

PERSONAL CHRONOLOGY OF AUDREY CURRAN

- 1926- Born in suburb of Indianapolis, Indiana, October 25, the fourth of seven siblings
- 1930- Great Depression
- 1933- President Franklin Roosevelt began New Deal programs when elected
- 1941- Pearl Harbor attacked, the beginning of World War II
- 1944- Graduated from Arsenal Technical High School in January, earning an "A" average in three and one-half years
- Married in February, after graduation, daughter born in December
- 1945- Son born
- Brother returned from Japanese prison camp in serious condition; two brothers-in-law did not return
- 1946- Began work as legal secretary in prestigious law firm due to high school record in secretarial courses
- 1952- Husband transferred to South Bend, Indiana
- Employed as secretary to History Department at Notre Dame University
- 1954- Transferred back to Indianapolis and returned to work in law office
- Brown v. Board of Education upheld unanimously by U.S. Supreme Court; Earl Warren was Chief Justice and declared "separate but equal" was unconstitutional; Riots occurred
- 1957- Civil Rights Act signed by President Eisenhower to end desegregation; however, he made no personal opinion; Southern states violently opposed it as did husband and friends of Audrey Curran
- Riots occurring due to the crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas
- 1962- Moved to Gulfport, Mississippi at end of school year and employed by law firm
- Riots were deadly due to the James Meredith case
- 1963- Moved to Philadelphia, Mississippi and began college with daughter at East Central Junior College in Decatur

- 1964- Son enlisted in the Marines and was wounded in Viet Nam
Riots occurring due to Freedom Summer
- 1965- Began college at Ole Miss (120 miles from Philadelphia) and
completed requirements for B.A. in a year and a half;
Inducted into Kappa Delta Pi Sorority with 3.7 GPA
- 1967- In January, began teaching 1st grade Choctaw Indians on the
reservation under the Bureau of Indian Affairs
- 1969- Returned to Ole Miss for Masters Degree in Guidance and
Counseling with 4.0 GPA
- 1970- Moved to Beaufort, South Carolina, and taught mandated
integrated High School for three years; School was on double
sessions the entire time, and it was hectic and chaotic.
- 1973- Returned to Indianapolis to be near daughter

Employed as Guidance Counselor at Stonybrook Junior high
School (grades 7-9) in Warren Township; It was not
integrated

Sponsored Honor Society for seven years
- 1978- Son-in-law moved to Gadsden, Alabama, with her daughter and
grandchildren

Her son was enlisted into the navy
- 1980- Moved to Rainbow City, Alabama, to be near her family

Employed as substitute and short-term teaching assignments;
taught at Gadsden Business College and New World Business
College; Both were integrated, as the Gadsden city schools
were, however, the County schools had few blacks attending
- 1984- Employed as Counselor at Westminster Christian School
- 1986- Became Executive Director of Thirteenth Place (Run-a-way
Youth Shelter) that provided for all races
- 1992- Accepted employment as Executive Director of Etowah
Community Food Bank after serving on the Board of Directors
for two years
- 1996- Presently still Executive Director and also serves on the
boards of Board of Directors of Mental Health Association,
Council of United Way Agency Executives, Etowah Council of
Community Services, and the Federal Emergency Management
Agency (FEMA)

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS DURING THE LIFE OF AUDREY CURRAN

- 1921- Veterans' Bureau created
- 1923- Harding dies; Coolidge assumes presidency
- 1924- Dawes Plan for international finance
U.S. troops leave the Dominican Republic
- 1928- Hoover defeats Smith for presidency
- 1929- Stock-market crash
- 1932- Reconstruction Finance Corporation established
Roosevelt defeats Hoover for presidency
- 1933- Bank Holiday
The Hundred Days: CCC, FERA, HOLC, AAA, NRA, PWA, and TVA
Twentieth Amendment (changed calendar of congressional sessions and date of presidential inauguration)
Twenty-first Amendment (prohibition repealed)
- 1934- FHA established
- 1935- WPA established
Social Security Act
CIO organized
- 1936- Roosevelt defeats Landon for presidency
- 1938- Fair Labor Standards Act
- 1939- World War II begins in Europe
- 1940- FDR defeats Willkie for presidency
- 1941- Japan attacks Pearl Harbor
United States declares war on Japan
Germany declares war on the United States
Randolph plans black march on Washington
Fair Employment Practices Commission established
- 1942- Congress of Racial Equality founded

