in Mossville; voting; married and moved to Moss Bluff; daughter only black child at her elementary school; wanted to wear her hair long and spoke like she was white; sent her to Washington High School so she could see how black people lived; "brought up white all day and black at night"; racism in Moss Bluff area; their house, along with other black houses, burned down; Klu Klux Klan coming out of the Gillis area; drove one of the first integrated busses in the area; route included kids from section eight housing; white children using racist slurs; first buyouts; Sasol buyouts wiped them out; comparing the different buyouts; Sasol paid enough for people to get a better place; drugs a recent problem for the community; food memories; father used to trap muskrats in Cameron Parish; also made wood floors; tenants who lived in family's rental units; cemeteries; local seamstresses; churches her father built; "we had everything!"

TAPES: 1 (T4488)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 56 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT 52 pages

PHOTOGRAPHS / PHOTOGRAPHER: Three photographs taken during interview, including a photo with interviewer Cooper. Photographer Stephanie Dragoon.

OTHER MATERIALS: Biographical data form; Interview questions (5 pgs); Correspondence

RESTRICTIONS: none