

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Judy Montgomery-Gauthia & Elaine Robinson

COLLECTION: 4700.2615

IDENTIFICATION: Judy Montgomery-Gauthia was a lifelong resident of Mossville, Louisiana. Her parents ran the popular Paradise Club nightclub.

INTERVIEWER: Chelsea Arseneault

SERIES: Mossville History Project – Field Interviews

INTERVIEW DATE: March 18, 2016

FOCUS DATES: 1950s to 1980s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4569

Gauthia's friend Elaine Robinson is also present; parents were from Duson, Louisiana, near Lafayette; as children, Gauthia's mother babysat her father; paternal grandparents had sixteen children; father was the oldest; memories of grandfather's house; Robinson describes sharecropping system; grandfather was treater, could treat anything you weren't born with; maternal grandmother prayed rosary in French; avoidance of French to fit in with Americans; Robinson grew up understanding French; Uncle Wesley's first wife could treat burns; transmission of gift of treating; always lots of people in grandparents' house; grandmother made clothes out of rice and flour sacks; trying to recall maternal grandparents' names; oldest daughter Lucretia born 1975; grandfather died in 1974; grandmother helped her with her baby; women of her grandmother's generation expected to stay home; describes grandparents' farm; maternal grandmother made excellent homemade bread; grandmother would wait up late for her sons and cook them hamburgers and sausages when they got home; these days many people less eager to cook for others; Robinson still cooks for her grandchildren, relates their preferences; Robinson's daughter died and so Robinson raised her two sons; one son had a head injury that caused brain damage; several of Robinson's grandchildren attend LSU; Gauthia's grandparents had little schooling because they had to work in field; Robinson's people also had very little education; Robinson's father was a carpenter and her mother took in laundry and ironing; Gauthia's parents didn't go to school, but her Uncle Albert did because he was crippled; Albert was a good seamstress; Robinson's mother took in ironing and sewing; Robinson learned to sew, quilt and clean from her mother; grandmother was neat freak, Robinson is, too; both sides of Gauthia's grandparents were Catholic; Robinson says most people from "down east" were Catholic; definition of down east; Robinson attended Mossville School from seventh through twelfth grade, except eighth at Sulphur; Robinson's favorite teachers; both played a little basketball, but

were mostly on the bench; Robinson was in band, and a cheerleader and majorette; Conoco would employ men for ninety days, then lay them off for one day, then rehire to avoid permanent hires; Gauthia's parents moved to Mossville when she was six months old; Robinson was one of eleven children, the only one born with a midwife; description of Gauthia's childhood home and the Paradise Club and dance hall; artists who performed at the Paradise Club; description of typical Saturday night at club; fun and safe in those days, no drugs; dance contests at Paradise; Al Green and James Brown were some of their favorite Paradise performers; radio and poster advertising; parents' entrepreneurial activities; Gauthia's mother cooked for everybody; mother fed sick people; employees at Paradise; sometimes they sold drinks to people right out of the house; mother was illiterate so didn't use recipes; father's other businesses; explanation of vacuum trucks and hydroblasting; Uncle Wes had similar businesses; Valery Montgomery registered people to vote and provided transportation to polls; held political barbecues and dinners; when he got dementia, he repeatedly tried to register everybody to vote; politicians he supported; Edwin Edwards called Gauthia's mother Mama and treated her like his own; Valery loved politicking more than food; Gauthia and Robinson worked in nursing together; Valery and Edwin Edwards spoke French together; Valery very nervous before his TV appearance as part of campaign to get city water for Mossville; many people consulted Valery's advice on civic matters; well water in Mossville; neighbor who washed clothes in rainwater; other memories of Edwin Edwards; father liked politics more than mother did; parents raised her to be good, honest and help others; father's advice to pay all bills, but especially medical ones because you might need that doctor to save your life; believes God watches out for you if you do the lord's work; brother Alvin has problems with nerves, is hospitalized; Greenpeace would come talk to Valery about pollution at plants; aunt who lived close to plant complained so much about pollution that the receptionist recognized her voice on phone; difficult to use bottled water for everything; glad Sasol is buying everybody out; dispute with her sister over whether Valery should be moved out of Mossville or not; Gauthia is eager to leave Mossville; chemical spills are way too close; at ninety, Valery is still strong; Gauthia's adopted uncle, Adam Washington; Miss Lillian, who is now over one hundred years old; death of Gerald Washington; last visit with Gerald, right after Gauthia's husband died; Robinson and Gauthia believe Gerald was murdered, not a suicide; Gerald was always a class clown; they didn't foresee him going into politics; whereabouts of Robinson's family members; Robinson never lived in Mossville, but lots of her family members have; Robinson stayed in Mossville with her mother for three months when mother was dying; Mossville is too far from stores and lacked Wal-Mart, so Robinson didn't want to live there; Gauthia has always lived in or near Mossville; Valery well-known and beloved by community; Valery always dressed meticulously and believed in decorum; Valery was raised that you took your hat off before entering a house; nowadays people go around half clothed with their pants hanging off.

TAPES: 1 (T4569)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 31 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 77 pages

PHOTOGRAPHS / PHOTOGRAPHER: Three photographs taken during interview, including two photos with friend Elaine Robinson. Photographer Kyle Tanglao.

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence

RESTRICTIONS: none