- 1943- Race riot in Detroit
- 1944- Roosevelt defeats Dewey for presidency
- 1945- Roosevelt dies; Truman assumes presidency
- Germany surrenders
- Atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- Japan surrenders
- Spock publishes The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care
- United Nations established
- 1946- Employment Acts creates Council of Economic Advisers
- 1948- Truman defeats Dewey for presidency
- 1949- NATO established
- 1952- United States explodes first hydrogen bomb
- Eisenhower defeats Stevenson for presidency
- 1954- Brown v. Board of Education
- 1955- Montgomery civil rights boycott begins; emergence of Martin Luther King, Jr.
- 1956- Eisenhower defeats Stevenson for presidency
- 1957- Postwar peak of U.S. birthrate
- 1958- NDEA authorizes loans and grants for science and language education
- 1960- Kennedy defeats Nixon for presidency
- Sit-in movement for civil rights begins
- 1962- Pressure from Kennedy results in a rollback of steel prices
- 1963- Civil rights march in Washington
- Kennedy assassinated; Johnson assumes presidency
- 1964- Johnson defeats Goldwater for presidency
- War on poverty begins

Twenty-fourth Amendment (abolishing poll tax in federal elections) ratified

Civil Rights Act

1965- Voting Rights Act

Race riots in U.S. cities

1968- Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., assassinated

1970- Kent State and Jackson State incidents

Questions I asked the interviewee

1. We have had desegregation in our schools since I began. Do remember when integration began?
2. What does desegregation mean? Just exactly what does it mean to you?
3. Was the high school my mother and uncle attended prepared to integrate?
4. When did you first become involved with desegregation?
5. What happened when James Meredith enrolled at the University of Mississippi?
6. After moving to Philadelphia, Miss. were you able to continue as a legal secretary?
7. What type of discrimination was going on?
8. If you acquired prejudice other than being raised that way, who did you acquire it from?
9. How were schools, churches, and public places arranged with blacks and whites in Mississippi?
10. When you were enrolled in college with mom, how were you treated?
11. Were you able to complete East Central Junior College?
12. What did you do then?
13. Were you able to find a teaching job right away?
14. Did you know anything about the Indians living on reservation?
15. When did you become aware of racial problems in your area?
16. What happened in Alabama after Governor Wallace made his famous proclomation?
17. Were there other states having problems in desegregating schools?
18. Did you return to Mississippi?
19. Why did you not teach the Choctaw Indians more than a year?

20. Was there any racial problems in Indiana while you were with my mother?
21. Were you able to return to Ole Miss after spending summers in Indiana?
22. Why did you move to South Carolina?
23. Was school in session on the first day according to the mandate by federal government?
24. What shift did you teach at the high school?
25. What was your assignment when school opened under such drastic circumstances?
26. How well did the merging of three high schools proceed?
27. In what way was in complete havoc?
28. Was there disruptive behavior by the students the first day?
29. Was there busing involved?
30. How long did the hostilities last?
31. Did you see mixed races together?
32. How did the teachers, black and white, accept this merger?
33. How did the students get along?
34. If you were prejudiced, how did you teach blacks and whites together?
35. How did your black students treat you as a white teacher and being from the north?
36. How did the other teachers function?
37. In the classrooms where some white teachers and some black teachers taught to their own race, was there any interaction between the students?
38. How long did this last?
39. Was it difficult for you?
40. How long did you remain in South Carolina?
41. Did you enjoy Beaufort while you were there?
42. How did you go about sharing an office and classroom during those years?

43. Were there any other black counselors?
44. Why did you leave Beaufort High School?
45. How long did Beaufort remain on double sessions?
46. What did you do when you moved from Beaufort?
47. When did you begin teaching at Stonybrook?
48. Did any blacks attend there?
49. Did you have any contacts with the blacks?
50. Did you live alone all that time?
51. How long did you teach at Stonybrook?
52. Why didn't you teach longer if you really enjoyed it?
53. Did you remain in Indianapolis, IN. then?
54. Were you able to find a teaching job in Alabama?
55. Have you worked anywhere else in this area?
56. Did Thirteenth Place accept other races?
58. Are you working anywhere now?
59. Do you work with any blacks?
60. Are you aware of discrimination in any of the schools you've taught in this area?
61. Is there any school still harrassing the black students?
62. What do you believe the future wil bring in the way of easing the tensions of desegregation in our area?
63. Has there been anything else?
64. Do you believe schools will remain integrated?
65. Do you feel integration or segregation is best for the State of Alabama in the future?

