

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAMES: Catherine Carter Kraft and Maude Anne Kraft Miller

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IDENTIFICATION: Catherine Kraft graduated from McKinley High School in 1930. Her daughter, Maude Miller, attended McKinley in 1952. McKinley High football coach J.L. Kraft was Catherine's husband and Miller's father.

INTERVIEWERS: Roderick Jones and Michelle Johnson

SERIES: McKinley High School Oral History Project – History of McKinley High School

INTERVIEW DATE: June 19, 1995

FOCUS DATES: 1920s-1950s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 939, Side A

Catherine Kraft is Maude Miller's mother; both born in Baton Rouge; Kraft's father went to school only through second or third grade, her mother graduated from Southern University; both of Miller's parents graduated from college; Miller's parents were educators; Kraft's mother taught and her father drove a cab; Kraft attended McKinley from 1927 through 1930; Miller only attended McKinley one year, then graduated from Southern University Laboratory School in 1955; familial feelings between students and staff at McKinley; Kraft still meets regularly with her McKinley class club; Miller felt solidarity with other students during 1952, her year at McKinley; Kraft married head of the science department of Bishop College in Marshall, Texas; husband was also coach who won almost every game; Mr. Kraft started at McKinley in 1926, the year the school opened; athletics at McKinley during segregation; McKinley got LSU's discarded athletic uniforms; Mr. Kraft was a great man who hasn't been recognized enough; Mr. Kraft often invited his McKinley High student athletes over for dinner, kept many out of trouble; Mr. Kraft's students obeyed curfew in case Kraft drove by and caught them; he disciplined his students but they loved him; student nicknamed "Money Waster"; recent meeting with Coach Mencer; Mr. Kraft's coaching tips; most adults were role models during Kraft's school days; harassment and insults from white kids passing them on the school bus; black kids had to walk to school; Kraft aspired to become a nurse; couldn't afford to go off to nursing school, and couldn't attend LSU because she was black, so became a teacher instead; first teaching job was in Natchitoches; taught in racist enclave of Dixie, Louisiana, for two years; sign in Dixie read: "Nigger read and run. If you can't read, run anyhow."; McKinley was not equal to Baton Rouge High; Miller emulated her teacher Mrs. [Elvina?] Williams; Mr. Kraft left McKinley in 1943 and

went into business as a merchant; left because he only made seventy-six dollars a month at McKinley; teachers were closer to students in Kraft's time at McKinley; McKinley offers more courses of study today; Miller says students today don't respect authority; Miller owns flower shop and drives school bus part time; on bus, she hears students making derogatory comments about their parents; discipline in Miller's youth; Kraft encourages students to reach for high goals; Miller thinks school administration has too much power now and rules are too flexible now; Miller thinks students need to be put back at center of education; suggestions for more people to interview; working out timeline for other early black high schools, such as Capitol High and Southern Lab.

TAPE: 1 (T939)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 38 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 23 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence; Interviewer's notes and word list

RESTRICTIONS: None