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Miriam Anderson: —went to St. Peter Claver School. It was a Catholic school. Same that we have here. It was then located on the corner of Scott [Street] and Governor [Street]. Same location. And when I was 7th grade I went to a training school for girls in Jacksonville. And from there—I finished 8th grade there. And then I went to Florida A & M and I finished high school and then finished college there.

After finishing college I came [to Tampa] and my first job was really with the Tampa Urban League as a social worker. That was a time when Mr. [Benjamin] Mays and his wife were—Mr. Mays was our secretary of the Urban League and Mrs. Mays worked as a social worker. I think they were gettin' ready to leave here. And when they left, I still had the job as social worker. I couldn't really replace Mrs. Mays because she was a trained social worker and I wasn't. But I, sort of, filled the bill. And that was when the agencies were separate, you know. Blacks had an agency and whites had an agency. And many of the referrals were made through Family Service. So I'd have to call Family Service and get permission to do certain things. Or they would call me where a black was involved and ask me to handle a case. And that had to do with Travelers Aid also.

Herbert Jones: So when did you start in the school system, as far as, teaching?

MA: Oh, I left the Urban League after about a year and a half. And I went to Florida A & M. [I] really just went for a visit because I had a sister who was workin' there. And there was a vacancy in the high school. And I was certified and got the job and worked there three years. I worked there until 1932. And my father died and I came home that spring.

Then I went to work at Booker Washington, and worked there until sometime in the '40s [1940s]. And then they were getting ready to start a branch YWCA [Young Women's Christian Association], and I had worked with the YWCA as a student. I had been on the boards and had made the trips and the interests and represented Florida A & M. So I was

asked to take the job. And I worked for them seven years and ten months, and then I went back to the school system, right back to Booker Washington, and worked there until there was a vacancy at Middleton. I went in as a replacement the last six weeks, and worked there about three years. And then I came back to Booker Washington and retired from Booker Washington.

HJ: What were the conditions of the schools when you first started? You know, the—I know that the education was separate and, you know, the facilities weren't as equal as the whites, but what was the general school life, you know, really like in the black schools?

MA: Well, since I didn't know what the white [schools] was like—

HJ: Yeah.

MA: You know—see, I didn't know what the white was like. And to this day, I don't know where some of the white schools are located.

HJ: Right.

MA: If somebody asked me where is Roosevelt [Elementary School], I got to get the directions and find out where Roosevelt is. And then get a map to find out what the street is—

HJ: Right.

MA: —because I'm not familiar with the location. But, I found at that time that students were far more interested in learning, and that teachers did not have the difficulty of motivating them, the same type of difficulty motivating them, at that time as they have now. For instance, you gave home assignments and those kids did that work overnight and they'd come back and we'd start with your home assignment. "Did you have any difficulty with your home assignment?" And you'd see hands go up. And you'd straighten that out and then you went on with the day's work.

I've known the time when I could give my children an assignment and walk out of my classroom and go all over that building and anybody passing in the hall would think I was in there, because there was no disruptions whatsoever. Or if I had any difficulty with those kids, by the time they got home I was there. And when I would talk to their parents, well, that was corrected. And there was excellent cooperation between the parents and the teachers. But I worked long enough to find that that did not exist because if you had a truant and you went to visit the parent, the parent would lie and say—well, first they were startled, you know. They'd be startled that the child was not in school and the more you would talk, they'd say, "Oh, I kept him home. I kept him home to see about such and such a thing." But that was not true in those first twelve or fifteen years that I worked.

HJ: Okay, how were the classrooms situated? You know, were there just one—two classes to one classroom or—

MA: No. I had an individual classroom. And a—now, when I went back, after I had been out several years and went back, I did not have an independent classroom. I shared a classroom with two or three teachers. But that was not difficult. And when the teacher was off [for] her study period, or planning period, then I could take that classroom. But that was not a difficult—I had the use of the board and the use of whatever facilities were in there. That was not a problem at all.

HJ: Okay, were you a part of the incident with, I think it was—what's the lady's name from Tampa that we read about that started this thing about equal salaries for black teachers?

MA: Yeah, I was right in there. I also have a subpoena where I was subpoenaed to court on that hearing. Would you want to see it?

HJ: Yes. Yes.

MA: Okay. I have most in the—

Pause in recording

HJ: Ms. Anderson?

MA: Umm hmm.

HJ: Okay, I see here where it said that the teachers would receive the increase in salary, but it would be done on a rating basis such as A.1 for Excellent, A.2 for Good, and this type thing.

MA: Umm hmm.

HJ: Was that—did that go for all teachers or just for Negro teachers at that time?

MA: Well that was really for Negro teachers. And there were some of us that were put in different categories. Fortunately for me, I got the high category. And I really don't know—let's see, what's the date on that? No, what's the date on this?

HJ: 1943. March.