Interviewee Background Information

Name: Audrey B. Curran
Address: 109 Myrtle Drive, Rainbow City, AL 35906
Phone Number(s): (205) 442-3430
Approximate age or date of birth: October 1926
Mother's name: Stence Dean Baker Nalley
Father's name: Chester O. Baker
Places lived and when: Indianapolis, Ind. (1926-1962); Gulfport and Philadelphia, Miss. (1962-1967); Beaufort, S.C. (1967-1972); Jacksonville, Ind. (1972-1980); Rainbow City, AL (1980 to present)
Education: B.A., M.Ed. plus 49 hours, University of Mississippi

Religion: Christian Church
Business, political and social memberships (past and present): National Education Association; Mental Health Association; United Way Activities
Present occupation: Executive Director, Etowah Community Food Bank
Former occupation(s): Director of 13th Place, Teacher and Guidance Counselor, Legal Secretary
Special skills: Working with others
Major Accomplishments: Completing college; Elected to Hall of Fame in junior college; remaining gainfully employed.

Local events in which you have participated: United Way activities; Mental Health Association; Etowah Community Services; Food Drives for the Hungry
State and/or regional events in which you have participated: Conferences and workshops for run-a-way youth shelters; Fair South West District -- Montgomery, AL., Athens, Ga.
National events in which you have participated: Conferences in Washington, D.C. and Indianapolis, Ind. for youth shelters (McKinley Act); and Mental Health Association
International events in which you have participated: Teaching schools with N.E.A. in Japan, London, U.S.S.R. (with briefing and de-briefing) and other countries.
Natural born U.S. citizen? (Yes) No
Naturalized Citizen: Yes/No Date:
Country from which you emigrated:
Documents, photographs, and artifacts which are in your possession:

Individuals you recommend who might be candidates for an oral history interview:

Additional information: Moving to the Gadsden area shortly after my daughter and her family did was a difficult decision; however, I've been blessed with my grandchild here.

Gift and Release Agreement:

We Audrey B. Curran and Deborah R. Holman
(Interviewee, print) (Interviewer, print)

do hereby give and grant to Jacksonville State University, all literary and property rights, title, and interest which we may possess to the audio or video recording(s) and transcript(s) of the interview(s) conducted at 109 Myrtle Drive, Rainbow City, AL on the date(s) of November 2, 1996 for the oral history collection being compiled by the Jacksonville State University Library.

Audrey B. Curran
(Interviewee's signature)

Address 109 Myrtle Drive, Rainbow City Date November 2, 1996

Phone (205) 442-3430

Deborah R. Holman
(Interviewer's signature)

Address 109 Myrtle Drive Date November 2, 1996

Rainbow City, AL 35906

Phone (205) 442-3430 (205) 442-2883

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction
 - Desegregation and it's meaning
 - When desegregation began
 - Desegregation in Indiana
- II. Gulfport, Mississippi
 - The case of James Meredith
- III. Philadelphia, Mississippi
 - Omom going back to college
 - Career- teaching Choctaw Indians
 - Governor Wallace shot
 - Desegregation- were other states experiencing it?
 - Civil Rights Activists missing
- IV. Visiting Indians
 - Visiting schools
 - Returning to Ole Miss and completing her masters in education
 - Moving to South Carolina
- V. Beaufort, South Carolina
 - Desegregation
 - Beaufort High School
 - Merging of three schools
 - Students and teachers and how they dealt with the merge
 - Omom's outlook on the merge
- VI. Returning to Indiana
 - Career at Stonybrook
 - The change of school environment
 - Moving to Gadsden, Alabama
- VII. Gadsden, Alabama
 - Career
 - Teaching and the difference here.
 - Director of 13th Place (runaway and youth shelter) and the problems the children had in school.
 - Director of Etowah Community Food Bank.
 - Meeting with Floyd Donald about desegregation.
 - Discrimination in the schools that Omom taught in.
 - Your views of future desegregation.
 - Former Governor Wallace making headlines again.

THE CHAOS OF DESEGREGATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 freeing slaves. The period which followed was hailed as the First Reconstruction although nothing was done to alleviate the practice of our country's majority belief that "separate but equal" schools were correct. The black race continued to struggle against injustice and equality.

