

**Oral History Interview of
Juanita Craft**

**Interviewed by: Harry Jebson and Patty Hogan
June 26, 1974
Dallas, Texas**

**Part of the:
*Dallas Parks History***

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The Dallas Parks interview series was conducted in 1973 and 1974 by Patty Hogan, Harry Jebsen, and Robert Newton and contains over thirty interviews. Subsequently, Jebsen, Newton, and Hogan published *Centennial History of the Dallas, Texas Parks System, 1876-1976*.

Transcript Overview:

Juanita Craft, black civic leader in Dallas, discusses the problem of racial and social discrimination and segregation in Dallas.

Length of Interview: 01:00:04

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Keywords

Dallas Parks; Segregation; Discrimination; African American Communities; Youth Outreach and Education

[00:00:00.27] **David Murrah:**

Mrs. Juanita Jewel, J-e-w-e-l, Craft, C-r-a-f-t, to Dr. Harry Jebsen, J-e-b-s-e-n; Miss Patty Hogan, H-o-g-a-n, June 26, 1974 Dallas Texas. The tape was made in connection with the history of the Dallas parks system.

[Tape break]

[00:00:24.14] **Juanita Craft:**

In 1936, when we celebrated the Centennial, well we were included by the building of a building dedicated to the contributions made by the negroes of this state. But after that, the building was destroyed, and they had, at that time, a special day honoring that contribution. But we didn't know it was going to be a permanent thing. And then they prohibited negroes' participation out there on any day except the nineteenth of June, and one day during the fair. That was in 1936. For a number of years, well, we tried to go on Dallas day as we had done before, and we were denied that privilege. It seems to me that it started with their local branch NAACP on about 1949, a verbal campaign, saying that if we could not go when we wanted to go, we would not accept just one day. The schools all over the state were given the privilege that one day, so they came, and thousands, thousands of our people came without realizing what they were doing; they were really establishing a pattern, and they felt like that's the only day they could come because that's the day they were let out of school and so forth. And they gave them free tickets, even, to encourage their attendance, which to me was giving them a crumb and destroying their dignity. In 1950, we began to spread the news over the state, but it seems that it just didn't reach the people. They still came. In 1955, my youth group—we had the youth department of the NAACP—we decided that we had taken all that we wanted to take. We went out and took pictures of these various concessions, where one child was trying to buy a ticket and we took the pictures. Everybody else would get up and he would have to be turned away, ride after ride. Then in concessions where a person could buy a soda pop, you couldn't go in and sit down and drink a bottle of soda water. They were a multi-million dollar institution; they would deny a child the right of drinking a bottle of soda water sitting down. He'd have to get it, and walk up and down the midway and eat whatever you wanted to get. Well, we had raised about 350 dollars, a real test, and we went out and we would send a group of kids to this concession, another group to this concession and so forth, trying to get some kind of relief. And then when that day came, they had planned this big parade coming down Oakland.¹ I felt like that we should be a part of the parade; that this is the State Fair of Texas, and of course we're trying to fix—that's the name, more or less, there's nothing connected but Dallas businessmen. We felt that we should've been included in the downtown parade, where everybody could've been a part, but have a separate parade coming down through this neighborhood. That day was the greatest day of my life, when my kids got up on top of houses on the route, they got on the back of trucks, and I still have those placards that they used in 1955. The placards were well-worded, "Don't sell your pride for a

¹ It is likely that Mrs. Craft is referring to Oakland Avenue which was renamed to Malcolm X Boulevard in 1997.

