

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Geraldine Brown

COLLECTION: 4700.0628

IDENTIFICATION: McKinley High School graduate, Class of 1945

INTERVIEWER: Shawnda Hollins

SERIES: McKinley High School Oral History Project – History of McKinley High School

INTERVIEW DATE: June 19, 1995

FOCUS DATES: 1940s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 912, Side A

Geraldine Smith Brown was born in Houston, Texas, on May 29, 1929; mother was a cosmetologist, father worked for railroad; describes typical day at McKinley; no cafeteria, so brought bag lunches or went out to eat; Brown is a retired elementary school principal; wanted to be a home economist but couldn't find a good job; taught for a long time before becoming a principal; during high school, was on dance team and performed in a play; Field Day in City Park; attended McKinley from 1941 to 1945; McKinley had strong focus on academics; went to Southern University; started out studying tailoring; switched to home economics; excitement about prom; Brown had a B average; grandmother was her role model; didn't have high school rivalry because McKinley was only black school in area; popular hairstyles, such as the pompadour; was inspired by Mrs. Powell at McKinley; graduation; home economics teacher Mrs. Cooper was her favorite; influence of McKinley on community; teachers were firm and in control, students obedient; goals while in high school; she still tutors people in her community; dislikes cooking; enjoys sewing; loves to travel; collects match boxes; collects All God's Children African American historical figurines; has no regrets; recites snippet of alma mater song; mostly learned from textbooks; subjects taught at McKinley; hopes McKinley retains its high standards; musical program has always been strong, though now mostly white; wants more black students to participate in music; talks about book commemorating McKinley reunions; has 1945 class reunion every two or three years; made most of her own clothes; has lifetime membership in McKinley Alumni Association; still feels closely connected to McKinley; relationship with principal Mr. Jones' family; Brown was selected as outstanding elementary school principal in 1976; leadership offices held in reunion activities group; Hollins reads aloud Brown's short history of McKinley; current large size of McKinley student body; Caesar Piper took over as principal after Dr. Frazier retired; Hollins reads more of written history about buildings, personnel, alumni association and alma mater; class emblem designed by art teacher Mr. Partridge; Hollins reads more history; both locals and out of state alums return for reunions; average forty-five to fifty people at reunions; advises current

McKinley students to conduct themselves as ladies and gentlemen; Brown wishes the oral history project success; Brown suggests additional interviewees; conclusion.

TAPE: 1 (T912)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 34 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 21 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: None

RESTRICTIONS: None