



**Sacramento Ethnic Communities Survey -
Black Oral Histories
1983/146**

Oral interview of
Grace Jenkins Brown and Phillip Jenkins

November 3, 1983

Conducted by Clarence Caesar

Transcribed by Lee Ann McMeans

Center for Sacramento History
551 Sequoia Pacific Blvd
Sacramento, CA 95811-0229
(916) 264-7072

cs@cityofsacramento.org
www.centerforsacramentohistory.org

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The following interview was taped November 3, 1983, at the home of Grace Jenkins Brown. The interviewees are Mrs. Grace Jenkins Brown and Mr. Phillip Jenkins, brother and sister. Both are native born Sacramentans, who attended Sacramento schools, established working careers in Sacramento and who are both now retired in Sacramento. Mrs. Brown and Mr. Jenkins are also descendants of Black pioneer families who came with the Gold Rush. The gist of this interview will consist of discussions concerning the early 1930s in Sacramento, the social and political climate of the day, and what it was like to live in Sacramento in the early years. In addition, Mrs. Brown and Mr. Jenkins will offer insights into the relationship between Blacks and the early institutions of Sacramento. In particular, the public accommodations sector and the employment sector. As third generation Sacramentans, the words in this interview carry particular weight.

Clarence: Can you give a brief biographical sketch of yourself?

Mrs. Brown: Yes, my name is Grace Brown, formerly Grace Jenkins and I was born in Sacramento in 1922. I lived in the Oak Park area for all of my growing up years. I married a man from Marysville, and moved to the Bay Area for a brief time, and then I returned to Sacramento. I have five children who are all grown now. Three boys and two daughters. I'm now divorced and single, and enjoying apartment house life. That's it.

Mr. Jenkins: I'm Phillip Jenkins. I was born at 2618 [hard to hear, counter 20] Street, on August 9, 1917. I've lived most of my life in Sacramento. Attended elementary, junior high, and high schools and Sacramento Junior College here. I was employed for nine years doing

alterations and window trimming in a dress shop locally, prior to going to work for the State of California, Department of Unemployment, and I've retired from there after 37 ½ years. I have been retired now for eight years. I now live in Woodland, California.

Clarence: Mr. Jenkins, when and how did you or your forebears come to Sacramento?

Mr. Jenkins: Well, my grandfather came by covered wagon from Missouri to Sacramento. My grandmother came by wagon as well as overland train, steam locomotive to Sacramento. They settled in the West end.

Clarence: What part of the West end did they settle?

Mr. Jenkins: I believe their home was located about 5th and U Street. I'm not too sure of that.

Clarence: What types of businesses or occupations did they have while they, while they were setting up in Sacramento?

Mr. Jenkins: Carpentry. My grandfather had his own drayage business. He had owned a wagon, he handled freight and buried horses at 9th and it was then known as White Street, it is now Broadway, and that is the location of the New Helvetia housing units.

Clarence: So the New Helvetia housing unit is, was originally a animal cemetery of sorts?

Mr. Jenkins: That and a dump.

Clarence: [laughs] And what was the name of your grandfather?

Mr. Jenkins: Albert Grubs.

Clarence: Albert Grubs.

Mr. Jenkins: Albert Eugene Grubs.

Clarence: Mrs. Brown, what are your earliest recollections of living in Sacramento as a child?

Mrs. Brown: Oh, I suppose the first thing I remember is when we moved and I was about a year old and then immediately there's a blank from that time until I was about six or seven and maybe about five and my main recollections then centered around my activities at St. Andrews Church, there were choirs, you know, little baby stars, mother of pearls, then the junior choir, and so forth and I always enjoyed singing and so that of course stands out in my memory.