segregated ride. Stay out." And can you imagine the floats with the beautiful girls and everything going down the street, and here's a kid on the back of the float saying "stay out?" [Laughs] The girls—one of the girls who was a cheerleader and went with the band, and when she got to the gate, she then held up both hands and the second girl walked over with the placard, the picket line was invoked. Communication wasn't as well established as it is now, but it wasn't long before planes were coming in from New York and everywhere else to get the story, and we had a nation-wide coverage. We still saw too many people coming in from rural—a bus driver didn't give a dime about the picket line, he drove the people in. We started, then, a whispering campaign inside the Fair Park, which was really amazing what happened. We planned it like this: I would walk up to you, "Hello, John. Wait a minute, are you John Smith?" And you'd say, "No." [plane noise overhead distorting voice] "Well, you know, you look just like a friend of mine. I'm looking for my kids, you know they're telling me they've got some trouble out here, and I don't like it." That was the whispering campaign, and by three o'clock, before they spent a lot of money, their people were getting [inaudible]. We still had the [inaudible]—we're not sure the people of Dallas even understood what we were doing. We never did stop going, but they didn't support us financially. And of course, we were limited, as far as manpower was concerned because many of the parents would not let their kids participate, and we even had some men that were doing some construction work alone, they just laid their shovels down and joined the picket line. And we had a lot of people—but people didn't even think to bring their kids a drink of water or a sandwich or anything. It was such a new thing then. And they established [?] still held out for that one day. It was not until 1963 that all the parks were open in Dallas, including that park, and I never shall forget the statement by a little ten year old girl. We took her out there that day to let her ride some of the midway rides, and she said, "I'm going home and find me a bunch of money and come back." She was so thrilled to have a [car noise, inaudible] to ride. One of the most embarrassing things that I'd ever had to happen to me was that—you know where the witness [?] meeting was held out there? Cotton bowl was filled with messengers [?] from all over the country. And I had some delegates staying here with me, and one inquired, "What is wrong with—our children can't use the midway out there." I said, "Well it's just some stupidity here in the city." He said, "Well I'm from Mississippi, and we use them down there even." I go, "This is embarrassing." To think of anything in Dallas being worse than it is in Mississippi. The kids were playing together, all ethnic groups, everything were out there just having fun, but when it got to the midway, the negro kid had to climb down [?]. We were awarded the national NAACP Award that year, these two years, on our activity on the fair. So, my youth council got a lot of publicity, but the aftermath was the thing that was really heart rendering, to think of a child trying to stand up for the American dream, and the school board—the superintendent of schools took it in his own hand and said that no child that participated in that picket line could graduate with any honors. My president [?], seventeen years old, was a senior, and because of his leadership, they gave him the works. He was a colonel in ROTC and they broke him down to a buck private, and there was no way for a scholarship. None of them could participate in the senior play or any of the senior activities. After then, I was so disillusioned, and I didn't want to

lose him. I got on the streets of Dallas and solicited his tuition for two years at Caverman [Paul Quinn?] [00:10:00.16] College. It was getting pretty rough, and I will say they get uninterested, and the glamour wears off, and I was having really problems, during it [?]; he saw that and he said, "Well, let's forget it, and I'll go and get in the Air Force." So he did. He's completing his last tour now. He has spent most of this time since then, abroad, the Philippines, Japan, England, Italy, two tours of England; was sent back to the states last September. His wife just got here last week. His first son was born in Japan, the second one in England. And he's still disillusioned about that.

[00:10:51.80] Well, Fair Park, in 1963, when all the parks were opened, it came as a surprise because that was when President Kennedy had asked the businessmen to try to stop the riots, try to stop the sit ins and so forth. And of course, this was a great victory for us. Two years ago, on my seventieth birthday, I went back to the fairgrounds to celebrate my seventieth birthday. And I told them then that [inaudible, tape noise] what had happened [inaudible]. And when the second—the other park was dedicated to me, I did the same thing, because this young man who led the fight, came to the dedicatory services, and I welcomed him home. I said, "You're home now, we can come out here and play. Just think what we had to do a few years ago." So I'm considering this, the struggle was worth it, because we do have privileges now that possibly nobody would ever noticed that we didn't have years ago. We have—the parks, the swimming pools, and so forth opened just about the same time, but during that time, there was a swimming pool, the natatorium out at the Fair Park was destroyed, because we felt that that was one of the reasons because the pressure we were putting on the project [?] [inaudible]. Now, at least we have some of our people on the park board that are trying to make some decisions, and I was a delegate to the Saleda [?] meeting where for four days we discussed the goals for Dallas and made goals, and [inaudible]. And the progress that has been made is, well it's just unthinkable when you think of what it was like just a few years ago as far as parks are concerned. And then this recent honor, to have had this park named for me, it's just something I just—inconceivable. But it issued me a challenge because the park is near a housing project, and if I had my way, I would destroy every low rent public housing project in the United States. It was one of their most—it was just a mistake. Those kids out there frequent that park almost like they're going to their bedrooms, and I'm trying to make friends with them. I had four of them take on this trip this weekend, and those boys will call me—it's about fifteen of them now; they just think I'm a big sister or a mother or a something. They decided to call me twelve-thirty at night. I never said, "Don't call me that late," or anything like that. I see a great job can be done out there, provided that I can get the cooperation of the city, and provide for those kids some of the things that they see other places. The thing that hurts me about this whole pattern, I have been a person who believed in the system. I believe that the constitution of this country—now I don't get [inaudible] [car turns over, tries to start]—it must provide for me the same opportunities that it provides to everyone else. But how long must I continue to say to these children, these young people I work with, that the constitution will protect you and the things you want and the things that you need.

