

**T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection**

**ABSTRACT**

**INTERVIEWEE NAME:** Evelyn Gasaway Shelton

**COLLECTION:** 4700.2596

**IDENTIFICATION:** born in Mossville, Louisiana

**INTERVIEWER:** Rebecca Cooper

**SERIES:** Mossville History Project - Field Interviews

**INTERVIEW DATES:** November 23, 2015

**FOCUS DATES:** 1940s-60s

**ABSTRACT:**

**Tape 4548**

Interviewer gives brief overview of what was discussed at oral history day interview; memories of mother's parents, Della and David [Spikes?]; both compassionate individuals; lived in Bancroft, Louisiana where grandfather farmed; picking cotton when they visited; competing with sister who could pick the most, stripping the cotton plant; grandfather called them "chaps" instead of children, later discovered this a German term; grandfather particular about his plants; Sunday church was an all-day affair; family reunions hosted at grandparents' log cabin; sweet potatoes cooked in the ashes of a fire, homemade syrup; grandfather only ate off solid white plates, nothing with patterns; amazed at grandfather's longevity, considering his habit of putting bacon drippings on grits; grandfather a freed slave from Georgia; original name "Culpepper"; parents moved to Mossville in 1943, for work at the plants; father worked for Cities Service until he retired; as a result of her father's work there, she received their scholarship to attend college; father had eighth grade education, while mother spent a few semesters in college; mother attended Wiergate High School, and was named Miss Weirgate; fond memories of family reunions; uncles would sing and dance; knew who was coming "up the lane" by the sound of their car; father one of the few who had an automobile at that time; names and some biographical details of siblings; chores growing up included keeping room neat, folding clothes, washing dishes; not allowed to help with cooking; first house parents moved into on Prater Road, near the railroad tracks; better memory of the next house, also on Prater Road; no electricity, had to study with a kerosene lamp, and keep warm from heated stove; father bought some land on the south side of the house, later used for gardening; father loved peas and only ate fresh foods, nothing dried; shopping in Westlake for food and clothing materials; mother made clothes out of flour sacks; made sure to buy sacks with the same pattern; changes she's seen in the community; able to play underneath the two-room schoolhouse because it was on stilts; later, another building was added to the school; sharing sack lunches underneath the school before cafeteria added; playing with neighborhood children; using broom handles for baseball bats, playing in the rain and jump rope; making doll houses out of boxes and dolls out of magazine pictures; neighbors growing up; funerals in Mossville resembled a family reunion; bodies kept in the home for the wake, instead

of the funeral home; doesn't recall a post-office in Mossville; moved away in 1958; Rigmaidens had first television in Mossville; Lula's canteen in front of her house, a place for young people to socialize; drive-in movie theater on Highway 90; forbidden to go to the Paradise Club as children, but they could hear the music from their porch; father a reverend at Rose of Sharon Sanctified Church, which is demolished now; mother helped at church; home remedies using sassafras roots and pine needles; doctors, like Dr. Ross, made house calls during this time; midwives delivered babies; grandfather peeled sugarcane and gave them pieces to chew on; grandfather used his sugarcane syrup on biscuits; booming sounds from the plants; fear her father had been killed, since he worked there; company picnic and Christmas party for employees and families; Cities Service used their own park for hosting events; parents made decisions together; mother took care of budget and discipline; Shelton's husband takes care of budget, while she takes care of cooking and decorating; macaroni and fried chicken bring back childhood memories, since every Sunday they had fried chicken; mother's specialty dessert was pineapple coconut cake; liked to cook collard greens, mustard greens and cornbread; father had to have hot bread every day; cornbread had to be cooked in the oven, not "hot water" cornbread cooked on stovetop; mother kept recipes in her head; cooked chicken and squirrel dumplings on special occasions; attending college in Baton Rouge in 1960 when Civil Rights Movement took place; "put the dogs on them" when they marched the capitol; memories of segregated schooling; playing sports outside when Mossville High School built; made the best of hand-me-down school books; despite this, many students went on to successful careers; parents involved in education, encouraged children to do their best; only two colleges available to black students at the time—Grambling and Southern, but McNeese integrated after she started at Southern; studied home economics, then went on to elementary education; teachers at Mossville were role models; traveling minstrels; field trips exposed them to cultural landscapes of Louisiana; Joshua Rigmaiden a community leader, also owned a store; Mossville is her roots, her foundation; hay rides to the beaches in Cameron; lists accomplishments of community members from a document she typed up, titled "Mossville through Our Eyes: A Walk Down Memory Lane."

**TAPES:** 1 (T4548)

**TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 1 hour, 19 minutes

**#PAGES TRANSCRIPT:** 41 pages

**OTHER MATERIALS:** Biographical data form; Correspondence; Shelton's own articles on Mossville history (5 pgs)

**RESTRICTIONS:** none