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We MARTHA S. TREDAWAY and MICHAEL A. BALSER  
(Interviewee) (Interviewer)

Do hereby grant permission to Jacksonville State University to copy the tape of the interview conducted at ROWE HALL, JSU on the date(s) of 25 OCT 95 for the oral history collection being compiled at Jacksonville State University.

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Martha S. Tredaway  
(Interviewee's signature)

Date 10-25-95

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## INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: MARTHA S. TREDAWAY M/F Female  
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Phone number(s): 205 / 435-6139  
Approximate age or date of birth: 10-11-29  
Mother's Name: Elsie Elaine Self  
Father's Name: DeWitt Self  
Places lived and when: Birmingham / Jacksonville  
Education: BS, MS, AA Certification  
Religion: Methodist  
Business, political and social memberships (past and present) \_\_\_\_\_  
Present occupation: Retired  
Former occupations: Teacher / counselor  
Special Skills: \_\_\_\_\_  
Major Accomplishments: \_\_\_\_\_  
National Events in which interviewee has participated: \_\_\_\_\_  
Local Events in which interviewee has participated: \_\_\_\_\_  
National born U.S. citizen?  Yes / No  
Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Country from which he/she emigrated: \_\_\_\_\_  
Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in the possession of the interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_  
Individuals recommended by the interviewee who might be candidates for an oral history interview: \_\_\_\_\_  
Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

With Mrs. Martha Tredaway, Jacksonville, AL

Intro: The date is 25 October 1995, Wednesday morning. The interview subject is Martha Tredaway, who was a high school counselor in Jacksonville, Alabama for around 30 years. The interviewer is Mike Balser and the place of interview is in Rowe Hall on the campus of JSU.

**Balser:** The time is 8:34, on Wednesday the 25th, and I'm sitting in the conference room with Mrs. Martha Tredaway. The purpose of the interview is to garner her observations as a woman on the history of women educators here in Jacksonville. I thought it would be good start with you because as a counselor maybe your observations were a little more objective. Perhaps you could watch educators at work and somehow glean what their feelings were as an observer, maybe more as a person who teaches in the classroom. Am I close? Can you help me?

**Tredaway:** Well I spent a number of years in the classroom before I went into counseling so I almost have two careers, one as a teacher.

**B:** For how many years did you work for the same school system and were you always in Jacksonville?

**T:** No, I was not, I received my B.S. in Secondary education; at that time I went to worked for approximately 3 years in Birmingham in the Birmingham city system. I went to school during the summers and I received my Master's in Guidance and Counseling at the end of August. Then I began teaching Chemistry, Physics, Biology and General Science in the Jacksonville City School. At that time we had very few school counselors, and after I taught for approximately 12 years, I was then made part time Science and part time counselor, and later I was full time counselor. I resigned when our girls were born and I stayed home with them until our youngest went to kindergarten. Then I was very very lucky that my position opened up again in Jacksonville. So I returned in 1975 and stayed there until 1995, until July of this year when I officially retired.

**B:** May I ask when you began with the Jacksonville system?

**T:** I began in 1954, I taught here until 1967 when our daughter was born on November 5, and I had gotten a leave of absence as of the first of October, so I worked up until that time. I came back February 1st, and in a month I decided that I couldn't be a full-time mom and full time counselor; so I resigned at the end of my 12 month contract. I worked through October, and then I resigned, and then I had another baby after that and I was out for a number of years. I went back full time in 1975, so from 75 to 95.

B: Martha I have a question about your leave of absence; was that maternity based?

T: Yes it was, I felt like I wanted to continue my career and also have a family, and I was very fortunate that my mother-in-law lived across the street from the high school, so she and her helpers could take care of the baby, so I was close by, I could even go home at lunch and so on. But that was my choice.

B: I ask about the maternity base because I didn't know that anywhere was very cognizant of a mother's need to take a break and then come back to work at a later time; and for 69 that seems kind of unusual.

T: Actually it was 67. I had a good rapport with my superintendent and my principal and I just asked for a leave from October.

B: Was that a common thing?

T: No, not really; thinking about my background, I don't know of any time when I was teaching in Birmingham that someone took off and had a baby and came back. And until that time I didn't know of anyone in the Jacksonville city system. That's not to say that it didn't happen, because there were many many teachers there who had had children, but some of them were older, and I was one of the younger ones at that time.

B: So it was kind of unusual then.

T: Perhaps, so, perhaps so.

B: Not the same emphasis that we like to think we have today with maternity leave and stuff like that.

T: That's true; we even have Pampers parties to welcome our teachers back. It's a little different.