How much longer can I tell them this? I'm losing faith myself in the system. Now out there, you have this housing project the James [inaudible], which is tantamount to putting a large group of people in a trap. Now this is what housing projects do for people. You have all of these children living in a trap; many of them haven't ever been out of there. I took a little girl downtown the other day, who had never been to the food market [inaudible], she didn't know what it was. She thought it was a rummage sale where they sold food instead of clothing and other things. You know what the public market was. Well, how can you keep a child in that trap? That child, her mind is even trapped. What do you do for that kind of child? And how much longer can we put them in those situations? This park serves as an outlet for a few children. I went out there one day, and I had an extra set of encyclopedia, I carried that out there and gave it to them. Books. The neighborhood adjacent to the housing project, prostitutes and drunks and winos and so forth, what do these children see but that kind of—all right the other day I went out there—last Friday—and they had planted—the park department had planted some flowers. But if you don't water the flowers, why plant them? Well, I imagine this was an oversight, the weather was extremely hot, and that they're on a schedule. Well, I called them. Why can't the kids water the flowers, let them have a part in their park. Now they were making posters on litter. They were waiting on the prize [?]. I'm wondering how deeply that they became involved in the actual need for my participation. Now, [car passes by] I think it was in March, I went out, and we did a whole neighborhood. One man sent us seventy-five dollars for putting up his property; the city was putting pressure on him. But the kids, all they need is some leadership, all they need is somebody that's interested in, and somebody they think they can trust, that they can love. I can go out there now, the little ones, "Hello Miss Craft. Miss Craft," And I just put my arms around [inaudible]. And I'm sure you saw the newspaper clippings, or did you? Has he been exposed to—

[00:17:51.24] Patty Hogan:
I don't know—

[00:17:52.21] Harry Jebesen:
I haven't seen all of them, I don't think.

[00:17:54.26] Patty Hogan:
[Crosstalk, quietly]—seen all of them.

[00:17:57.01] Juanita Craft:
Well anyhow, when I go out there now, some boys can be out there with nothing on but their trunks, and they'll go grabbing their shirt and coming to me. And one boy, I'm not sure what his problem is yet, but you see, I'm not quite sure that I can trust these kids in my home yet, but I've had seven, eight of them here, because—unless I'm that sure [?]. But one a boy, and he's in the bunch [?], I'm trying to figure the child out. But I know he needs something. He's the one that's

always dressed differently from the others. He is—you can tell there's poverty in his home. He's out of school at eighteen and eleventh grade; he has some kind of physical problem. And I'm not sure what is wrong, but he said he's going to try to get back in school in September. All right. Most of those kids have been carried to Skyline. Well, they're running into the problems there of the [bird caws] crediting [accrediting?] and so forth, and they're not happy at Skyline, and they want to get out of Skyline. Well, I can't understand the system or other people in these kinds of positions that's going to—if he sees a child having a problem, he should be big enough then to start to communicate in some way that that child would not feel that way. But this is the old—and I'm very proud of their basketball team. They haven't lost a game in three years, and those little kids have played together since they were just tiny tots and they understand and they're just doing a beautiful job. But at Skyline they have not permitted them to really participate. Nobody's gotten a scholarship for anything of that sort, which they are now wanting to get out of the school because of it, but come back in the park. And this summer, several of the boys are working at the various [?] parks, because of their dedication to the Craft Park. The whole thing is a new nightmare for me, because I see so much that could be done out there. What do you do? I had seven of them here one day, and I asked the question, "Do you like living in a housing project more so than in a home, or would you like a home?" Six out of the seven said, "Oh my, we enjoy the housing project. We live close together, it don't take long to get from one place to the other." The seventh boy said, "Miss Craft, I'm seventeen years old, I've never had a pet. I've never had a garden or been able to plant flowers that were mine. We have a refrigerator that just doesn't serve our needs, but this is what somebody said we needed, and they put it in here. I'd like to give my mother a different kind of stove from what we have. I've been in the housing project all my life." One out of seven willing to break the chain. Now how many parents are you going to get out of those seven boys? How many of those seven boys are you going to have that will be the kind of fathers that they should be? These are things that bother me. And I'm having a lot of fun about the park, and I said, "Well when a horse gets old, you put him out in the pasture." So they're giving me a car [?] to play in, but they didn't give me anything to eat out there. So I'm still trying to give something to those kids out there. And of course, we have too many kids out of school out there, and I find that the school that's being with all the suspensions and so forth—I'm sure you've read about what we're up against here on that—they go back to the park. I'm not sure that a lot of the crime that's taking place isn't perpetrated by those kids. I'm not sure of that. Because this one boy that I told you needed something, our police department—well I work with the [inaudible] committee, and they came over here one day and asked me if I knew this boy. I said, "Yes." Well, their participation in the cleanup, everything, I issued them a little card that these kids are proud of, and they—[shows the interviewers the cards]—well I used to sign the card before [inaudible], and when they assessed his billfold, they found my name in there, they came to me. And when they asked him if he knew me, he said, "Yes, but please don't tell her. Please don't tell her." Well, the boy was picked up on suspicion. Well, that's what they do, if the boys ever—they're trapped down there. There's no way out for those kids. And I said—well I said, "Where is he now?" "Well, he's in jail." Well, I didn't want—the boy didn't want me