Committees were appointed and laws were passed; however, it was not until 1946 that President Harry Truman appointed a competent group of Americans as members of the President's Committee on Civil Rights. This Committee presented their report to the President the following year. It included "The description of the condition of the Negro community in 1947....serves as a useful starting point in any account of the civil rights movement."¹ Even after World War II, the report stressed lynching and police brutality along with voting rights and the restrictive educational opportunities for the black race.

Little was done about the recommendations made by the President's Committee Report. Legally-enforced segregation had been the precedent since the Reconstruction era. In many states it was generally illegal for blacks to attend the same schools as whites; attend theaters patronized by whites, eat or sleep in

¹Leon Friedman, The Civil Rights Reader, (Walker and Company, 1967), 2.

hotels, restaurants, or public halls frequented by whites. It was also an offense for whites to attend black schools and similar places. The federal government tolerated this aspect even though it had full authority to eliminate it.²

There was very little improvement made after the President's Report; however in 1954 the case of Brown v. Board of Education Topeka, Kansas, was unanimously upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States. Judge Earl Warren was Chief Justice and declared, "separate but equal doctrine laid down by the Supreme Court sixty years before had no basis in the Constitution."³ This ruling was akin to a bomb dropping on the entire country for it was acknowledged most lives would be affected. The court invalidated laws that required racial segregation in the public schools. The blacks believed the decision would unlock the door to their rights as citizens, and it was thought to be a threat to the way of life, especially to white Southerners.

Governor Folsom reminded the people of Alabama, "When the Supreme Court speaks, that's the law."⁴ Alabama Governor Folsom further told the Alabama Education Association at its annual meeting in 1957, "Due to high court rulings of recent months, as well as more to come, that we always hear more noise from those who are guided by blinded prejudice and bigotry than is ever the

²Ibid., 16.

³Reed Sarratt, The Ordeal of Desegregation, (Harper and Roe, 1966), 2.

⁴Ibid., 4.

case with those who try to think through and be fair in their approach. If there ever was a time for the American educational front when we needed wisdom and tolerance and objective thinking it is certainly now."⁵

The eleven old Confederacy states were determined to preserve segregation in the public schools. All eleven Southern states amended or repealed their compulsory school attendance laws, so that no white child would be compelled to attend school with black children. In some states it became a misdemeanor to teach a desegregated class. "Any teacher who served in a desegregated school faces loss of certification".⁶

Little or nothing towards integrating public schools was done. There was no decree that required immediate desegregation of the schools. This was widely regarded as a victory for the South.

Finally, in 1957, a crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas, occurred. It proved the federal government would not tolerate defiance of federal law by any state.⁷ When Orval Faubus of Arkansas was running for re-election as Governor, he predicted that "any attempt to force integration on an unwilling district will result in consequences which will be terrible for our people". He further promised to give all the help he could "to any school district which wants to resist the abandonment of its

⁵Ibid., 28.

⁶Ibid., 11.

⁷Ibid., 18.

segregated school".⁸

Governor Faubus ordered troops to surround Central High School, Little Rock, determined to prevent nine black teenagers from entering even though the Brown ruling stated black students had a right to attend integrated schools. President Eisenhower had a choice of sending in federal troops to protect the students or to allow a governor to defy the Constitution. The President ordered United States soldier troops to walk with black students at Central High School as they went from class to class the entire school year. Governor Faubus closed down all public schools the next year. However, the Supreme Court ruled that "evasive schemes" could not be used to avoid integration and Little Rock schools were finally opened to black and white students.⁹

The Arkansas case served as an example for President Kennedy to order federal troops to protect James Meredith as he registered to become the first black student to attend the University of Mississippi. Even though many whites openly supported the official defiance of integration laws by elected politicians.

Audrey Curran was living in Gulfport, Mississippi in 1962. All members of the law firm where she was employed were unanimously agreed Meredith would not be allowed to enroll. She stated "Governor Ross Barnett addressed the State's television

⁸Ibid., 19.