B: When you got to the Jacksonville system did you move building at all - were you always in the same location?

T: No - are you familiar with the Jacksonville setup? There is a main building and there is a building parallel to that in the back. I taught Chemistry and Physics, Biology and General Science in the main building, and then when I was vocational counselor, I was in the main building also, but in a different location, I was upstairs one time and then downstairs. Then later when I returned as a junior high counselor in 75 I was in the so called new building which was parallel and in back of the main building. Later on all the offices were moved to the main building and I got a suite there up until the time I retired.

B: Is there any female who would stick out in your mind as an outstanding educator? Perhaps an example for us here in Jacksonville?

T: Yes very much so but none who taught me are living today. There are two female educators who are teaching at Jacksonville State that I feel are making a very positive impact on the lives of their students today. One is Dr. Jane Brown, who teaches Elementary Education and the other is Dr. Margaret Pope who teaches in the Physical Education department. Both of these women are truly interested in their students not only as students but as human beings. I hear this from the student's side rather than from actually being in the classrooms. They both go outside of their way to help outside of class and inside of class. They keep up with the progress of their students and informally track their student's progress when completing their classes and graduating and even into the work force. Both of these women are married, they have children; interestingly enough they are both athletic, both Dr. Brown and Dr. Pope run and I've seen Dr. Brown bicycling. They've continued their education, both of them having terminal degrees. I think both of them are real role models for our women today.

B: In the question of Progressive Education; when I say Progressive Education I mean - given the early 1900's and the accent on life experience; education taught that we have some social concerns; that as a society we need to address those concerns in order to support each other. But people who became socially involved were kind of branded and given a hard time as being contrary to social order. I was wondering if you had any insight to that, specifically in regards to women educators?

T: No, not really, but let me tell you what I think of progressive education. When I think of it, I think of it as one of those teaching methods that takes as their starting point children's own aptitudes and interests and encourage them to follow their own investigations and lines of inquiry. I always think about an example that was given. Says if Johnny wants to climb on the roof, let him climb on the roof. When I think of the term progressive education, that's what I think of. I don't believe I've ever had a course as boring as one in which progressive education was incorporated. It was one of those courses that would turn a persons thinking processes completely opposite to anything mentioned in class. For this reason, I don't think I ever thought about it again until you mentioned it. Seems like to me, the term that you have used, would be one like the reform movement, when legislation was sought at the national, state, and local levels to improve the democratic processes, working conditions, welfare, and that kind of thing. I can't remember a lot in class about this being mentioned. I'm sure that it was, but however, as with many college students, I was interested in something only long enough to get a grade and then

I promptly forgot about it. So, I'm afraid I can't help you there.

B: It almost seems like permissive education.

T: Right. And it was quite a controversy about it at the time.

B: If I can jump back to the maternity leave issue, do you know if there were facilities available for teachers who had just had babies, for instance? When has that, or has it ever become an issue in Jacksonville for daycare facilities and child care?

T: In the early days, when I began teaching, women usually quit the classroom until their babies were old enough for someone to take care of, probably [go to] school. Of course, things are quite different now and babysitters were lined up far in advance of birth and when doctors OK that it's alright to go back to work. As many mothers do today. Today, in Jacksonville, our teachers were definitely welcomed back, but as far as facilities at the school system or a regular day care center in the city of Jacksonville, I really don't know of any. The Children's House was one of the first that I know of that would even care for children. But that's not to say that they were not there. These were just [organized]... When the Children's House began, it was not called the Children's House, but Mrs.[Nancy] Reid opened it in her home. She was a very close neighbor of mine. Our children went to her; I was very fortunate because they could walk.

B: Generally, it's very difficult to find child care in Jacksonville. Down at the Children's House, at Creative School, women go down there and register their fetuses.

T: That's what I understand. But I didn't have that problem. As I say, I was so fortunate and my mother-in-law was never too busy to take care of the children. And since she lived across the street from the high school, it really worked out well for me. Now that's a rather unusual situation, too. Our girls are both adults now. They still remember the wonderful times that they had with their grandmother. She gave them the love and attention and so on but she also gave them responsibility and learning experience that they've never forgotten. If she were giving a tea, they would be there to help. And consequently, I think that they learned social skills far beyond their ages.

B: If I were to seek out a common view, or what you thought was the common happening for child care, do you think most educators families' supported them in going back to work or would the family kind of drive them to stay home and raise the children through their high school years? Was there a trend?

