

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Audrey Sims Guillory

COLLECTION: 4700.2599

IDENTIFICATION: Mossville, Louisiana resident from 1959-1965

INTERVIEWER: Rebecca Cooper

SERIES: Mossville History Project – Field Interviews

INTERVIEW DATES: December 7, 2015

FOCUS DATES: 1950s-70s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4550

Introduction; full name Audrey Mae Sims Guillory, born in Lake Charles, Louisiana in 1947; oldest of five siblings; siblings' names; parents Mary Beverly and Oscar Sims; father from Gueydan, Louisiana and mother from Branch, Louisiana; moved to the area because mother's brother the pastor of Methodist church in Westlake; moved to Mossville in 1959; mother divorced father and worked as a housekeeper; father legally blind sibling of a twin; father's mother died giving birth to another set of twins; mother's father died a month after she married, in 1966; names her two children and nine grandchildren; grandfather strong in faith, and taught them to be that way; seven ministers in the family; lonely when they first moved to Mossville; wrote a note to a neighborhood girl asking to be friends; moved in with uncle, Reverend D.S. Beverly, until they could find a house of their own; moved around a lot growing up; mother faced financial hardships, but didn't beg for help; as the oldest, she was rewarded with her own room; responsible for helping at home; mother was her friend; taught her to be respectful, and to demand respect; looked to families and teachers as role models; teachers saw something in her that she didn't see herself; names teachers Mrs. Rogers, Mrs. Jones and Ms. Prater as particularly inspiring and influential; graduated from Mossville High School in 1965; school was her safe haven, and she was well-liked; started dating her husband in the ninth grade, at thirteen years old; boys respected her because she stood her ground; majorette for five years, and remembered for twirling with fire; awards received at graduation; husband Roy went to Washington High School, and they met at a canteen; grew up dancing, because her father a zydeco musician and played instruments like the rubbing board; able to participate in extracurricular activities because Mossville residents helped her financially, even though she wasn't originally from there; hard times when step-father got out of prison and wanted to move the family to Texas for work; Mrs. Rogers counseled and consoled her; in third grade, chosen to dance in a musical; majorette coaches and mentors at Mossville High; performed for Mardi Gras in Lafayette, and everyone said, "Look at those corn-fed girls!"; other extracurricular activities; loved dancing at the canteens, but husband not a dancer; walked her home after and kissed her; married him the day before her nineteenth birthday; he passed away on her birthday, fifty years later; mother could

create sewing patterns from brown paper bags; mother designed her a dress after Jaqueline Kennedy's inauguration gown; she was the talk of that ball; other skills learned from mother; white beans first dish she tried to cook, but beans never got soft; coon meat a delicacy; mother noted for her pies, but Guillory's favorite is her syrup cake she made every weekend; to make ends meet, mother worked in a sweet potato field and they had any kind of meal that you can make from a sweet potato; mother also had a garden; saved up money to buy mother a birthday present—a Baby Ruth candy bar and a white cereal bowl; taking apart hand-me-downs and making the latest fashions; first jobs she had; taking classes at McNeese to be a P.E. teacher, but taught reading instead; later attended SOWELA [Technical Community College] and worked for Olin; laid off, so attended Denham's beauty school to pursue her passion—hair; used money earned from Olin to build a beauty shop, and she had her business for over twenty-five years; other jobs, like working at St. Patrick's hospital; first black student taking classes to be an x-ray technician, but left because she was pregnant and didn't want child exposed to the radiation; lost the baby, but sees God's hand in this; feeling out of place at a convention because she “dressed to kill” and everyone else dressed casually; Mossville a safe haven, you didn't think about race and color; pictures of father's light skinned family members; voting; community leaders; people wouldn't brag about their generosity; grandfather a veteran; used home remedies for illness, or attended the Clinic in Mossville; fat for cuts, clover for toothache, olive oil and cigarette smoke for ear ache, gargling with Alum for sore throat, castor oil for cleansing; smell makes her nauseous to this day; dash of cayenne for high blood pressure; attended St. Paul and Mount Nebo for church; small congregation, so members had more leadership responsibilities; church activities; fondest memories of Mossville include the school; people cared for each other, but were not in and out of each other's homes; latest fashions and clothes; asked to be eleventh grade queen, and everyone helped out with her outfit; transportation was either bus or walking; doesn't like arguments because that's not how she was raised; raising children; traumatic experience with step-father hiding from police; too excited to get married to remember all the details; first couple to get married in uncle's church; father a street musician, could also play harmonica; zydeco and other aspects of French culture “not cool”; mother cut their hair, since they didn't have money; has a book of memories, because she enjoys writing; closing.

TAPES: 1 (T4550)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 40 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 50 pages

PHOTOGRAPHS / PHOTOGRAPHER: Three photographs taken during interview, including one photograph of interviewer Cooper. Photographer Stephanie Dragoon.

OTHER MATERIALS: Biographical data form; Correspondence

RESTRICTIONS: none