⁹Sara Bullard, Free at Last, Teaching Tolerance, 16.

audience several times and pledged Meredith would not be allowed to register. When Meredith was flown into Oxford and escorted to the campus, over a hundred deputy federal marshals and over 300 U.S. boarder patrolmen and federal prison guards escorted him to the campus. Riots occurred all over the state, which left several people dead, 20 marshals shot, and scores injured. But Meredith did become the first black student to register at Ole Miss. The entire state was in mourning."¹⁰

On September 30, 1962, President Kennedy televised a report to the nation that "Mr. James Meredith is now in residence on the Campus of the University of Mississippi..Americans are free, in short, to disagree with the law but not to disobey it.....".¹¹

After Meredith's forced enrollment at the University of Mississippi, Alabama Governor Wallace at Tuscaloosa captured the headlines of the nation. As a candidate, Wallace promised to "stand in the schoolhouse door" to bar any black who attempted to enter any white school in Alabama. He repeated the pledge many times after he took office..¹²

The University of Alabama was ordered to admit two blacks in 1963 beginning the summer term. On the day they were scheduled to enroll, Governor Wallace took his stand in the door of the registration hall on the campus. The commanding general of the federalized Alabama National Guard asked Wallace to step aside,

¹⁰Audrey Curran. Taped interview. 2 November 1996.

¹¹Friedman, 61-63.

¹²Sarratt, 61.

Wallace did without fanfare. The black students were enrolled with no violence or disorder. The governor had urged the people of Alabama to stay away from the campus. The scene was on national television.¹³ Other famous words of Governor Wallace were "segregation today, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever". Governor Wallace believed these words as well as many Alabama citizens. President Kennedy wired the Governor that he would use all necessary force to make sure that federal court orders would be followed. On June 11, 1963, President Kennedy made a nationwide television broadcast. Anthony Lewis of the NEW YORK TIMES called the speech "one of the great speeches in the history of the American Presidency".¹⁴

While many states complied with the law of the land and began integration to some extent, other Civil Rights movements were enacted which created additional riots. Birmingham was known as the South's most segregated city. The best schools and restaurants were closed to blacks along with better paying jobs. Terrorists had bombed 60 black homes and churches since World War II yet no one had been arrested. Martin Luther King was in Birmingham to lead anti-segregation marches and boycotts. Hundreds were arrested, including King. While in jail, King wrote his famous Letter from a Birmingham Jail which included, "freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must by

¹³Friedman, 64.

¹⁴ibid., 65.

demanded by the oppressed".¹⁵

During the summer of 1964, Freedom Summer was observed by hundreds of college students. Most of those recruited were from the North who publicized the campaign in rural Mississippi. The volunteers brought national attention to the repression and poverty of black people in Mississippi. From Meridian, three volunteers traveled to Philadelphia, Mississippi.¹⁶ Audrey Curran was living in Philadelphia at the time and attending East Central Junior College. From the interview, the following is recalled:

"As I was leaving for my 35-mile trip to East Central, I noticed a helicopter circling Philadelphia and how odd it seemed. I had almost forgotten the incident until an instructor asked what I had done with the three young Civil Rights activists who were missing after they had been arrested for speeding and placed in the Neshoba County Jail. When I returned home from school we were visited by FBI agents from Atlanta who questioned me about what I had seen and heard Sunday night. Since our apartment building was next to the Neshoba County Police Station, the agents were sure I had seen and witnessed something. However, we had attended a movie on the other side of the square. It was serene and quiet and my husband even commented on how peaceful it seemed. The FBI agents stated that was hard to believe. Their attitude seemed to be one of ridicule and disbelief, perhaps because it was obvious I was a Yankee. They stated the three could possibly have been kidnapped, perhaps tortured, or murdered. This seemed unreal to me even though I was aware the entire area was very prejudiced. The search continued, but it was some time before their bodies were found. They had been murdered and buried on some farmland owned by the father of one of the young ladies I often drove to school. He was a member of the Klan. Months later, after several Klansmen provided information to the FBI, the U.S. Justice Department called a federal grand jury and won indictments against 19 men for murder. Neshoba County Sheriff Lawrence Rainey and Deputy Cecil

¹⁵Bullard, 22.

¹⁶ibid., 64.

Price were among those indicted. In October 1967, seven Klansmen and Deputy Price were found guilty of civil rights violations and sentenced to prison terms from three to ten years. Three defendants were freed by a hung jury, and three were acquitted, including Sheriff Rainey".¹⁷

This became one of the most widely publicized atrocities of the entire Civil Rights movement.¹⁸

Periodic outbursts of violence attracted the biggest headlines but the greatest battles of school desegregation were between state legislators and federal judges. These occurred in the legislative halls and in the courtrooms.¹⁹ Many states observed the law of the land and local school boards integrated, or made plans to do so. However, most legislators in the eleven states of the old Confederacy were determined to preserve segregation in the public schools. In the Deep South states of Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, the rallying cry was, "Never!"²⁰ Alabama, Louisiana, and South Carolina refused to abandon their stand until force to do so by court order.