to know it; I didn't want the boy to know I know it. I never said anything to him. But one of the [inaudible] and everything, they were all together, [inaudible] bunch to say hello to me and everything [inaudible]. He can't get his shirt on [?]. "Hi Miss Craft, how you doing?" And I'm not sure—see I'm afraid, I don't know the boy that well to know his disposition to know whether this is genuine, or if he's trying to get close to me. And see the frustration is, it's sad for me. Well, I'm taking four of that group on this trip to New Orleans, where they'll be exposed to youth from all over the country, and I leave next week. And they are just thrilled to death, because none of them ever spent a night in a hotel, had never—well one of them has been on a long trip, but the other three have not. I've talked to their mothers, and I've got the assurance of those persons in control at the park that these boys are all right, and that's the only choice I have.

[00:25:10.20] But parks are not all of the answers, unless we can give these kids something that's meaningful. I'm tired of giving them a lunch, and letting them play. How meaningful are our programs on the parks? I'm thinking that we should have tutoring programs even there, [loud plane noise, distorting voice] because of the disadvantage of position that many of our kids would have. What can we do at the parks to teach them to read or to want to read [helicopter overhead distorts voice]. I go out and [inaudible] they have a reading room, and a [inaudible]. But how much can we encourage these kids that want to do this? And then in this truth [?], to get out of that boundary, they feel that they are not the hero, they get too far away from it. All right. This brings into my discussion this idea of busing. I am so disillusioned and tired of hearing people saying, "Oh I'm against [President Gerald ?] Ford's busing." I don't understand the terminology. I argued with one of my—well my congressional representative at that time, when he made the statement. I said that a child is born in that trap, he must live in that trap, he must go to school in that trap, but he has to come out and participate in society. When are you going to get him out of there? When is he going to know something other than that trap. Now what are you doing? The only way you're going to get him out is to bus him out. Now you bussed him past these other schools all these years to get to the segregated schools. So just say you're a segregationist or a racist, and not against forced busing, because busing has been a tool all these many years. There's no, no objection to your busing to Harvard Day [?] [inaudible] or to Saint Marks or to Greenhill, but only to get that child, to let him see some green grass. As one of the boys said to me, "Miss Craft, why are our neighborhoods like they are?" He was concerned. I said, "Well let's get out here and pick it up." And this is what I've done for a number of years, use the parks as a place to collect trash. Let them see what their city looks like. Let them see the mounds and mounds of trash thrown in the streets that nobody cares about. And I said, "Then we must go out here and do it ourselves." When I received the Linz Award, which is the highest civic award given by the city of Dallas, it was really amusing because three days later that I was out on the streets picking up cans of trash. One woman said, "Well I never would do that." I said, "Listen, this only makes me more humble, makes me more concerned about the situations in our city. Whatever I can do to help, I want to do it." If I can inspire one child or one community, I have a problem with [inaudible], but this week, they found that planting flowers, planting them

wrong, doing everything wrong, [tape begins to skip and clips words for the rest of the interview], the fact that they'll wait [tape skips] the fact that they [inaudible] [tape skips]. But how much longer can we have parts of one [inaudible] [tape skips] these kids are fine [tape skips] for a tennis court out there. They are almost willing to stay in that trap, but they're seeing some things that ought be in the trap with them. They need a swimming pool; they've got a little wading pool out there, but that's for small children. They just need some things that they think they ought to have. What are we going to do? Now the nearest food available would be this one on Oakland and Alamo, or else at the Samuell Park. And I realize that that's a long ways for a kid to walk, a long ways. And they just think they need food from that park. Well—

[Tape break]

[00:30:08.26] Juanita Craft:

