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1973

Ms. Myna Lee Zeigler

Twila Haygood

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Interviewed is an immigrant to Savannah from a surrounding area. One of the skilled laborers who made her way in Savannah without becoming a domestic worker, the dominant work of the day.

Interviewer: Twila Haygood

Interviewed: Myna Lee Zeigler

Q: What's your name?

A: Myna Lee Zeigler

Q: Where are you from?

A: Sawdust, Georgia.

Q: When did you come to Savannah?

A: 1946.

Q: About how old were you when you came to Savannah?

A: I was about 19, I think.

Q: You grew up where?

A: Sawdust, Georgia.

Q: You spent your whole life there?

A: Yes. Most there.

Q: Where did you go to school?

A: Sawdust Elementary School, then I went to Swainsboro High and Industrial School.

Q: What church did you go to?

A: I attended Beach Bright Baptist Church, then I moved to Savannah. I moved my membership on down here to Connor's Temple Church.

Q: How was your school set up?

A: It was set up nicely for the time. I enjoyed going. We didn't have football games but we had basketball and softball games.

Q: Were all the grades in different classes?

A: Yes. No, it was just one school and all the grades were together and one teacher at one time taught all the grades small scholl one time.

Q: How many months did you go to school?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Were all the students black?

A: Yeap.

Q: Was the teacher black?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you know if she had gone to college?

A: I don't know, I think she went to college.

Q: You said it was one school for all grades did it go one through twelve?

A: No. One through six from first to six. And then we went to Swainsboro High then they consolidated all those rural elementary schools and that's when they started having one grade in a class.

Q: You said you went to what Church?

A: Beach Bright Baptist Church.

Q: Did all your relatives belong there?

A: All my family belong there except my father and he was a member of Springfield Baptist Church.

Q: You were fairly active in the church?

A: Yeah. I was on the usher board and go to Sunday School I use to attend conventions of all the Baptist Church.

Q: Did you find the Beach Bright a lot different from Connor's Temple?

A: Well not to much different we just have more things here at Connor's Temple than you do in my church in the country we just have meeting up there once a month which would be on the second Sunday.

Q: When you say meeting do you mean you went to church?

A: yes.

A: But we visited other churches but I pastor was there once a month.

Q: Did the whole church visit other churches?

A: yes.

Q: Do you remember anything that happen to you as a child that stands out?

A: Well I remember I use to like to follow my father all the time until one day he asked me to stay home to plow. And then I got out that but I stayed home that day but I didn't stay home after that. I use to like to climb trees and what not.

Q: What kind of things did you have to do as a female?

A: You mean at school.

Q: No, at home, like clean the house.

A: Yeah. I had to clean the house, cook and very little sewing.

Q: You mention plowing, kind of things did you grow?

A: Like any gardens cotton and corn and peas and potatoes.

Q: Why did you come to Savannah?

A: To take up a trade, at Madame Freeman Beauty shop on Montgomery Street.

Q: Why did you stay?

A: After I got here and started working I said it was much better here than up in the country so I just stayed.

Q: Where did you go?

A: Madame Freeman Beauty School.

Q: Located?

A: Montgomery and Anderson Streets.

Q: How did you pay your way?

A: I worked right there at the shop. I shampooed hair.

Q: Did all the girls who attended do this?

A: No, just me.

Q: Did she pick out the workers.

A: Yes she did.

Q: How many in your class?

A: Well in my class it was twenty-two.

Q: What kind of entertainment did you have?

A: Well I like to go on boat rides and I like to go to the beach and sometimes night clubs.

Q: Did only middle class attend clubs?

A: No.

Q: Where did famous people who come to the town perform?

A: In different clubs.

Q: were the boat rides like the ones on the Waving Girl.

A: Yeah, but it was the Robert E. Lee back in that time.

Q: How long did it last?

A: Leave about eight get back about eleven or twelve.

Q: What did you do on board for fun?

A: We danced and played cards. They also had drinks there. They used carry bands down also. To the Fusskey.

Q: What were some of the famous people you saw.

A: I saw James Brown and B. B. King.

(about 10 minutes inaudible because of pot in kitchen)

Q: Did blacks accept segregation when you were younger?

A: yes.

Q: Did they ever complain?

A: I use to hear some complaints but not like they do now.