MA: 1943.

HJ: Umm hmm.

MA: Well, somewhere in here I would have the contract for that year and the rating. Let's see if I can find it. 1943. (She looks through her papers.) Go ahead. You can go on and talk while I look for this.

HJ: Okay. Ms. Anderson. What were the two earliest black schools in Tampa, or the oldest black schools in Tampa?

MA: Harlem was one of 'em.

HJ: Okay. Were there any others?

MA: And I think Lomax was the next one. I'm not sure. No. Let me tell you, there was a school—There was Harlem, Lomax and Dunbar, a school out in West Tampa.

HJ: Okay. Were these just elementary schools or what? What age levels?

MA: Harlem was the elementary. And... I believe Dunbar the school in West Tampa—it wasn't always known as Dunbar. I think it was known as the West Tampa School.

HJ: Within the school system, were there any Negro administrators? Anything like this?

MA: Mmm mmm. Not until—not until Ms. Blanche [Armwood] Beatty was employed. And she was—well, she had connections with the School Board. And, I guess, she was considered a supervisor.

Shirley Smith: Is Ms. Beatty still living?

MA: No. She's dead. Didn't you go by the cemetery?

HJ: Right.

MA: Umm hmm.

HJ: Okay, on your contracts, what—were you given the same yearly contract as the other schools were, or were your contracts different?

MA: Now, I really don't know. As I tell you, I never saw a white teacher's contract so I really don't know. Now, let me see, this is in those later years.

HJ: What was the outcome of the contract agreements with the courts?

MA: We got a raise in salary. We were reclassified and got a raise in salary.

HJ: How did they go about reclassifying you?

MA: Now, I don't know.

HJ: You don't know?

MA: Uh uh. You say this was 1947?

HJ: Forty-three. Forty-three. [1943]

MA: Forty-three.

HJ: Umm hmm.

MA: All right. Here, this evidently is my first contract with the school board. Keep all of that together. Thirty-three [1933], thirty-four [1934]—

HJ: Okay.

MA: —Thirty-four [1934]—

HJ: Who was some of the other important individuals that played a part in contractual agreements?

MA: That did what?

HJ: Who was the other important pioneers or important people who played an important role in the negotiations?

MA: There was Christina Meacham.

HJ: Christina Meacham.

MA: That's the school—Meacham School is named for her. You say this was 19—that's 1940. This is—

HJ: No, that's forty-three [1943] right here.

MA: All right, this is forty [1940]. This is forty-one [1941]. This is forty-two [1942]. This is forty-three [1943]. Now let's see what this letter says. Okay, now, this evidently—let's see what's the date on this one, February—and the date—

HJ: And this is March.

MA: This is March.

HJ: The court thing is March, forty-three [1943].

MA: Okay. Hold that.

HJ: But that other stated—the thirties [1930s] and forties [1940s], would you classify it as—how would you classify it according to the present day education?

MA: Oh, I think that we are much better prepared, generally. At that time there were many people teaching who had only two years of training. You know, they had finished normal [school, or teacher's college], but they were going back to summer school. You could teach on a two year certificate. Your salary wasn't as high, of course, as people who had the four-year. But when you went back and got your bachelor's—and they did it by goin' in the summers—then they moved from one category to another category, salary-wise. So you found that most Negro teachers were goin' back to school every summer to get the advanced degree.

And then, after they—we went on the new rating, that you were paid more for a master's than for a bachelor's, then they went back and got the master's. So I would feel that they were far better prepared. Then many people went into administration and supervision. And then that was the time when guidance and personnel had the day so many people went in and certified for personnel, guidance, administration and library science. They didn't get a degree. Some of 'em did not get the degrees in library science but they got the certification and they were able to do a job.

SS: Ms. Miri—Ms. Anderson, do you remember anything about the Depression here in Tampa?

MA: What do you mean?

SS: Well, how was life during the Depression? How was things here?

MA: I guess it would be foolish for me to say I don't know, but that was 1932—

SS: Umm hmm.

MA: —around 1932—I'm afraid I can't speak to that.

HJ: What were the occupations of, say, the majority of the blacks during this period, during the thirties [1930s] and the forties [1940s]?

MA: Now, I don't know exactly when the longshoremen's union started [International Longshoremen's Association]. You know, that was started by two blacks. One was Mr. Perry Harvey [Senior]. And one was, I think his name was, Michael Lazarus. They actually started the union. And there was much opposition to them starting it. And they weren't even—they were even afraid to go home at night. They had to hide out, you know, until it was completed.

Now, there were orange pickers. And I imagine there were longshoremen. We made a study of the longshoremen at Booker Washington, the history of it, and used it as a theme for junior high school graduation. But I don't know how it contrasted with the number of people who worked as longshoremen then and now. I know you have to be a member of the union to work now. And when there was no union I really don't know. I know Perry

[Junior], Little Perry Harvey, would be able to straighten that out for you, or give you the correct information.

