

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Nona Mae Dumouil Gray

COLLECTION: 4700.1737

IDENTIFICATION: Former resident of Baton Rouge's Beauregard town; she attended Reddy Street School, McKinley High School, Southern University, and has a master's in education from Louisiana State University.

INTERVIEWER: Petra Munro Hendry

PROJECT: McKinley High School Oral History Project: Social Organizations

INTERVIEW DATES: April 25, 2005

FOCUS DATES: 1920s -

ABSTRACT

Tape 3439, Side A

Introduction; spelling of Dumouil; birthdate and birthplace; parents Beulah Watson and Henry Dumouil; Dumouil's current property was owned by her mother's family; mother was a tailor, father owned a grocery store; her father's parents lived on Maximillian Street; her mother's parents were John and Alice Watson; information on her mother's upbringing and education; she was 101 when she died in 1991; she doesn't know where her dad went to school; she graduated from Reddy Street School, McKinley High School and Southern University; she has a master's from LSU; she had two older brothers, Lawrence and Henry, who are deceased; one brother worked for Esso, the other worked for a beer company; when she was growing up, whites and blacks both lived in Beauregard Town; she lived on Europe Street where her dad's family owned the whole block and each child had a house; one of her aunts was a nurse; her father ran the store; another aunt, Maude, became the principal at Perkins Road School; her grandfather, Levanski, bought the block from a French family; the "triangle" formed by streets in Beauregard Town; typical day growing up, visiting with family on the block; her mother worked at various businesses downtown as a tailor; Dumouil would walk to Reddy Street School; recollections of her time there; teachers' names at McKinley High School; Principal James Frazier; neighborhood around McKinley was pretty well developed; places to eat and shop; skating on hills by the Old State Capitol; other children she played with, including Gardner Taylor; there were dances at McKinley but she wasn't allowed to go; she attended Bethel AME Church but the church is not there anymore; was referred to as "the silk stocking church" because of the "choice people" who attended; she now goes to Mount Zion Church; pastors Gardner Taylor and T.J. Jemison; she met her husband at Southern, they married in 1947; he taught industrial education at Southern; she is friendly with young girls in her neighborhood; she moved to her current home two years ago, it's on her mother's family's property that has been in the family for over 100 years; in Beauregard Town, she didn't know any different about whites and blacks living together; she always felt that everyone is the same; white families in

the neighborhood; she doesn't think anyone really discussed how the neighborhood came to be; drugstores, doctors and dentists in the area; city limits of Baton Rouge when she was growing up; visiting her grandmother was a day-long trip in a wagon; she doesn't know much about Old South Baton Rouge because she never spent much time there; location of downtown Baton Rouge, Beauregard Town, South Baton Rouge and LSU; South Baton Rouge was more working-class than Beauregard Town; Italians lived in South Baton Rouge and Beauregard Town; different schools for whites and blacks in Baton Rouge; she doesn't think that "moving schools or moving people make for race relations"; in Beauregard Town, racial breakdown was about fifty-fifty; there were no interracial marriages that she knew of; she was one of the first African Americans to attend LSU as a graduate student; other African Americans who attended LSU around the same time she did; they were there to prove that African Americans could "do as well as white"; attitudes of white students and teachers at LSU; she taught at Perkins Road School, McKinley High and Valley Park School; she retired in 1977; she took care of her husband and mother after she retired; she was not involved in the Baton Rouge Bus Boycott; she had a car and never really rode the bus; some people from Beauregard Town are "still kicking"; she loves to visit there;

Tape 3439, Side B

Goose Hollow, a low area by a canal in Beauregard Town; area that is now the policy academy used to be LSU's campus; school for the blind and Dufrocq School are in the same vicinity; Catfish Town was mostly low-income people; businesses along the river near Catfish Town; she has been to the Lincoln Theatre but mostly went to the Temple Theater on North Boulevard; good restaurant called Bernard's; three highlights of her life are being Christian, being born in Baton Rouge, and having good health; she doesn't have any yearbooks from McKinley; she has a picture of her and her brother as children in Beauregard Town; tape turned off.

TAPES: 1 (T3439)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 55 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 53 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: None

RESTRICTIONS: Gray asked to review transcript before deciding on restrictions; transcript mailed to Gray for review in November 2011, but was not returned