Alabama State Senator Sam Englehardt said, "As far as I am concerned, abolition of segregation will never be feasible in Alabama or the South. No brick will ever be removed from our segregation walls".²¹ However, Alabama and North Carolina cut

¹⁷Audrey Curran. Taped interview. 2 November 1996.

¹⁸Bullard, 68.

¹⁹Sarratt, 32.

²⁰ibid., 36

²¹Sarratt, 31.

the patterns for the pupil assignment acts. In the Alabama act, which was widely copied, it included available room and teaching capacity, transportation, students' scholastic aptitude, psychological qualifications, effect of the admission of the pupil on the academic progress of others, possibility or threat of home environment of the pupil, morals, conduct, health and personal conduct of the pupil. This procedure was designed to discourage and to hold race mixing in the schools to a minimum.²²

Ten years after the Brown decision, only 2.3 percent of school populations in white southern schools were black. President Lyndon signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which permitted the Department to bring suit "for the orderly achievement of desegregation in public education".²³ In addition, the Office of Education of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare was responsible for drawing guidelines for desegregation. HEW also had the power to punish school segregation by terminating federal funds.²⁴ Many plans for school desegregation were drawn in southern states to remain eligible for federal funds, and many law suits were filed. In Alabama, United States v. Montgomery County Board of Education, the court ordered "...that Montgomery, Alabama must work to achieve racial ratios of faculty at each school that reflected the racial ratio of teachers in the school district as a whole

²²ibid., 32.

²³J. Harvey Wilkenson III, From Brown to Bakke, 1979, 102.

²⁴ibid., 106.

(three whites to two blacks)".²⁵ Montgomery actions encouraged many other school districts in Alabama to follow this procedure.

In the late sixties, Alabama schools were integrated to some extent. Prejudice continued and partially existed. According to Floyd Donald in the oral interview, the Etowah/Gadsden area integrated in 1968-69. There was little violence since local school boards closed the two black high schools and the black elementary schools. Students and teachers were forced to attend previously all-white schools, but they did have the option to choose. He said, Gadsden is a racist area,"²⁶ and believes it will continue to be for another decade at least. Floyd also stated detention camps had been in use in Gadsden for several years. Enforcement officers used cattle prods and sent "trouble makers" to the camp. Consequently, members of the black race caused little trouble. Floyd is the owner of the black radio station in Gadsden and is a respected member in Gadsden. He was unable to get employment with any educational facility after the black schools were closed. With public busing not available in Gadsden, most black students attended the school nearest them. This has created several schools which have remained predominantly black in city schools. Few blacks attend the county schools since school buses do not accommodate their areas of residence.

²⁵ ibid., 118.

²⁶ Audrey Curran. Taped interview. 2 November 1996.

By the end of the sixties decade, most schools in our county were integrated to some extent. The southern states, however, continued to lag in carrying out the 1964 Civil Rights Act. South Carolina, as well as other states, received a mandate late in the summer of 1970 to integrate prior to the opening of schools for the new school year or suffer the loss of all federal money. Beaufort County School Systems did open as scheduled according to Audrey.

"While visiting a good friend in Beaufort, I contacted the Board of Education to see if there were any openings for a school counselor. I was living alone and was ready to leave Mississippi. I was hired immediately and I attended the teacher orientation. It was then I learned about the court order to integrate immediately--just a few days away".²⁷

All available personnel spent the week-end moving desks furniture. Teachers and students were to report to the previously all-white high school the following Monday. Two black high schools were merging with the white high school. Beaufort High was not large enough for teachers and students enrolled in three high schools, but the Board of Education planned on double shifts for the school year. The first shift was scheduled from 7:30 to 12:00 noon, with the second shift beginning at 1:00 p.m. to 5:30. Homeroom was scheduled from noon to 1:00 in the cafeteria for both sessions. No lunch was served to either shift. Eleventh and twelfth grade students attended in the mornings with ninth and tenth graders attending the afternoon sessions. Each shift had different teachers, counselors,

