

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Jawanna Huntsberry

COLLECTION: 4700.2667

IDENTIFICATION: grew up in Mossville, Louisiana

INTERVIEWER: Chelsea Arseneault

SERIES: Mossville History Project - Field Interviews

INTERVIEW DATES: June 3, 2016

FOCUS DATES: 1960s-1990s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4624

Jawanna Mayo Huntsberry starts interview with parents' origins; from St. Landry parish, parents met while mother worked at a night club Joy Hill; moved to Mossville in 1957, the night Hurricane Audrey hit; grandparents Pinky and Ethan Mayo; Pinky a midwife, died at one hundred and thirteen years old; remembers everything about her; picking sugarcane; two white geese her pets; house on Prince Street, in Mossville; lived off the land; Pinky's maiden name Catlon; Aunt Minerva Palm, her sister, lived to one hundred and eight; Pinky's brother, Francois hopped trains in the 1900s, and that's how he was killed; land rich, and they didn't get sick; raised what they needed, had gardens, livestock; pneumonia main cause of death; researching family history; grandfather's wife Elma Mae [Verdine?] worked at the Verdine plantation in Lockport, Louisiana; Pinky Mayo's obituary; "mother" of Philadelphia God and Christ in Mossville; church wouldn't start until she got there; when she shook her tambourine, everyone would stand and church started; children required to sit in front row, and the old sisters dressed in white; Huntsberry discovered her grandmother lost four children in childbirth; married Ethan June of 1884, and he died in 1925; good memories of her mom working and running cafes; Mother Mary Louise [Achan?]; Reverend Achan her godchild; canned everything they had—figs, pears, peaches, okra, made mayhaw jelly; sad to see Mossville now; grandfather Edison retired from Firestone plant in Lockport; grandmother's cooking; you had to eat; fresh tea cake when they came home from school; father Henry worked at Lake Charles Stevedore; "mothers of the street" shared with each other, and no one talked about anyone; if neighbors butchered a pig, everybody got a piece of meat; large families, so they made sure to take care of each other; mother taught them to sew; mother born in 1933 to [Olazine?] and Josephine; started researching family history when she had a dream about grandmother Pinky; mother's side from the Sunset area; great-great grandmother Cherokee; Pete Mayo came from Africa to Lake Charles on a boat; different spellings of Mayo; mother's first son died of "crib death"; ten of them, but they didn't lack for anything; brother Alvin Noel graduated from Mossville in 1969, the last year it was a high school; school turned to a junior high in the '70s; siblings' names; walked anywhere they

wanted to go; would walk to Bel Air to buy frozen cups; neighbors growing up; Pete Moss rode his horse and buggy everywhere, even to Piggly Wiggly; Mossville's original founder Jack Moss; everyone had a garden; Prince Street in the Queensboro neighborhood; busy with chores; feeding the animals, outdoor maintenance, washing clothes etc.; chores rotated weekly; three stations on T.V.; used Almanac to plant; canning; different kinds of chickens mother ordered would come on a truck; sister the only one who could catch guineas, because she would crawl to them; mother would wring chicken's neck and dip it in wax to take the feathers off; community leaders; had to play when adults visited, sometimes they talked in French so the children wouldn't overhear; expected to behave a certain way around elders; father whooped them once a year for everything; she stayed close to home, but her brothers always in trouble; mother ran the café at the Paradise Club; charged people to park in their yard; Valery Montgomery owned the club and also worked at the plant; wife Eula always had something cooking in a big pot; Paradise the biggest, hottest club in Mossville; remembers Mrs. Eula was strict with her daughters because they were all so beautiful; people voted for who Mr. Valery said to vote for; he and his brother Wes Montgomery had a vacuum truck business; Wes and his wife Agnes opened a club called the Rolls Royce and she was a waitress there; doesn't remember James Rigmaiden, but his wife Lola Bell is still alive and always has a smile on her face; doesn't remember a post office in Mossville, but there were a lot of clubs; mother helped run the canteen; go-go girl for the talent show at school; fond memories of Mossville High School; Ms. [Earline?] drove the bus, and she did not play; back then, teachers would take you home if you misbehaved; Mr. Mouton was her favorite teacher; special bond with the librarian, Ms. Franklin; four classes before her had integrated at Sulphur High; may have been bad at one time, but she remembers being fine; brother involved in a local protest, but she doesn't remember the details; she was quiet and liked to stay home; born in 1960, but she remembers a lot of stuff, and researches a lot; local businesses; mother worked in restaurants, and also ironed for white families; selling pecans and blueberries on the side of the road; mother bought first winter coat from selling blackberries; grandmother Pinky's sister sold to Jim Lee for a sack of rice, a mule and some sugar; afraid of the "mamou tea man" who would ride his bike and treat people for things like worms; home remedies like wet tobacco and filé; sister jumped off the roof and broke her jaw; several churches in Mossville; raised Catholic, so they attended St. John Bosco in Westlake; mother moved to Baptist church, and they went along with her; remembers when mass in Latin; Halloween a fun time for whole community; ghost stories about the sycamore tree; mother's brother played in a zydeco band; father's work; first buyouts in Bel Air; a lot of anger from first buyouts; could smell the pollution from the plant, and it would burn your eyes; something always blowing up; Mr. Mouton talked about how dioxin gave people cancer, asthma; she didn't get involved with environmentalists; children's names; parents' education; peeling sugarcane; cutting grass with machetes; beautiful family home, biggest one in Queensboro neighborhood; blind neighbor could count money; mother made most of their clothes, and pressed their hair; favorite shows on T.V.; school friendships; how she wants Mossville to be remembered.

TAPES: 1 (T4624)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 53 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 93 pages

PHOTOGRAPHS / PHOTOGRAPHER: Two photographs taken during interview with Huntsberry at her home in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Photographer Kyle Tanglao.

OTHER MATERIALS: Interview questions (5 pgs); Correspondence

RESTRICTIONS: none