HJ: But as far as a job, were there large unemployment during this period?

MA: Well, of course, the jobs were menial labor, you know, like janitors and service jobs, like maids. People still picked oranges and worked in the fields. Oh, there were some white collar jobs like insurance agents, and there were several black mail carriers during this time. I could almost name the ones who were the mail carriers. There was a Mr. Middleton, for whom Middleton High school is named. And there was a man by the name of King. There was Herbert Lester. He has a son who works here in the school system now, Wilson. And, let's see who else—if there were any other. Oh, and there was a Handy Daniels, who worked. There was William Walker, who was also a carrier. There was five whom I remember.

HJ: Okay, umm—pertaining to business, can you name any of the businesses that was located on the, say, the avenue from Cass Street up to Scott Street, the businesses that—

MA: From Cass to Scott?

HJ: Yes, the businesses and who owned 'em and, you know, just a overview of that whole section.

MA: Now, there was a man who had a dry goods store on Scott Street in front of Allen Temple Church; his name was Williams. What was his first name? I don't recall but he is related to a Mrs. Helen Jackson. You know Ms. Helen Jackson?

HJ: Umm...

MA: You don't know her? Robert. His name was Robert Williams. And he had this one dry goods store. Then right next to him on, not really adjoining him but on that same block and the corner, was where you had this 50/50 Bottling Company. Then on Central the only thing that I can recall was something like eating places, you know, restaurants.

Fred Beaton: We would like to know something about the eating places because we really don't have that much about 'em.

MA: I don't even know—and there were pool rooms. You know?

HJ: Well, you know, some of them, Johnny Green and—

MA: Yeah, of course; Johnny Green was one of the late ones. You know. But, in the early years when I was a child the one that had the sway on Central was really the Greek Stand. Because I can remember that a—we were just children—just enjoyed that tripe that was ride up—and left standing. And then he went for a tripe sandwich, all they did was heat up the grease and take off a piece of tripe and drop it in there and let it get hot,

and then put it between two pieces of bread. Now, I don't remember any other businesses, but I do remember the—The Greek Stand stands out because it was there for years and years and years, almost until urban renewal came through there.

HJ: Now, concerning this 50/50 Bottling Company, do you know who owned that?

MA: Let me see, you see the thing here? Let's see. His wife still lives—lives in Daytona. I don't remember his name.

SS: Do you know anything about the soup lines?

MA: Mmm mmm. I know—I heard that there were soup lines but I don't know anything about the soup lines.

FB: What was the overall treatment of blacks in Tampa, in early Tampa? Like, when you were comin' up as a child, how was, you know—what were the conditions? How were blacks treated as far as, you know, white-black relationships and this type thing, and the social life?

MA: Well, now you almost have to be—I had no contact with the police. You know? People in my category had no contact with the police, so I wasn't mistreated, you know, because I had no contact. But with people who were always runnin' afoul of the law, well, I imagine they knocked 'em down, kicked 'em—I don't know that because I did not experience that, but it is said—but, of course, it's a far cry from what it is now because I've had two or three traffic tickets—and umm—they were very courteous and very polite to me. Very. And I've heard that expression from other people.

FB: Okay, so do you remember the last lynching of a black man in Tampa?

MA: No, not really. I remember that there was a man who was supposed to be lynched, and that was on Jefferson Street where the new police station—see, that's a new station now, but there was a smaller station on that same—it didn't occupy as much space, and the back of it faced Jefferson Street. And— there was supposed to be a lynching that took place—there's supposed. I can't really verify it. You'd have to verify that from the records.

FB: Do you know anything pertaining to the shipyard, dealing with longshoremen, or anything like this?

MA: Mmm mmm. No, I do not.

SS: What about the civil rights?

MA: Well, that was, you know, around 19—what, sixty [1960]-something?

SS: Umm hmm.

MA: Around 1967—

FB: And the riots on Central?

MA: I can remember the riot because I was still livin' here, and I had a very ill mother. And I'd been accustomed to getting my mail and going on down to the post office, regardless to what time it was. If I had some mail that had to get in I would just go on out the back door and get the car and go on down, put the mail in and come back. And this particular night I got to the back door to go out and remembered that there was somebody else I owed, and I came back to write the check so I could put it in the mail. And I got a telephone call and it was somebody who knew my habits and they knew that I'd just as soon be on my way to the post office, so they suggested that I not go out at all because there was disorder on Central.

So then I came on back in the house and shortly after this I could see the flames from the back door. And then as I sat out here I could hear the mob moving up Nebraska [Avenue] and the smashing as they went along. And then they moved, then, into the Ybor City section. And by morning I remember seeing a helicopter. I went out to the garbage can and there was a helicopter over—and I guess it was a week or more before I went through Central to see the damage.

