

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Dupuy H. Anderson

COLLECTION: 4700.1026

IDENTIFICATION: Baton Rouge native, participant in Baton Rouge Bus Boycott, civil rights activist, veteran of U.S. Air Force, retired dentist.

INTERVIEWER: Dawn Wallace

SERIES: McKinley High School Oral History Project - Baton Rouge Bus Boycott

INTERVIEW DATE: June 24, 1998

FOCUS DATES: 1930s -1960s, 1953

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1513, Side A

Anderson grew up in Baton Rouge in a mixed neighborhood; his elementary school was on the other side of town, the school near his home was for whites only; school books were out of date and in poor condition; graduated from McKinley High School in 1935 then attended Southern University; graduated from Southern and passed medical aptitude test but “struggled through medical school” because no state aid was available; enlisted with Air Force and assigned to Harding Army Air Field in Baton Rouge; turned away from service because African Americans could not hold rank over whites in the military; six months later Air Force Surgeon General inquires about his absence; witnessed and experienced hateful acts toward African Americans, assaulted by police in Atlanta because he didn’t know the train station was segregated; assigned to Air Corps Reserve, Air Force Strategic Command out of New Orleans; attempted to serve at Hotel Dieu Hospital but was turned away; he was angered and tried to resign, instead put in the Inactive Reserve Corps; tried to affiliate with Officer Reserve Corps at LSU with an African American friend, “we went to about two meetings and they changed the meeting place”; attention turned to the desegregation of schools after *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954; whites misinterpreted desegregation, “it wasn’t the idea of mixing and mingling,” African Americans simply wanted equal access to education; attended school board meetings and felt the needs of African Americans were not considered, everything was to benefit whites; confrontation with white woman at one meeting; necessary to get whites to sign a petition for a peaceful desegregation of schools in Baton Rouge; brightest African American students were chosen to integrate the schools; his daughter was one of six undergraduates that later integrated LSU; his daughter’s work as a teacher in Michigan; African American students often labeled behavior problems, slow learners; one of his sons was dyslexic, teacher didn’t care or try to help; put him in a new school with a teacher that helped him; he was successful in life because of a teacher that cared; feels strongly that African American children need to know their history; many young people think “that it was always this way” so they “should know what some people went through”; travelling to Atlanta to witness school desegregation there; teachers there were more involved, meeting with students and families before integration took place, making the process

smoother; discussion of implementing year-round schooling in Atlanta; Mississippi schools reluctant to change busing policy, ahead of other states in computer education programs.

Tape 1513, Side B

Went to Palo Alto, California, to observe integrated computer education classes; enjoyed seeing the students excitement when using computers; few states were using computer education at that time; reading up on computers so he wouldn't look "like a dummy"; school teachers before desegregation were not highly educated but tried their best to educate students; lost a generation during desegregation; sad situation today with teenage pregnancy, uneducated youths; rode the bus with his dad as a kid and sat "behind the sign"; military men helped pave the way for desegregating the busses; almost saw a race riot in Memphis, Tennessee, when he attended a military social where African Americans were not welcome; tried to leave town with a first-class train ticket but was forced to sit behind the coal car instead; back in Baton Rouge, on the bus a white man gives up a seat for Anderson's fair-skinned wife, angered when Anderson sits down beside her; decision by African American community to boycott the busses; first day of boycott driving people around in his car with a big sign; people sharing cars, giving free rides, African American-owned fuel stations donating gas; African Americans working in domestic capacity provided information on what white community was saying about the boycott; boycott ended abruptly, disappointing results but eventually African Americans were given the right to sit anywhere on the bus; recognition of his predecessors paving the way for desegregation and fighting for his freedom; desire to give something back to the community to show his appreciation; trying to integrate the hospital; white doctors tried to brush them off, wondered how African American doctors could operate outside of medical establishment; bitterness over racial inequality effects his dental practice and self-worth; the Lord helped him overcome his anger and bitterness; the struggle and fight for equality continues; hopes for the day when people are measured by their worth and not their skin color.

TAPES: 1 (T1513)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 24 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 24 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Interviewer's comments, Correspondence, Obituary, Photographs (2), Additional information on people/places mentioned in interview (6 pages).

RESTRICTIONS: None