²⁷ibid.

principals, and other personnel. The first shift was her assignment and all offices and classrooms were shared by the shifts. Audrey was hired as a school counselor but taught Psychology one period each day to seniors. She also taught any class needing a teacher because of a teacher's absence, which was frequent. Each time there was an announcement, "all male teachers report to the breezeway"²⁸ students and teachers were aware there was a fight. The fights were usually between students from the black schools (one school had been in the county, and one from the city), but racial crises were not unusual at first. Confusion and disorder were rampant. The bus drivers endured racial slurs and disturbances more, and chaos reigned in abundance. For some of the students, the bus ride was 25 miles each way. Police cars often accompanied buses to and from school.

The hostile attitudes continued most of the school year, although by the Christmas holidays there was a lull in slurs, taunts, and fighting.

According to Audrey, when walking the halls, one could observe some white teachers teaching only to white students, and some black teachers teaching only to blacks. Black teachers resented the closing of their schools, and white teachers had difficulty in understanding learned speech patterns. Even podiums had been placed to face students of the same race as the instructor. This was done by the white teachers more than the

²⁸ibid.

blacks, for some teachers were quite verbal with their views on desegregation. Some were fired or placed on unpaid leave. The lack on communication between the races was apparent, and after three years of double session, Audrey returned to Indianapolis. Although her son was making the Military a career, her daughter had started a family.

The school system of the city of Indianapolis had been completely integrated while the Townships surrounding the city had not. White flight was apparent, as Stonybrook in Warren Township indicated. This school was professionally run, nicely furnished with carpeting, and crowded. After seven years, it was time to return South to be with her daughter and family again. My father, her son-in-law, had accepted employment in Gadsden.

In 1980, Gadsden City Schools had been completely integrated. Gadsden Business College and New World Business College serves all races well. Westminster Christian School had only two black students who had received scholarships. Substituting in city and county schools made it evident very few blacks were able to attend any of the county schools because of transportation needs according to Audrey. Busing for elementary school children was provided, but it affected only the blacks with freedom of choice available.

Audrey worked as Director of Thirteenth Place, a run-a-way youth shelter in Gadsden, and she said it required all available resources. This shelter served young people ages 12-17, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Blacks and whites were forced to live

together. All residents were compelled to attend school, even for a short-term stay. There were three shifts of counselors in addition to those who worked week-ends. Since she usually was responsible for enrolling and withdrawing residents from schools, prejudice was observed by administrators, teachers, and students. This position was even more hectic and chaotic than teaching, but rewarding. When Omom (Audrey) was director, I would spend a lot of time at Thirteenth Place with her. I noticed the tension between the blacks and whites but did not really understand it. I could get along with blacks but then again there weren't many blacks, if any, in my elementary school and even middle school and my high school there were just a few. After several years, it was necessary to leave to be readily available for grandchildren and activities.

However, being an active volunteer for several local agencies, a job needed to be filled with the Food Bank. She was persuaded into taking this job and it is a lot of work but she enjoys it.

The Etowah/Gadsden area remains somewhat biased in many ways. Reading the GADSDEN TIMES more extensively since receiving this assignment, one becomes that discrimination does still exist in Alabama and the Gadsden/Etowah area. Included are:²⁹

| <u>Date</u> | <u>Article Subject</u> |
|--------------|--|
| September 24 | "Magnet schools a success" Funded by U.S. Department of Education (\$5.7 million grant |

²⁹THE GADSDEN TIMES, September 24- November 15, 1996.

- for three years) Two goals--
 "To enhance and enrich
 educational programs and to
 impact a positive racial
 balance in the schools.
- September 30 "Private schooling is booming"
- October 9 Lurleen B. Wallace Award of
 Courage to be presented to first
 black graduate of University
 of Alabama.
- October 10 "New elementary school to get
 push" (would close an existing
 school) this would be built in
 the black neighborhood near the
 old Carver High School that was
 closed. It would be integrated
 but white students would have to
 be bused.
- October 11 Three key players in the stand
 in the schoolhouse door in 1963
 meet and try to put the past
 time. Governor apologized and
 said he had been wrong.
- October 17 On-going controversy
 about "No pass, No play. Some
 parents feel below average are
 accepted by teachers due to
 participation in sports.
- October 22 Citizens march for principal's
 suspension. Black student's
 allegation he was assaulted by
 the principal.
- October 22 Truce needed in education
 reform. Professional educators
 accused do not create an
 atmosphere of trust; unqualified
 teachers causing schools to
 drown in "a rising tide of
 mediocrity."
- November 11 A white ex-principal opposed
 mixed dating at a high school
 prom threatened to cancel prom
 if interracial couples attended.
 Had no Republican opposition

for superintendent.