[Counter 50]

Mrs. Brown: One thing that I recall very proudly was when I was about seven years old I was taken to a convention in San Francisco by [hard to hear, counter 51], the musical director at St. Andrews. They stood me on top of a piano to sing a song. [laughs] But, we played, all my

brothers and I all, played instruments. My parents were very concerned that we had musical backgrounds, so we had little, a first a little family orchestra, and then later on there were two or three families involved in it and we played at different churches and at different social functions around Sacramento and even out of Sacramento. I remember one time we played up in Auburn and then we played down –

Mr. Jenkins: Chico.

Mrs. Brown: Chico, and San Jose and places around, so these are the things that stood out most in my mind.

Mr. Jenkins: Christmas?

Mrs. Brown: Christmases that we were taken around to see the windows. My father always had a window in the competition, a decorated window, a Christmas window in the competition and he usually won.

Clarence: So this was a competition basically between window dressers in the downtown Sacramento –

Mrs. Brown: No. Householders.

Mr. Jenkins: No.

Clarence: Householders? Oh, I see.

Mrs. Brown: And he made

Mr. Jenkins: Conducted by the Chamber of Commerce, I believe.

Mrs. Brown: Yeah, and one year, like one year he had a church scene. He'd made this church and my mother made the little clothes for the little figures inside the church. It was lighted and it was in the window, and people used to flock to see it. Then he had made a big star that was wired so that he could put, and this was before they were so common, in fact, his was the first that I've seen, it was on top of the house and that really drew a lot of attention. Another thing that I remember so well, was the very extensive railroad layout that he had in our basement that he made all the scenery and the houses and people used to come from all around to watch that.

Mr. Jenkins: [Laughs]

Mrs. Brown: Homey things are what I remember –

Clarence: This was an annual event?

Mrs. Brown: The railroad was just an ongoing thing.

Mr. Jenkins: It was just year round.

Mrs. Brown: Yes, that was even my brothers spent a great deal of time with that.

Clarence: Mr. Jenkins, what are your earliest recollections of living in Sacramento vis a vie your sister, your sister's recollections?

Mr. Jenkins: Oh, there are many things. I can remember when it cost you a nickel to ride the street car. From Oak Park, we lived at 6th Avenue, 32nd Street, downtown, and it eventually went to six cents one way. I remember the opening of the SP depot, not the present one, but the one that sets behind, back in the 20's, and everyone dressed in 49er costumes, my brother and I wore bandanas and we had cap pistols on our hips and big sombreros and boots. My mother dressed in frontier dress, style dress. My dad was a letter carrier. They wore very large grey felt hats in those days and he had a pistol on his hip and there was a pioneer mill at the I Street bridge and that mill was operated by a water wheel that was lowered into the river. Sacramento and Oak Park were two different communities at that time. Joyland was an amusement park in Oak Park and it was owned by the P. G. & E., that also operated the street cars and provided the electricity. Originally we didn't have electricity, we had gas chandeliers and gas jets on the wall. Then electricity came in. Which was not too secure [laughs], you would get a storm and you would be in darkness for hours. Then also the old Capitol Park. The old Capitol Park was a very nice place to go after church on Sunday afternoons. You could at that time go up into the dome and look all over the city, you could see as far as Folsom, there was a driveway all the way around the Capitol building. It was a very fascinating place. Well I guess, Capitol Park and Joyland

would be my favorites. In those days you could get into the theater for ten cents and it would be a Saturday or Sunday, it didn't matter, as long as you were under, was it 15 or 16 years of age.

Clarence: Did you find any social restrictions as a child due to being Black in Sacramento as far as being able to enjoy recreation to its fullest?

[Counter 100]

Mr. Jenkins: Only when I got into high school. Then you began to feel it. The social activities excluded Blacks at that time. This was in the early 30's, 1930, 31, and 32. That you were not invited to the various club parties, into their homes. The only activity that I can remember was in band or sport or orchestra or in the glee club. There it was total.

Mrs. Brown: And Scouts.

Mr. Jenkins: Yes, that would be about it. Sacramento for a long had a curtain they drew across in front of you as far as the Black living in Sacramento. My father was, passed an examination when he was very young, here in Sacramento for the Fire Department. But they had no Blacks in the Fire Department, they wouldn't hire him. He was finally accepted by the Postal Department, from which he retired after 35 years.