T: That's hard for me to imagine a wife and mother not having

the support of her husband and family if she continued teaching. Contrary to some novices opinion, I think teaching is stressful, I think it's hard work, but extremely rewarding. I think there's no such thing as three months vacation, maybe three months without pay is more like it. But, it is hard for me to see how a teacher could go back and not have the support of family and husband.

B: You couldn't go back without that support?

T: I don't feel like I could. And even though I had it I just felt like I needed to stay home. That was important to me at the time when my children were ...

B: Was there anybody in your experience maybe who couldn't go back and teach because they were kind of alone and they had to bear that burden alone as a woman?

T: No I can't. I can't think of an incidence in our school system. I don't remember of that happening.

B: I wonder maybe if that's relative to the size of the town and the closeness of the people. Would you expect for a person not to be able to come back in a bigger place, say like Birmingham? Would there be more trouble there or concern?

T: No, no, it seems to me in a town the size of Birmingham they would have more help and maybe "new" which I was not, I was born in Birmingham, so that would not have been a problem for me because I knew people. But perhaps someone who was new, it could have been a problem for them because you don't want to just leave your child with anybody. I don't know of daycare centers even twenty years ago. I'm sure there were daycare centers. But it's certainly nothing like what some of the companies have today where they actually have the children on the floor where some of the employees are working.

B: Since you were both a counselor and a teacher, obviously you had common experience with other women educators. My question would be do you know how, as a woman, these ladies felt in relation to their male counterparts. Did you detect any kind of trend of favoritism or would anyone try to make you feel inadequate, or brow beat, or ask for deference or something like that because of your sex?

T: I can't speak for everyone, but I never did feel that I was subordinate or superior. There were many times when I wished I had a broader knowledge of subject matter to keep up, but I always felt that I was a professional teacher, just as I felt that men were professional teachers. So, to your question, no.

B: Did you detect a difference in treatment?

T: I don't think so.

B: Was feminism an issue in school? Were women educators likely to take up a feminist banner.

T: I don't think so. In our school it didn't happen. If it was an issue, I was never aware of it.

B: It was about the same time as your break too, the late sixties to 75 that feminism became a national issue and very apparent. But women educators were still very cognizant of being women, I'm sure.

T: I think you'll find the majority of teachers at that time were women. Men were pursuing other areas and we had very, very few men teachers, particularly in the elementary schools and high schools had their coaches, and so on.

B: Do you think there would be a parallel between the amount of women in school and maybe the success of feminism or attention to women's issues? If women are the educators, then I think that would help to imbue their pupils with some sort of sensitivity to women's issues. I mean, that's just a thought. Would you kind of agree with that?

T: Not really, but that could be because of the subject matter that I taught. Since I was in science, I can't see that there was any...

B: It wasn't really relevant, one way or another?

T: No, you have your Madam Curie and your Rutherfords, and your Einsteins, and so on. But I don't know that ...

B: It's probably more an english or a history...

T: Probably so; you go to your own classroom during the day and you just don't have time to interact with your teachers, you know, find out what they're doing in the classrooms, per se, now as much as.

B: Do you find that a persons sex would make them more capable or gracious in granting grades? Was one softer than the other?

T: I think grades a lot of times depend on the students, their interests, their backgrounds, their habits, their subject matter. Sometimes it could it depend on the course and it's not whether the course was taught by a male or a female. I think that the grades at my school were fair.

B: Were your principals all male, at the high school? Did you ever have a female?



T: At Jacksonville High School, when I first started teaching there, we had a combination superintendent and principal who was male. And then we had a female who was acting principal. She also taught advanced math classes, she was the senior class sponsor in addition to her principal duties. At the same time the principal of the elementary school here in Jacksonville was a female, and later, the school was named in her honor. [Mrs. Ernest Stone]

B: The acting principal at the high school, do you remember her name?

T: Yes, her name was Mrs. Jane Self.

B: Did bosses who were male expect deference; you answered that before. You said that you didn't feel or detect a specific trend of treatment, deference here.

T: I was never made to feel a difference was expected in a negative way. I knew who was boss and I respected those wishes. I worked with the present principal, Mr. McKay, for twenty years. I always thought he was a gentleman and an excellent principal. He always said "be fair, be firm, and consistent". That's what he told us in the classroom and that's the way he was a principal. And I think you always knew where you stood with him.

B: Starting early enough in the school system, had you ever detected a trend in the difference in pay between men and women? For instance, if there wasn't a stated deference trend, would people be paid different?

