

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Brenda Cole Jones

COLLECTION: 4700.2665

IDENTIFICATION: resident of Mossville, Louisiana

INTERVIEWER: Stephanie Dragoon

SERIES: Mossville History Project - Field Interviews

INTERVIEW DATES: May 5, 2016

FOCUS DATES: 1960s-1990s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4622

Brenda Cole Jones born in 1954 to parents Joseph Cole, Senior and Ruthia D. Perkins Cole; family moved from Sulphur to Lincoln Heights subdivision of Mossville in 1956; father a truck driver, mother a homemaker and also a hairstylist for a short time; grandparents James Perkins and [Leada?] Vincent Perkins lived in Willow Springs area; has one brother, Joseph Cole, Jr. and two sisters, Yvonne Cole Hester and Deirdra Cole Green, both deceased; family moved to the area for housing opportunity; close to father's work, cement step company Como and LaFleur; earliest memories of Mossville; influx of new families in the sixties; father had children from a previous marriage, but until age of thirteen, she was the only child of that marriage; recreational activities as children included playing "across the track", games such as hopscotch and marbles, and the playground at the recreational center; Mossville a safe community where people helped each other and shared what they had; children could walk to school, and ate lunch at home; in 1976, she married and moved to Lake Charles because there were no houses for sale in Mossville; husband's family moved to Mossville in 1969; growing up, the area was an active one: some people had gardens, some had cattle, hanging laundry to dry, getting ready for school; families on her street would get together, mothers would drink coffee and watch the children play; brief description of childhood home; spent every Sunday and holiday at her grandmother's home; both her mother and grandmother loved to cook and share with others; noticed her generation started moving away after high school; went to Mossville from first to eighth grade, then graduated from Westlake High in 1972; teachers at Mossville strict, wanted you to stay focused; spelling bees; classroom discipline; she was an honor roll student, due in part to her mother's emphasis on education; played the clarinet and enjoyed staying busy with school activities; wiener roasts; parents' education; father went to the fourth grade, mother finished high school; Jones studied office administration at McNeese, then worked there; worked for several different industries in the area, retiring from Continental Oil Company; fond memories of crabbing and fishing with ladies from the neighborhood; local disk jockey, Bubba Lutcher, came to Mossville once a week to host "teen town" where teenagers could dance and socialize;

enjoyed sewing, taking pictures, and listening to music on her portable record player; popular music; talking about cute boys under the shade trees; attended Willow Springs Baptist Church, where her grandparents lived; typical Sunday; parents often gone, so she attended church with her grandfather; role of women in the church; mother enjoyed revivals; values her parents instilled in her; everyone treated as an equal; mother primary decision maker, as father was more laid back; husband Hayward's family from the Houston area; she has two children, but no grandchildren; moved back to Mossville for a short time in the '90s; to her, it was just the same; playing ball where Entergy had their high line; weddings in Mossville; receptions often held in family home; meals that bring back childhood memories; grocery stores; didn't have a garden, but her parents would buy meat deals; father would go squirrel hunting; grandmother would make quilts; not allowed to go to canteens often, because mother thought it wasn't safe to walk home in the dark; Paradise Club; club near their home called Cowboy Inn; couldn't get away with prohibited underage activity, since everyone knew each other; facing prejudice for the first time at Westlake High School; parents outside threatening black students with ropes; police at the school for several weeks trying to maintain order; father would drive through areas that still had "colored only" signs; remembers when the doctor's office in Sulphur did away with segregated seating areas; father a truck driver, delivered cement steps and later worked for Cesco and BFI hauling chemicals; community leaders; odors from the refineries; explosions at the plants; refineries have tried to become more community oriented; her family lived in the area of the first buyouts; thinks Condea Vista and Conoco worked to clean up the area; first buyouts by Condea Vista disappointed some because amount not what they were expecting; some able to sell their homes and get extra money, others were not; started hearing more about illnesses in the late 90s; same time when MEAN [Mossville Environmental Action Now] formed; doesn't know much about the group; job training offered by Conoco for Mossville residents; toxic chemicals dumped at Willow Springs facility; fond memories of Mossville as a tight knit community; landscape of the area completely different now, but she'll always have the memories.

TAPES: 1 (T4622)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 56 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 72 pages

PHOTOGRAPHS / PHOTOGRAPHER: Three photographs taken during interview, including a photograph of interviewer Dragoon. Photographer Rebecca Cooper.

OTHER MATERIALS: Biographical data form; Correspondence

RESTRICTIONS: as per ee's request, a small portion of the interview has been restricted