

INTERVIEWEE BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Name: Barbara Thomas M/F  
 Address: 800 Mohawk Trail, Chatham  
 Phone number(s): 205 - 892-3359  
 Approximate age or date of birth: 1937 - (58)  
 Mother's Name: Buena Ethel Hogan Robinson  
 Father's Name: George Washington Robinson  
 Places lived and when: Talladega and Calhoun  
Counties in Alabama  
 Education: 12 yrs High School - 1 yr of college  
 Religion: Methodist as child - Same Southern Baptist now  
 Business, political and social memberships (past and present) Civitan Club  
 Present occupation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Former occupations: El Plant - Secretary - Housewife  
 Special Skills: Crafts  
 Major Accomplishments: Rearing two children  
 National Events in which interviewee has participated: Writing of  
letters to National leaders -  
 Local Events in which interviewee has participated: Writing letters  
to voice opinions  
 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: James Taylor  
 Additional information: \_\_\_\_\_

JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

TELEPHONE: (205) 782-5632

**Gift and Release Agreement:**

We Barbara Thomas and Cynthia W. Thomas  
(Interviewee) (Interviewer)

Do hereby grant permission to Jacksonville State University to copy the tape of the interview conducted at 326 Hillcrest Dr. on the date(s) of Oct. 28, 1995 for the oral history collection being compiled at Jacksonville State University.

This collection will be maintained by Jacksonville State University for research into the history of Northeast Alabama and the South. We further grant researchers permission to quote from the interview on this tape.

Barbara A Thomas  
(Interviewee's signature)

Date 10/28/95

800 Mohawk Jr  
(Address)

Opatchee, AL 36271

(205) 892-3359  
(Telephone)

Cynthia W Thomas  
(Interviewer's signature)

Date 10/28/95

326 Hillcrest Dr.  
(Address)

Anniston, AL 36206

205-820-9296  
(Telephone)

Cynthia W. Thomas

H7. 436

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Aug 17, 1937 *Barbara Thomas*

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Classie  
 1950s S. Ala  
 white  
 middle  
 class

George Wallace

- type - clear & easy to hear

- add place names where possible

Good

add ...

**CYNTHIA W. THOMAS  
HISTORY OF AMERICAN WOMEN  
DR. MARSHALL**

## Life of an American Woman

After a recent interview I discovered if ever a woman epitomized God, Home, Motherhood, and Apple Pie it would have to be Barbara Ann Robinson Thomas. Barbara was born August 18, 1937 , in Ironaton, Alabama. Ironaton is an old mining town in Talledega County. Soon after Barbara was born, her family moved to Munford, Alabama, where they raised cotton. Munford was a small town consisting of mainly farmers. Your neighbors did not live next door, they were usually a couple of miles down a winding dirt road. Family was very important for survival, actually family was vital for survival. Everyone worked together on a farm. Each person's attribution was very important.

Barbara had three half-brothers, and four sisters. During World War II, life changed for the Robinson family, as well as for most American families. Barbara's three brother's went to war, and her father went to Mobil to work in the shipyards. Therefore, Mrs. Robinson was in charge of the children and the farm. Women all over the country were taking over the roles of their husbands as head of the household. William F. Chafe wrote "Female participation in the labor force was essential to victory in the war (151)." Many women were leaving their homes for the very first time. With the men gone to war, women were encouraged to enter the work force, temporarily.

As for Barbara, she was too young to work in the cotton fields and recalls: "I remember playing in the big cotton baskets, but my older sisters remind me quite often how hard they had to work." Life was a struggle for the Robinson family, the son's sent their allotment check home, and Mr. Robinson sent home what was left of his pay after his booze was purchased. Barbara remembers that they were very poor, but she did not realize it at the time because she knew of no other way of life. As a matter of fact, it was 1945 when Barbara had her first ice cream cone. Her brother was home on leave and took her to Anniston, where she enjoyed her first ice cream cone!

As Barbara entered young adulthood, she met her husband Howard on a blind date. They soon married and lived in Jacksonville, Alabama. Howard was a student at Jacksonville State University and worked part-time at A&P food store.

student at Jacksonville State University and worked part-time at A&P food store. Barbara laughed when she recalled thinking they were rich , because Howard made twenty-five dollars a week.

As our interview continued, I noticed that everything was now we or just him. It was as if she became his shadow and lost part of herself. But, from her point of view they were now one and he was the leader. Barbara told me she liked being taken care of. After Mr. Thomas graduated Barbara attended college for a while, but decided later that it interfered with motherhood to much.

In 1969, Mr. Thomas became principal of Saks High School, the first year of desegregation . They were new to the community and Mr. Thomas wanted everyone to know that he cared about all the children. Barbara remembered going to the Black community with her husband to talk with them about school and how Mr. Thomas would never treat them any different than he did the white children. This went over well with the Blacks, but many of the white's were very upset with Mr. Thomas for talking with them. The first year at Saks was a terrible experience for the Thomas family, rocks and coke bottles were thrown in the windows of their home.

In these years, many women were working outside of the home. Barbara did community work and helped at the school. Barbara believes that the reason for the downfall of our children today is because so many mothers work outside the home. She believes that a woman's place in the home to care for her husband and children. This is important to her because it is Biblical and that means it is true!!

I asked Barbara what major event in history had an impact on her that she remembers well. Barbara answered " I will never forget when President Kennedy was killed, I saw it on TV and it will always be something that I will remember.

Barbara considers herself to be very independent on her husband, but she takes care of all the business besides working outside of the home. He would not know how to balance a checkbook or cook a meal on his own. As the old saying goes "Behind every man, there is a good woman."

## WORKS CITED

Chafe, W. (1972). The American Woman. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.