[Tape distorted] They want to learn what to do about it. If there is a problem of drainage, just get it done. Don't call me, you know who to call. If there's a problem with mosquitoes, and they do have it out there because there was a lake under this park, and they destroyed the lake and the stream is still going through, but that was [inaudible] and so forth. Well, there's a lot of growth down there; I think the kids should be taught the meaning of that stream. Where did it come from, and the growth that's there, what is it? I know we have a lot of cat tails in there, of course this will be my first summer to get involved in that stream down there. It's just a little trickle of water, it's not a lot. But then the rains come; then you have the creeks and so forth. But I would like for some group of those kids to be involved in what it's all about. Now there's a [tape skips] school across the stream, adjacent to the park, there's a stream between the two properties. But I'm saying, where will these kids ever learn to get involved in this society unless we get them out there [inaudible]. [Helicopter overhead distorts passage] Elementary schools down there and they [inaudible] for another school. [Inaudible] The frustration is here, and I know what it must be to that child, or else the child is so ignorant of what is going on in other parts of the city, other parts of the [tape skips] society because that they [inaudible]. But when they find out, this is when you have bitterness, you have this young person that would rather be with the Black Panthers than be with a voting group of people, because they see they've been denied. Well, I'm saying this in my [tape skips] desperations, I've tried to commercialize [?] all. Because from a youngster, I always—my parents exposed me to what they could—and I've always had a desire to do something to make my living a little better. But I was exposed to books when I was quite young, my father taught in the state of Texas for forty years and my mother taught eight before [?] her death. There's always been a book in my house of some kind, and maybe nothing dear to me to what I'm interested in, but it's here, and I've tried to get some kind of—be involved in some amount [tape distorts more prevalently] of whatever's going on.

[Tape break]

[00:33:25.01] Juanita Craft:

[Voice muffled by recorder, inaudible to start] That was the one that there are open prairies [?], without any problems, I should say. Because the state parks are the ones where the problems were, but locally it wasn't [?], because in open restrooms [?] and [inaudible] who at that time was living [inaudible] was just good business to let them in. And everything [helicopter overhead distorts recording]. That was '63, and we had started the fight about it in the fifties.

[00:34:06.18] Harry Jebson:

We'd been led to believe, and maybe erroneously, that there never was a policy on the part of the park board to segregate parks.

[00:34:14.06] Juanita Craft:

I don't think there was, I'm saying now that this is just customary, tradition kind of thing, that developed out of the fact that we had these five crazy [inaudible]. But in the recreation, it was on the state level but not locally I don't think. But statewide there was, because—let me see—our first state park, we fought the one down in Bastrop, Texas, that was a state park, and I'm trying to remember, now, where some of the parks back [tape skips] then were. But you don't find our people using state parks too much now because they've been barred all the time and this newer, younger, generation will possibly do it, but then you don't find very many people camping out around the lakes there, and getting to build houses and so forth and move on the lake areas. But then this is a public park, they go camp out or to take their kids there, very little of that going on. I was involved in a Meridian Park [law]suit here a few years ago, where they were trying to destroy part of that for this golf course. Do you know the incident?

[00:35:29.17] Harry Jebson:

No.

[00:35:31.11] Juanita Craft:

It's been about four or five years now, but the suit emanated from here, [inaudible] was here. And I was a plaintiff in the suit, because they were trying to protect this area where the golden-cheek[ed] warbler nests, and it's a small park—I think it's 491 acres, or something like that, not quite 500 acres. Why would you have to have this in that one spot, when this is the only place in the state park in Texas where the golden-cheek[ed] warbler lives. Why destroy that [inaudible]? So we won the suit. But that Meridian Park is a beautiful little park. And this is what I'm trying to do now. Now, I'm taking this group of kids to New Orleans this weekend. We're going to drive; well coming back, we're going to stop in Livingston, we're going to stop at the Big Thickett area as much as possible. Letting these boys see—this is their future involved. And the replanting of the pine trees in that area, it may not [inaudible] highway means nothing until you sat with some of these kids, and this is why that the trips that I carry kids on are so meaningful to

me. I've carried over a thousand kids on trips from Los Angeles to Boston; so I know all the trees.

[00:36:56.19] Patty Hogan:

[Crosstalk] I've never been to Los Angeles or Boston.

[00:36:58.05] Juanita Craft:

Well, we have gotten into the New Mexico area, Grand Canyon, and well, the mountains. They've never seen the rock cliffs. See around Dallas, they tell me these kids have never been to Highland Park. But parks. And now just think, I carry a golden age card. Isn't that grand? Go to any national park, free. You know, living is a beautiful experience. [Laughs]

[00:37:33.27] Harry Jebson:

Do you recall any incidents, other than the thing at Fair Park, in which there was racial—possible racial violence, or was any of this swept under the rug or anything?