Mrs. Brown: Mama said the only reason he was accepted was because they didn't know he was Black then, at the time. [They all laugh]

Mr. Jenkins: Not only that, but he had one of the largest districts. He had the entire north side of Sacramento, and it ran from 7th to 21 Street, from B Street to G Street. And deliveries were made twice a day.

Clarence: This was a postal route?

Mr. Jenkins: A route. When he retired they broke it up into three separate routes.

Mrs. Brown: But they let him almost drop dead on the route before they would do that.

Mr. Jenkins: The man never walked anyplace. It was a constant trot. Those homes over there, the flights of steps were oh 18 steps, and the mail box was always at the top of the steps. It was never down at the bottom.

Clarence: That's very unreal, very –

Mrs. Brown: They didn't have the carts like now, it was all big leather bag that they had to lug around.

Mr. Jenkins: It was a bag that would hold 60 pounds of mail, and he'd carry oh, maybe six blocks of mail in one arm stacked with straps and rubber bands. Plus the sack on his shoulder. At Christmas time he would go, make the route with two sacks, and then towards the, well

maybe two weeks before Christmas, all he would do is leave the home at about 5:00 in the morning, we wouldn't see him until about 10:00 that night. He would stick mail for two other men to deliver during the day, and he would take one swing himself.

Clarence: Do you think this was a deliberate policy by the postal service to discourage him from delivering mail?

Mrs. Brown: Oh yeah, they wanted him out.

Mr. Jenkins: Yes, in fact there were only three Blacks in the entire postal service within Sacramento.

Mrs. Brown: And all three of them could have been something other than Black.

Mr. Jenkins: Yes.

Mrs. Brown: Well one of them –

Mr. Jenkins: Wagner and, and Bill Taylor

Mrs. Brown: Oh and Fred Butler.

Mr. Jenkins: Oh yes, four of them, Fred Butler.

Mrs. Brown: And then Will Taylor didn't even count, because you couldn't have convinced anybody that he was Black. [Mr. Jenkins laughs]

Mr. Jenkins: And then Johnson came in later.

Mrs. Brown: But the others were all, you know –

Mr. Jenkins: Very light complected.

Mrs. Brown: My mother said

Mr. Jenkins: They were never in front either, that is they were not in windows and only the two carriers, my dad and a fellow by the name of Johnson, who eventually, well he lived on 9th Street, but, let's see, about 9th and U Street, on the east side of the street. He eventually left here and moved down to Southern California. I don't know whatever happened to him.

Mrs. Brown: My mother said that my father was six feet tall when she married him, when he died he was shorter than I am and I'm five feet, three.

Clarence: So there were definite physical effects from the –

Mrs. Brown: Oh absolutely.

Mr. Jenkins: Yes, definitely.

Mrs. Brown: Absolutely.

Clarence: Mrs. Brown, can you give some background on the social and religious lifestyles of Black Sacramentans before World War Two? To your best recollection.

Mrs. Brown: Uh, the religious lifestyles uh, were pretty sort of much, just sort of homespun, I guess, there were, two of the biggest Black churches were St. Andrews, Methodist, and Shiloh Baptist and they were both pretty rigid and stiff necked in their opinions of everything and each other. But –

Clarence: Are you saying they are conservative, had a conservative outlook on life?