T: I don't ever remember discussing salary with another teacher. When I first came here, we didn't have a salary schedule that was published where you could figure your salary to the penny like you have today. I guess that salary was such a personal thing that it was never discussed with people. I do feel that there was equity in pay. I feel that way now, I don't always feel that it was that way. For example, when I first came here, I was told that I didn't need as much money as others who had a family, where I had a husband who was the breadwinner in my family. By that statement, I always felt that, for a short while, that I wasn't making as much as others in the same position. And this, as I say, was a long time before salary schedules were published and one could figure to the dollar amount in annual salaries.

B: But you were certainly working as hard.

T: Absolutely. I had a heavy class load and I had some rather difficult subjects. It was to me, the chemistry, physics and biology. Difficult subjects. I think things have a way of righting themselves. A simple thing that happened to me, I

changed jobs when I was within the system, when I was made the vocational counselor. My superintendent apparently failed to realize, and he did not admit this, that everybody in the system got a percentage raise, and I talked to the bookkeeper about it. My salary was the same after the first month. And she said "there is an error on that. Let me check on that". So I did not deposit the check. I think that what had happened, he had looked at the salary of someone before me and he gave me the same salary rather than including the increment. However, things did work out better. I think that once he realized that, he realized that there was an opening in the area that I really wanted to go into, the counselling, so he not only offered me that, with the increment, but he also included it as a twelve month job, rather than a nine month job. So, for me, it worked out much, much better in the long run. One other thing, later on when I came back, my superintendent forgot to write in that I was a twelve month person rather than a ten month person, so I had already worked those two months in the summer time for which I did not receive pay. I'm sure you're wondering why in the world did I do it. Today, I probably would have challenged it. But, I really respected my principal, my superintendent, I liked my job, it was good for me and I'm not sure now that on some of the instances I would have said it's OK.

B: And, apparently, it was something you wanted to do?

T: Oh, yes, I wanted to stay there. It was very good for me. But, as I say, everything worked out fine for me. I did get, as I say, the twelve month job, which certainly helps out with annual retirement pay and so on, so it worked out for me.

B: And that's on an accrual basis, for the amount of years you work?

T: This is something that's not happening today. This is something in the past and I have a very good rapport, I hope, with the superintendent's office.

B: We're very specific now about the amount of hours we work today.

T: No, I don't think we are specific about the number of hours we work. I think that, particularly in the counselling job, we're expected to be there during certain hours. As far as saying I get off at 3:30, that was not the case, because many times I would be there on Saturdays, I would be there on Sundays, I would be there at night, and often times, I would schedule conferences after people got off work at 4:30-5:00. It was salaried, but if I needed to take off and go to the dentist I didn't mind asking off; they were always very good about that. I put in more hours than...

B: Did you detect any kind of trend for preferential hiring practices? You said that in the grammar schools that there was a higher distribution ratio of women teachers. And in the high school, there was also a high distribution of women, but there were more men than in the grammar school, generally. Did you detect any kind of preferential hiring practices?

T: I don't really think so, none which I'm aware. But, on the other hand, I was not in the business of hiring or firing or evaluating. Seems like, to me, with the scarcity of teaching jobs today, I know you don't want to hear that, seems like I've heard of some very good students who are still looking for jobs in the teaching profession, that transcripts seem to weigh very heavily, interview, and also recommendations.

B: Do you think it was a cognizant effort by school systems to get women educators for grade schools, for grammar schools?

T: As I say, I had nothing to do with the hiring or firing. All I did was interview myself and was hired.

B: It just seems kind of fishy and I kind of wonder, if it was a cognizant thought process which actually said, maybe a lower threat environment for a child would be to be with a woman educator who was teaching him something because it would be a more passive transition from home to school.

T: Back in my own experience, our principal, when I was in school, was the only male. We had an assistant principal who was female in the elementary school and I went to a school where grades one through eight were in the same, then nine through twelve. I don't believe, even at the ninth grade level, I had a male teacher. The first male teacher I can remember having was a geometry teacher about the tenth grade level. But things have changed, for the better, I think. I look back at my children and some of their favorite teachers have also been male teachers.

#### SIDE TWO OF CASSETTE

B: Ma'am, we've been talking about the incremental pay system.

T: Actually, the equity in payment between male and female teachers, I really feel like, today, that salaries, for the most part, are equal. I don't think male or female has anything to do with it. I do feel like that some teachers, not necessarily male teachers, are given additional supplements. And many of these are coaches, and they are men, whereas I think that other teachers who sponsor things like student government or the annual sponsor of the newspaper sponsors, to my knowledge are not given these supplements. At least when I was an annual sponsor and newspaper sponsor, I was never given a supplement. And I do think that there are a lot of hours involved over and above your

regular teaching day. Now things could be different today and I guess this policy varies from school to school and system to system, depending on the money available for extra-curricular activities.

