

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Roger Clay Jackson

COLLECTION: 4700.2587

IDENTIFICATION: Westlake, Louisiana resident, attended school in Mossville, Louisiana

INTERVIEWER: Chelsea Arseneault

SERIES: Mossville History Project – Field Interviews

INTERVIEW DATES: October 31, 2015

FOCUS DATES: 1950s-present

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4535

Introductions; Jackson born in Shreveport, Louisiana on June 19, 1947; parents' names and what they did for a living; moved to the area in the 1950s; mother's name Beatrice Parsons, and she passed away when he was ten; Jackson is the youngest of five; grandparents raised them; grandmother a great influence on him; names were George Parsons and Florence Parsons; father's family; clarifies he grew up in Westlake, but went to grade school in Mossville; lived across the street from Catholic Church, St. John Bosco; attended Good Hope Baptist Church; description of childhood home; cleanliness very important; grandmother taught them to wash and iron clothes, cook, and clean; baseball in spare time; other chores; grandmother's cooking; Baptist preacher ate at their house because grandmother best cook around; taught Jackson to cook, as well as how to preserve and can; grandfather's garden—could grow anything; chilling a watermelon in the well; grandfather's gardening techniques; how to make preserves and jelly; raised chickens, turkeys, and guineas; comical story of a turkey chasing him when he was gathering eggs; earliest memory of Mossville was walking to the pool there, since the one near his home was segregated; walked over three miles to Mossville and learned to swim there; people he met at the pool; swimming lessons; Mossville kids who snuck into the pool; Mossville school and sports; Coach Williams; detailed story of a track meet victory; courting girls at the canteens on Sunday; music and dancing; never felt poor, had fun; Cowboy Club in Mossville a rough place, didn't take girls there; several other clubs in the area; making bikes from pieces salvaged from junkyard; story of running into a girl with his bike and hurting her badly; worst whipping he ever got; different injuries he sustained growing up; how he earned the nickname "Cat"; lost vision in an eye when it was shot with a bow and arrow; later lost the eye when he suffered football injury; getting caught in an old washing machine wringer; favorite teachers at Mossville; recalls several of Ms. Rogers' famous phrases; fondest memory of Mossville is the track tournament; integration in Westlake; recently elected mayor's death; ruled a suicide, but many believe it was murder; body found in the Mossville School parking lot; details of the events surrounding the death; Jackson's opinions on the death; remembers the death of his

friend, Calvin Mayfield, who was hung by white people; he and his friends used to play in the woods, and would sometimes encounter white bullies there; Principal Williams announced what had happened to Mayfield over the loudspeaker; found in what they called the “African Tree” by his brother and neighbor; mean white store owner questioned because he sold rope; what Mossville means to him; closing.

TAPES: 1 (T4535)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 32 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 60 pages

PHOTOGRAPHS / PHOTOGRAPHER: Two photographs taken during interview at the Rigmaiden Recreational Center in Mossville, Louisiana. Photographer Kyle Tanglao.

OTHER MATERIALS: Interview questions (3 pgs); Correspondence

RESTRICTIONS: None