[00:37:47.16] Juanita Craft:

There was no racial violence at Fair Park. We just picketed at that place and embarrassed them. That was an embarrassing thing that hurt more than anything else. No child was ever struck or put out or anything. One thing that made it amusing, the day before, that Friday, that before I—well, anyways, the kids—that was after—the kids did not go that day, but we had, oh about eight or ten white kids who worked with us, and they got the tickets from their school and brought them to us, and we had about thirty tickets. And on that day, that Friday when it was high school day, well the kids from these two high schools, at that time, were there. We had 1,052 that left this school down here and went to the fair. Didn't have tickets; they just got out of school because this was high school day, and the school [inaudible] said that we had 378 got out to go to [inaudible]. This was a lot closer to the fairgrounds, and went to the fair that day. And that was where, we were talking about, I didn't know what to think that time because the girls had to get them back in school. I couldn't do that, but they got—they were on time [?]. There's no violence. The most violent thing that was done was what was done to the kids afterwards, and those seniors, that was the thing. To have denied them the privilege—we haven't had any problems here, even the city, we haven't had any problems. Well once we picketed a store downtown and somebody came through and brushed up against a couple of the boys carrying picket signs. [Inaudible] Arrest even, because we had an attorney at that time that was—well he studied the law thoroughly before we got into it, because we knew how serious it would've been for any juvenile to have been arrested, because the judge can throw the books at a juvenile if he wants to, and there's no appeal. So we went in with dedication and determination. Of course, the sit ins were [inaudible] so nobody bothered the kids [inaudible], that was one thing that I think saved a lot of the confrontation we had, it was done by—and negotiation and the behind the scenes deals.

We organize this, at that time, bi-racial committee called the "14 mag committee," [?] seven from our neighborhood and seven from downtown.

[Tape break]

[00:40:57.20] Juanita Craft:

And I—for some reason, they kept me on the committee for about six years or seven. The kids were really restless, and then we worked with the kids on this angle of rumors and so forth—if you hear something that is derogatory to our cause, well let's talk about it. Then on these trips, where we ran into this kind of thing with other kids, all over the country, well I would always take them to see the results. You want your city torn up like this, we took them to Cincinnati in the Spring of '67, and the Cincinnati group just took them from the bus, clearly [?] showed them the whole situation. I said, "You don't want Dallas torn up like that."

[00:41:43.23] Harry Jebson:

That's where I was living in '67.

[00:41:46.18] Juanita Craft:

In Cincinnati, is that so? You know the story then.

[00:41:51.25] Harry Jebson:

Right.

[00:41:54.00] Juanita Craft:

And I wanted them to see Woodrow High School because to me, at an early age, I saw Woodrow and I thought it was one of the most beautiful high schools that I'd ever seen. And so the kids there, we took them out to the [inaudible] house at that time, and they brought in [inaudible] to rest. Then we took them up to Niagara Falls and Albany. See no need to go straight anywhere. When we take these trips, we just wind about and go places. [Laughs] We went up that way, on up to Albany and by Niagara Falls, over in to Boston. We went to Plymouth, [inaudible] and we came back down to New York City, Washington, and on down to these retreat towns [?] Richmond and then to [inaudible] and back on that way. [Inaudible, crosstalk and static].

[00:43:00.04] Harry Jebson:

Could you go back even further. You said you'd been in Dallas for fifty years. What parks could blacks go into, what parks was it understood?

[00:43:07.15] Juanita Craft:

Griggs Park.

[00:43:08.07] Harry Jebson:
Griggs Park was the only—

[00:43:10.12] Juanita Craft:
Yeah, that was the only thing we had.

[00:43:12.13] Harry Jebson:
How about, were there any facilities there at all? Swimming pool?

[00:43:15.13] Juanita Craft:
They had a swimming pool and a place to play ball, colored ball [?]. There was a little clubhouse that had a few activities there [inaudible]. Not too much over there now, [inaudible]. The Catholic school that lives adjacent to that park, it gives them an outlet, of course those highways destroyed most of old Dallas.

[00:43:50.05] Patty Hogan:
It's right off the Central Expressway.

[00:43:51.01] Harry Jebson:
Is it? Okay.

[00:43:54.17] Juanita Craft:
Then we had the YMCA at that time that they had a swimming pool there. That building's [inaudible] building, and a well-built building. [Inaudible]. But you look at the [phone rings]—

[Tape Break]

[00:44:22.90] Juanita Craft:
[Inaudible].