B: So, do you think it might be a partial result of the strength of someone's personality; if we are in a board meeting and we're all requesting the same amount of funds, could a very strong personality overshadow the person doling out funds?

T: I don't think it's that at all. I think it's just a matter of where our priorities are.

B: So, it's not a sexist perception?

T: No, I don't think so because we also have women coaches who also get supplements.

B: Moving on to the next question. There was an integration of black women as teachers into the high school. The reason for it was that racial integration had just been ordered by the Supreme Court. From previous sources that I've talked to, Martha, I had, for instance, Mr. Messer, there was a concern about the quality of learning of a black teacher who had been trained to lower standards could impart students in the classroom. And I was wondering if you had any insight into that?

T: I can only speak for Jacksonville High School and what I remember about those times. About a year or two before actual integration in the Jacksonville city system, a male counselor and I went to the Eastwood [Jacksonville Colored] school several times each week to lead group discussions with the students who were to come to Jacksonville High School. Consequently, I think, when the Eastwood school actually closed during the summer and those students came to our school in the fall, those students knew me and they knew him, they knew about our programs, they knew about our athletic facilities, they knew about our extra-curricular activities, and they were beginning to feel a part of the program. I don't know whether you know this or not, but the principal [Johnny Brown] of the Eastwood school was actually transferred to our school as an assistant principal and many of the teachers were transferred. One teacher [Elijah Slaughter] that I remember specifically who was transferred, is still teaching in our high school today. He is teaching social studies. I believe he has Alabama history at our school today. And I think, because of all these things, we at the high school, do not experience many of the problems that many other school systems have. I truly feel that we were all interested in the good of the individual and thought we could and taught in a way was in the best interest of the students and I think that they realized it too. I was there for a very short while after we actually integrated because I had worked with those students and

I wanted to make sure I was there at the beginning of school. But that's when I decided, my first retirement, and that's when I resigned to stay home with the girls. And that was in 1967.

B: So that 1967 was a year that the Jacksonville system actually put into effect the integration order?

T: I believe the Eastwood school was closed that summer. I remember going to the graduation at that time. I also remember I was the only white person at the graduation. I can't remember whether the other counsellor was there or not. But I felt like those were my children too, by that time and it was interesting. It was a little different than some of our graduation exercises. I didn't realize how many presents some of those graduating seniors got.

B: That must have been a neat time.

T: It was an interesting time, it surely was. And I think after a while, I didn't realize, anyway, I was more interested in the individual than I was in the color of the skin. And I still feel that way today.

B: There seems to be, speaking as a superior minded male around whom the world gravitates, was there a sort of feminine bonding between black female and white female after the schools became one?

T: Well we had a counsellor who go through the Eastwood school and then came to Jacksonville High School. I felt very close to her and I enjoyed working with her. She was a very professional person and she's still a counsellor at the elementary school today.

B: Do you think the bonds of sisterhood helped to break a racial stigma or a racial barrier at all?

T: I don't know how other people feel about it but I just feel like it's the individual, rather than the color of their skin. Sorry.

B: I was just thinking of the common experience. If a woman's common experience is that, I don't want to say men are very unreliable...men are very volatile, and sometimes that may result in a need for women to rely more on each other. And I was wondering if that need was bridged or was able to bridge a gap across race?

T: It possibly could be but I had never thought about it like that. But on the other hand, I still think very highly of the man [Mr. Slaughter] who is at the high school today. I think he is very good, I certainly think he is a good influence, not only

on the black males, but white males as well. And I know very definitely he takes a sincere interest in his students.

B: This whole conversation has been kind of roundabout. There are a bunch of little issues that we kind of picked apart and dissected individually and just spoke to them. I was wondering if you think, or if you thought, have I missed anything in the whole picture of a woman educator in the south or in Jacksonville. Is there something specific to your experience that you think should be addressed that I haven't alluded to.

T: Not really, except I was real curious as to why you didn't want to know a little bit more about my background. When you talked to me about doing this, you specifically mentioned the unique position as a counsellor and I feel like that I was in the classroom for a long time too and I was just curious as to why you were not interested in my background.

[Interviewer comment - I received Mrs. Tredaway's name from the Jacksonville City Schools as a recent retiree who was the High School counsellor. Before she became counsellor she taught in the school system. I assured her that though I wasn't familiar with her total role, it is still beneficial this research - she daily applied her prior experience as an educator and daily viewed student, parent and teacher, as a woman.]