HJ: Okay, Ms. Anderson, I have one last question I wanted to ask you. Can you give us some background of your father and your relationship to Central Life Insurance Company?

MA: My father was one of the founders of Central Life Insurance Company. And there is a picture—a calendar which has all the founders' pictures on it. You've seen that.

HJ: Yeah.

MA: And that's all I know about that. And you know that there were certain men—one was Middleton and I think one was Stone. Wasn't Stone one of them?

HJ: Uh huh.

MA: Stone, Middleton, Norton, a man by the name of Bryant. My father. And maybe some others. I don't know whether Dr. Howell was in that group or not. I know he became a stockholder. But I don't know whether or not he was one of the original stockholders.

HJ: Okay, what about the churches, what were the first black churches in the area?

MA: I don't know. I know Beulah Baptist Church was one of the Baptist churches. And I remember St. Paul AME [African Methodist Episcopal] Church were established when I was a child. And Beulah is an outgrowth of a split from Bethel [Baptist Church].

HJ: Right. Do you have that information you was telling me about the other day—

MA: Yeah, that's—

HJ: —about (inaudible).

MA: —dirt. Now, unfortunately, I don't know whether there are any dates and this. This one is concerning the church, our troubles between rival factions in Beulah Baptist discuss—now this one here—

HJ: That's 1909.

MA: This is 1909.

HJ: And it's also—you have an article on lynching—there are some.

MA: I have?

HJ: Right.

MA: Umm hmm. That evidently was 1909 because it mentions a man by the name of Green, who was the pastor of Bethel, I think, at that time. And this is ten something—1909.

SS: Let's see it.

HJ: Is there a way that we can get these prints?

FB: We can try to go outside and maybe lay a few of 'em down and the—

Pause in recording

HJ: —blacks before World War I, you know, were there any special, you know, names or any—

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins

MA: —blackservicemen stationed at MacDill [Air Force Base]. I remember there was a group of West Pointers who came here for special training at MacDill. And when it came to entertainment, the black officers were entertained in town. We sponsored their entertainment. And the white officers were at MacDill. I don't know what they did for them, but they did not include the blacks. And we screened the girls, you know, that we—we could not eliminate any girls, but we did screen some and insist, you know, you come—you be sure and come.

HJ: Yeah?

MA: And there was one marriage as a result of that. A West Pointer met a girl and he kept up with her and they were married. She came here this year for her high school reunion.

SS: Really?

MA: Umm hmm. She's been all over the world almost.

HJ: And they're still married?

MA: Still married. And he's stationed now at Fort Benning. But she says that they may not be there over two years and then they move on some place else. And after that, you know, mothers were very shy about people—about their daughters having anything to do with soldiers. But after that happened, then everybody said—

SS: Everybody's pushin' it.

MA: —"When the West Pointers comin' back? When you gonna entertain the West Pointers?" You know. But that was once in a lifetime.

HJ: So what was main social—(inaudible) you know, what kind of entertainment?

MA: Well, there was dances. And there [were] picnics at Rogers Park. They would send in one of the buses and they'd load from the Urban League. And sometimes we might call and, say, stop at Cass and Boulevard and pick up a group of girls, you know, rather than have them come in from West Tampa to the Y. They'd pick 'em up there and then they'd come in and they'd get the larger number of girls. Then they would unload them and the return trip. And if they were going through to Cass, you see go through Cass down to MacDill, they would unload again in West Tampa so that they would be closer to home.

HJ: So what—can you remember anybody that started here, you know, singing or sports or anything, anything like that, that started from Tampa, that's now professional or either just local, you know, entertainment durin' that period?

MA: I don't have anybody, no. No, I don't remember anybody in entertainment.

HJ: Okay, so, your overall view during your stay in Tampa has been, you know, productive or content. Right? You know, you've had—you know, I mean, like, you know, you had no harassments from the police or from the whites or nothin' like this. You—

MA: Un uh.

HJ: It was just—smooth sailin'?

MA: Well, maybe that was because I didn't become involved enough. You know, if I had become enough I may—that may not be true.

HJ: Umm hmm.

MA: But I did my job and came on home. And, you know, the things I was interested in, like, I worked with the Urban League and I worked with the Red Cross and the Cancer Fund or something like that. And worked with my church.

HJ: Are you in the sorority?

MA: Yes.

HJ: Which one?

MA: They ain't but one.

HJ: (laughs)

MA: A.K.A. [Alpha Kappa Alpha].

HJ: (laughs)

MA: A.K.A.

HJ: I thought that, because I saw a pink matches in there.

This is Herb Jones, Fred Beatty, Shirley Smith. We just finished interviewing Mrs. Miriam Anderson—

MA: Miriam.

HJ: —Miriam Anderson—March—

MA: Seventh.

HJ: —Seven, 197—

end of interview