November 11

Magnet schools hold open house for second year enrollment. A racial balance has not yet been achieved.

November 15

More than 150 parents, teachers and Community leaders attend Gadsden's magnet schools.

Indeed, the state of Alabama has come a long way with desegregation, and should continue progress in its quest for equal rights and justice.

Deborah Holmken

THE CHAOS OF DESEGREGATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEMS

For my oral interview I have chosen my grandmother who received her college degree 24 years after high school graduation. Having taught in four states, O'Mom[?] has had experiences beyond most educators. While teaching in South Carolina, the state was mandated to desegregate before a deadline--over a weekend. Television stations and newspaper publications went amuck with the enforced desegregation for many southern states. The University of Mississippi enrolled James Meredith, Little Rock enrolled a minority and Governor George Wallace stood at the door of the University to prevent desegregation, while the Birmingham police resorted to the use of bull dogs. Living in Alabama since 1978, O'Mom has seen changes and problems continue, and O'Mom continues her involvement in our area. For the past 14 years I have lived with my grandparents, and we have always discussed the topic of desegregation's outcome. . I will continue with my outline and interview in depth, especially Alabama's problems with this topic.

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court voted unanimously that separate but equal education in public schools was unconstitutional. This decision was made in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka citing civil rights laws. The court ordered that desegregation of public schools proceed with "all deliberate speed," and it became the law of the land. In the days, weeks, and years following this decision, heated, sometimes violent, arguments occurred over our entire country.

Now, more than 40 years after Brown. our county is faced with various organizations and individuals pressuring local officials to build a new segregated high school to retain "identity and culture."

Good topic

This is the checklist I will use when your assignment comes in. If any of the following are missing your grade will be lowered before I begin reading the paper. Be warned

1. A copy of the tape. _____
2. A copy of the historical chronology (typed). _____
3. A copy of the interviewee chronology (typed). _____
4. A copy of your prepared questions (typed). _____
5. A copy of your interviewee information sheet. _____
6. A copy of the tape release form, signed and dated. _____
7. A copy of the tape table of contents (typed). _____
8. A copy of the paper. _____

Your paper will be graded on the following:

1. Organization
(Is it organized in an effective manner.) _____
2. Style
(Clear, understandable) _____
3. Form
(Correct use of the language, bibliography, documentation, etc.) _____
4. Research
(Consulted appropriate primary and secondary sources--no encyclopedia or textbooks) _____
5. Fulfill the assignment
(How well did you do what I assigned.) _____

1980 - resident of AL.

~~Oral~~ - Racial Discrimination in public schools.

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT GUIDELINES

ALABAMA HISTORY

1. Contact a resident of Alabama who is willing to be interviewed. This may also be a former resident of Alabama who is willing to be interviewed on an Alabama topic.
2. Prepare a chronology sheet of events in Alabama history (and national events that had an impact on Alabama) from the 1920s to the 1970s. Be sure to include economic, political, and social events.
3. In consultation with the interviewee, decide what aspect of the person's life on which you wish to focus--what period of time, what events, etc.
4. Prepare a list of questions to guide you through the interview. These questions will help you think through the time period to be discussed and will aid you when conducting the actual interview.
However, do not let these questions limit the interview. Allow the interviewee to direct the course of the session as much as possible.
5. Do a 60-90 minute taped (cassette) interview.
6. Fill out the Interviewee Information Sheet neatly, in ink.
7. Have the interviewee sign the Release Form.
8. Prepare a personal chronology sheet of your interviewee's life to correspond with the historical chronology sheet you prepared prior to the interview. These must be typed.
9. Prepare a Table of Contents for the tape outlining the topics covered by the interview.
10. Using the taped interview, the chronology sheets, and other historical evidence (newspapers, books, articles, letters, etc.), write a 15-20 page typed, doubled-spaced paper on the aspect of your interviewee's life on which you have decided to focus. The 15-20 pages includes text, notes, and bibliography.

Please use quotes from the tape in your paper. Use Turabian endnote style