[Counter 150]

Mrs. Brown: Uh huh, pretty much so, I would say the Shiloh Baptist was more conservative at the time than St. Andrews was. There were also the other two churches was. There were also the other two churches that I mentioned, Kyles Temple and New Hope Baptist, but they did use to come together and have celebrations of the sort, or some kind of interfaith sort of things, where they'd maybe have a joint choirs, something of that sort. But there really wasn't, there wasn't much progressive activity, even though St. Andrews was involved in getting a school

started, that was much before my time, and by the time I came along it was pretty just sort of you go to church on Sunday and have special programs on special days, but they were community activities. My little, you know I mean, they weren't particularly progressive. Socially there was a social set in Sacramento. I was, you know, there was an organization called the Informal Dames for women in my mother's generation. My mother was not a member of it, she was not a very social minded person. Mainly because she had five kids I think. I would say that the biggest part of the social life stemmed from the Masons and the Eastern Stars, and that sort of thing, the lodges, and whatnot. And there were private parties, and so forth. The younger people might like, in my age group, when we were younger, we made our own activities and we thought we were having as good a time as anybody anyplace. We organized picnics and bike rides, and we had a tennis club, and a something else, we had all different clubs, but everybody, the membership was the same in each club, you know, that we had.

Clarence: So you felt no need during those days of social activity to intermingle or interact with other racial groups or ethnic groups at that time? Was there any opportunity to do such things, or was it basically self-contained within the Black community itself?

Mrs. Brown: It was pretty much within the Black community itself. At school once in a while there were some little contacts, you know, social contacts, limited. I don't, as I recall it didn't bother us much. When it did bother me it was in later years when the White people that we had gone to school with became very liberal minded and wanted to say that they had always been that way and started coming back and saying "oh, do you remember what great friends we were?". Then it bothered me. [They all laugh] Then I wanted to say "ha, ha, ha".

Clarence: So there was an element of hypocrisy that flowered.

Mrs. Brown: Definitely, definitely. I've never been to a class reunion, for instance. I didn't feel that I lost anything or left anything behind in high school.

Clarence: What high school are we talking about now?

Mrs. Brown: I went to Sacramento High my first year, and then when they built McClatchy I transferred to McClatchy. I had to go to McClatchy because we lived right on the border and I was in my first year so I had to go to McClatchy, my brothers were in their last years at Sac High School, they stayed at Sac High. So, we were spread.

Mr. Jenkins: You have to understand that there were only three, four high schools here at the time. Actually three until McClatchy came along. That was Christian Brothers, at 21st and Broadway,

Mrs. Brown: That used to be 21st and Y Street.

Mr. Jenkins: 21st and Y Street, yes. And Grant Union High School in Del Paso Heights, and Sacramento High. Then McClatchy was constructed, and now I believe there is a total of 16 high schools with the community.

Clarence: Did you recognize or were there any Black males recognized for athletic exploits in high school?

Mr. Jenkins: Quite a number were, yes. Many of them are gone now. I was very active both in track and basketball and football until I was injured, but we were not ostracized from sports, that was one thing.

[Counter 200]

Mrs. Brown: Just the fun that they had afterwards.

Mrs. Jenkins: That's right, just the fun that they had afterwards.

Clarence: So there was equality on the playing field, but not in the extracurricular activities beyond sports. In other words you were probably excluded from the Homecoming activities or having a Queen crowned or things like that?

Mr. Jenkins: That's right.

Clarence: I see that well it was still being maintained when I was going to high school.

Mr. Jenkins: So there probably were not 15 Blacks in the high school when I was in high school.

Clarence: So there was no overwhelming number of Blacks?

Mr. Jenkins: In my graduating class there were 750 students, graduating class, and two Blacks led the class down the aisle. One was Clarence Canson and the other was myself.

Clarence: What year was this? Your graduating class?

Mr. Jenkins: 1935.

Clarence: Thank you.

Mrs. Brown: But just to show you how fast things change when I graduated from McClatchy which was in 39, just four years later, when was it, 35 when you graduated?

Mr. Jenkins: Uh huh.