[00:44:23.24] Harry Jebson:
Quite a tribute to—

[00:44:28.09] Harry Jebson:
Yeah, I'd seen it when I get down in—

[00:44:29.22] Juanita Craft:
It gets old with arthritis and [inaudible] place to play. And I don't quite think that would work. I don't have transportation, and I don't bother people as much about taking me out there, as much as I—I have one friend, [inaudible] out somewhere, picking up groceries or something like that,

will just whip by the park, [inaudible] and [inaudible] she likes to go, until the other day, I think the [inaudible] disturbed her a little bit [helicopter overhead, distorts passage]. She had on a dress, she wanted her dress [inaudible]. All right. Got out there and she wanted to ride swing [inaudible]. She got up on the slide, and she finally came down off that slide, and tickled me so bad, I could not [inaudible]. So the next day I said, "[inaudible], want to go out to the park?" Uh-huh. I said, well that's one way to have a little peace with her. [Laughs] We have—the thing that is hard for me to understand—nearly every school that we've inherited had a park adjacent to it. We had the school down here when we started moving into this area. We've inherited every old school in the city practically. We've had one little school the last—I don't think we've had a new school for twenty years, twenty-five years, and of course it was quite [inaudible] parks. But it's amazing to see every one of those schools [inaudible] property, now school [inaudible]. And at Griggs park, [inaudible] well there was [inaudible, John Wesley Ray?], Darrell, and Booker T, three schools in that general area, but it couldn't have sufficed all of the schools, and yet Darrell had no facilities. You know where Darrell is?

[00:46:57.03] Patty Hogan:
No.

[00:46:58.05] Juanita Craft: © Southwest Collection/
Now when we talk about Griggs Park, it's across the street where the community action work is
going on now. The oldest school in [inaudible], and the first high school we had. [Inaudible]. But
[phone rings]—
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[Tape break]

[00:47:33.60] Juanita Craft:
All right, when we inherited all these schools out here, the one down here on Grand Avenue had
a huge playground. Now the one at Wheatley Place, that is one that I think that one was built a
number of years ago for us, and it does have a small playground. The one over here on Colonial,
a large playground. And this is true all over town, where the whites [inaudible]. But our schools,
it hasn't been true. And of course, I'm saying that segregation is prevalent even on the parks now,
because they are so situated that kids just don't get together. I'm just wondering how much longer
America can afford everything.

[00:48:39.28] Harry Jebson:
You had mentioned before that Griggs Park was the only park that blacks could go to. What were
the next parks that blacks were allowed into and when? Did you have to wait all the way until
1963?

[00:48:51.05] Juanita Craft:

Exall Park. Exall was the next one, and that was a concession there that, there's nothing else living around there but us and Mexicans, and of course, this is where they started going, and they opened up. But there was some protest at first about it—I can't remember what year it was, but it was in the forties.

[00:49:17.01] Harry Jebson:

How about other special facilities? Black golf courses, and were there these types of things?

[00:49:21.18] Juanita Craft:

The city golf course opened its doors, I can't remember the year, but Cedar Crest was the first one to open. And that one was opened, I just don't remember the year, but that was in the forties though, I don't—

[00:49:57.06] Harry Jebson:

Do you recall within the black community was there any realization that the park board might have been juggling swimming pools and that around to avoid segregation?

[00:50:08.21] Juanita Craft:

That they were what?

[00:50:08.09] Harry Jebson:

They were shifting their pool policy, because they might've been—

[00:50:13.23] Juanita Craft:

[Inaudible]. It's one of those things that nobody said anything about it, but I knew that there were no restrictions. As I said customary tradition [?] was a thing that extended the area of segregation because their—I remember once, [inaudible] my momma said, "Well I never thought about the way a negro [inaudible]. Hadn't thought about it." Because that's the way it was, nobody even thought about it, because swimming was not the kind of pastime then as it is now. [Inaudible] when I was young, younger [laughs], and we wanted to go down the river, and the back of the Marriott is where it is now, there was a nice hole back down there, and then one day a boy got drowned in it, and I don't think I've been swimming since.

[00:51:14.20] Patty Hogan:

What was—did you ever go out to Hillard Golf Course? What was that?

[00:51:20.20] Juanita Craft:

No, I never went, but I knew about it. That was a group of men who wanted some [inaudible] property—that was a public property. Unless I'm mistaken, it does seem to me that at one time it was given to them or something.

[00:51:44.15] Patty Hogan:

The way I've gotten it out of the Park Board minutes is that it was excess property bought by the city for Love Field, but they weren't using it for Love Field yet, because Love Field hadn't expanded that far, so they had it for a golf course. But I was just curious at the description of it.