- Q: Where did you stay when you came to Savannah?
- A: On Ogeechee Road.
- Q: Where did you make money from?—
- A: School.
- Q: What kind of work did most of the women who stayed around you do?
- A: They did maid work.
- Q: Did they stay in?
- A: No they used to come and go every day.
- Q: What kind of hours did they have?
- A: Well I don't really know I guess most of them went around seven and got back at seven.
- Q: I have heard a lot about Daddy Grace, what did you think of him?
- A: Well, I didn't think too much of him but I used to go around there a lot.
- Q: What interest you about going there.?
- A: The band and the show they used to put on. They way they acted like he was God or something. I went round there following the crowd big crowd.
- Q: When did the parades use to be?
- A: The third Saturday in September.
- Q: Was the parade a big thing in the black community?
- A: I guess so.
- Q: Did all the black people know when it was and did they go.
- A: Oh yes. Most everybody went.
- Q: Did they go because they liked Daddy Grace or did they go because of the entertainment his forever gave?
- A: Because of the entertainment most of people who like him marched in the parade.

Q: Did most people who belong there were they poor?

A: I don't know.

Q: Do you remember anything about the moonshine business in Savannah?

A: Wel, it use to be here in Savannah. I don't know about now they use to catch people and put them in jail.

Q: Do you know about the numbers?

A: No.

Q: Do you see that the police of more brutal than they have to be?

A: No.

Q: Do you see that the police are nastier in the black neighborhood than in the white neighborhood.

A: No.

Q: Where are some of the place you have stayed in Savannah?

A: Ogeechee Road then I went home then I moved (inaudible). I stay on west 34th Street then I moved here.

Q: Where do you stay now.

A: 401 McKenzie Place.

Q: You are a beautician? Don't you belong to the beautician legue.

A: Um-um.

Q: It is one of the most respected black organization in Savannah is it not?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: Does this legue have any white members at all?

A: Well, they have a white beautician legue, too, white and Colored belong to it.

Q: Do they put on programs?

A: I don't know about the white but I know the colored do.

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Q: What kind of programs do you have?

A: You mean for entertainment. We have mod dances. We have annual Christmas dance. We have formals and hair style show.

Q: Do you remember anything about the Klu Klux Klan in Sardist?

A: Well, they didn't have no racial things like that in Sardist. I didn't hear anything about the Klan until I came here to Savannah.

Q: What do you remember the Klan did here in Savannah?

A: Let me see it been so long now I forgot they use to burn crosses or something.

Q: Do you remember the killing of anybody?

A: No. Uh-huh.

Q: Did they do anything else.

A: I has been so long now I just don't remember.

Q: Did they frighten the black community much?

A: Yes.

Q: How do feel about the demonstrations of the sixties?

A: I think we accomplished a lot.

Q: Like what?

A: We use to have to sit in the back and eat now we can see up at the counters. We used to have to sit in the back of the bus now we can sit where we want.

Q: What did it do for education?

A: It help the young people quite a bit. You see these young people are getting the jobs that white people use to get. So it put them up front, too.

Q: Did you participate?

A: No. I didn't lie down but if they say don't go to a store. I tried not to go.



Q: You saw the demonstrations on T.V. were the worst in Savannah than other places.

A: I think it was pretty nice here in Savannah compared to other places.

Q: Were there any participle tragic incidence during the demonstrations.

A: I don't think no one got killed in Savannah.

Q: What do you do in the church?

A: I am a member of the sisterhood they are trying always to help somebody.

Q: What happen during the services?

A: They have singing, praying and preaching.

Q: Do most of the people you know are Baptist?

A: Baptist and Methodist.

Q: What are the differences?

A: Methodist just kneel a hold lot more.

Q: What is a good job for a black in Savannah?

A: Sugar Refinery, Union Bag and Railroad and Holsome Bakery.

Q: Where did poor black stay?

A: On the west side.

Q: How did housing look.

A: Like they going to fall down.

Q: Did the poor go to any particular church?

A: They went to different churches.

Q: Did racial positions get better after the demonstrations?

A: I believe so they be together more.

Q: Do you believe your church was different from others because it was large?

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A: No.

Q: Did the people who attend Daddy Grace give him a lot of money?

A: Oh, yes.

Q: Did he ever do anything to help blacks with that money?

A: No. I don't know if he got the money but they use to throw money at him.

Q: There will be a black man running for mayor next fall what can he do that a white man cann't?

A: Well, I think a black man can do just as good as a white man if he is qualfied.

Q: Do you think he will look out for the interest of the black community?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you find that withe other black officers?

A: Yes. Look at Bobby Hill.