[00:52:06.20] Juanita Craft:

Well, I'll tell you, I remember that it was given to this group for their purpose and named for the city, and knew it was quite a private citizen out there partially responsible for that being done. When you think about that, oh boy. I left some time and talked to young people about living. You haven't lived until you've lived, and it's too late then to live. When I came to Dallas, I was twenty-three, and there were just centered lots [?] out there, and [inaudible] approached me one day, said, "Do you want to buy a lot today? Fifty dollars. We wouldn't need [inaudible]." After all that mud and all that, I couldn't realize [inaudible] development, and I was telling them about the area now where Coca Cola is and [inaudible] Print Company and [inaudible] Bread Company—that's the area we're talking about, where Love Field is. You just can't imagine, that was way out in the woods. But long about Loma Alto [Drive] and—well the streetcar went, it crossed Lemmon Avenue, about three blocks, maybe four, after you pass over Oak Lawn, which [inaudible]. And when Loma Alto was built, that was, oh golly, that was town talk in that particular era [?]. But that's about the end of the streetcar line, and you had to walk, then, from then on out to what was just—I was going to say I think in that Cedar Springs area. And all that space in there was Johnson Grass and white face cattle and all that stuff. And then going on Lovers Lane, that was really Lovers Lane. Tree lined and of course the couples went out to their drive and they were way out in the woods [?]. And of course, SMU was, oh, about eight or ten years old when I came to Dallas. And all around it was cotton fields and [inaudible], and farmland. And then when I look at this [inaudible] was being constructed when I came, and the medical [?] lodge building had just been completed, and everybody, after the club [inaudible], a little creek that cuts through downtown, underground, down the Akard Street, through the Adolphus, and the Mobile Building, on down the river that way. [inaudible] on the side of the back of that creek after the club was being built, oh yes, it's a little creek there [laughs], so you look at it now, you'd never knew what's under there. And then the Adolphus Hotel had been built, I think it was built—I forgot what year [1912], but anyhow—they had these two deep wells at the Adolphus, and the Anheuser-Busch company built [inaudible] building across the street [inaudible]. And the heating and lighting systems controls of both buildings were underground, and had another tunnel went way out Elm Street, way out to that central railroad track, and that's where the oil was [inaudible]. And you know, [inaudible] underground and walk all over the

street [?]. Well, these young people now, they've inherited a great civilization. What can we encourage them to do with this? I'd hate like mad to see all these buildings being torn down in downtown Dallas. We need to preserve some of those buildings. And yet with modern mind, [inaudible] should not be destroyed. They should not destroy the [inaudible] building, a lot of buildings down there, because it's not—it's history. And I'm so sick of these cracker box looking glass buildings that I don't know what to do.

[00:56:49.07] Patty Hogan:
[Inaudible].

[00:56:51.28] Harry Jebson:
Chicago is a good example of preserving the old, making good use of it. You got the new big, tall, beautiful, silver buildings, but right next to it, you've got the old Carson Perry Scott Building. And you get a sense of the age, and—

[00:57:08.28] Juanita Craft:
Yeah, but you cannot discard the work of these people because—I can always put up one of these slabs that's going to fall down, now the way they've got it, they were always pre-molded, and just bring them in and stick them up there, but that was all right. And you should not discard. I don't have a quarter to even call anybody to tell them how to do it, so that's all [?]. But I call this house a museum because of all the junk I keep around here, and the thing I've been around now for most of my life, and I think that's some kind of rock, plus the driftwood and this piece back in the corner, I got that out of Sam Rayburn Lake about three summers ago. And I love the natural wood, I don't want to spray it with anything, and yet sometimes it would be prettier because I want to keep it in the living room to spray it. And most of the things in that aquarium, I got them down at Jekyll Island, Georgia. And they don't mean anything to anybody but me, you know what I mean because of my [inaudible] collection. That piece standing up against the back there, and the stairs [inaudible] because it's a flower bonnet was grown on two sides and not on the other two sides. I didn't understand that [inaudible]. Back over here behind me, I guess you think this is intended this [inaudible], I was painting last summer and I pulled it out and never put it back [laughs]. So it's a good place to hide a lot of junk behind here [PH laughs]. I don't know about that, but that old coffee table, every time—junk I have there, everybody went through it, they'd read my mail and everything else, so I left it back there.

[00:59:04.27] Harry Jebson:
Left it back there. [Inaudible].

[00:59:07.14] Juanita Craft:
Uh-huh, but these kinds of things are things kids ought to see. Because when I took the kids to Los Angeles that year, these kids in high school had never seen an ocean. I took them on to Santa

Monica so that they could see the ocean. On another trip around the world [?] we went on out to [inaudible] New Mexico, we spent a day on an Indian Reservation and then from there [inaudible] went on up to the Grand Canyon, spent a night up there, then back down through Prescott area where there's nothing but piles of rocks. And then to Blythe [inaudible] that way. Coming back, well that was the year—'65—that was the year after the riot. Then we came back, I took them down to see the destruction, and then came back—

End of Recording



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