Mrs. Brown: Clinton, Clinton White, who is now on the –

Clarence: Appellate –

Mrs. Brown: A judge, yeah. Was the valedictorian of McClatchy, but that's because he was the kind of person he was. He was pretty, he wasn't very reticent about making [hard to hear,

counter 218]. And strangely enough a lot of might have rested with us because Clinton was involved socially with White kids, and more certainly with the boys than with girls at that time, but, so I think that a person who was extroverted and very strong and you know, would push themselves wouldn't have experienced as much separation, or I couldn't say we were ostracized, we were just left out. He wasn't left because he pushed himself in, you know. I mean very, that's what he did, he pushed himself in. [Mr. Jenkins laughs]

Clarence: So you did notice a definite change between the time Mr. Jenkins graduated and the time you graduated that there was some social changes going on in Sacramento, subtle but change none the less.

Mrs. Brown: Some little changes, yeah.

Clarence: Which leads to my next question, what changes in these lifestyles did you notice after World War Two, after the increase in population of Blacks in Sacramento, did it accelerate?

Mrs. Brown: Yes, tremendously.

Clarence: Did it steady itself out?

Mr. Jenkins: Yes, it accelerated tremendously, and its still growing. We are beginning to have a voice within the community, to a greater extent than pre-World War Two. The possibilities, I guess prior to World War Two, D. D. Mattocks was the big mover then, wasn't he?

Mrs. Brown: And Harry Johnson was, [hard to hear, counter 238]

Mr. Jenkins: And Harry Johnson was, George Dunlap.

Mrs. Brown: But they really didn't move anything much, they just –

Mr. Jenkins: The movements really started after World War Two. This basically was due, because of the heavy influx of Blacks into the community.

Mrs. Brown: And I think not only because of the heavy influx but because they came from areas where they hadn't experienced the same kind of restrictions that we did. They didn't know they couldn't do, so they did it. You know, I'd like, the ones that came here and applied to be teachers and they were mostly from the South, they applied to be teachers and they applied to be policeman and so forth, and they didn't realize that that wasn't being done here, so they came in and they applied and they were qualified and they passed the test and they couldn't be turned down and they moved in. When we grew up there were many times when my brothers and I were the only Black children in the school.

Mr. Jenkins: [laughs]

[Counter 250]

Mrs. Brown: You know, you were quite intimidated, and I think that growing up in a school where you are fully participant even if it is say a gated school, where you were class president and you were in a social activities it gives you a different attitude, you know, and when they came they brought that attitude with them, and it was one of the greatest things that could have happened.

Clarence: Did you notice any changes in the White attitude. Earlier you mentioned that you were perceived as a threat, because there were so few of you. Did you notice a change in the attitude of White Sacramentans as far as how much they would allow Blacks to do in Sacramento after the population increase?

Mrs. Brown: You see the same thing happened to the Whites in Sacramento that happened to the Blacks, I mean, [hard to hear, counter 259]. They were as much overwhelmed and astounded and speechless at what was going on as the Blacks were, because there were hundreds and hundreds and thousands and thousands of new people coming in, both Black and White and if they had wanted to say anything I think it sort of was lost in the, you know there little voices weren't heard either.

Mr. Jenkins: Actually, there was –

Mrs. Brown: I think the whole community was just sort of traumatized, you know.

Mr. Jenkins: Prior to World War Two, I could walk down to K Street and say hello to almost everybody I met on the street. After World War Two, I couldn't say hello to a soul that I knew.

Mrs. Brown: It's funny, you meet people now, you meet someone knew and they say, "Oh how long have you been here."

Mr. Jenkins: How long have you been here? [Mrs. Brown and Mr. Jenkins laugh]

Mrs. Brown: A year or two, I don't want to say all my life because they, I feel like they will say "well what have you been doing?" "Nothing." You know. I think it has been good for Sacramento what has happened. I think there is resistance, you know, to the change, but it, they didn't have a strong enough voice.

Clarence: What types of relationships did Blacks have with the power structure of Sacramento before World War Two? Was there an understanding between Blacks and White politicians in power at that time as to what can be done, or what they could do? Was there any relationship at all?

Mr. Jenkins: No –

Mrs. Brown: No –

Mr. Jenkins: Go ahead sister.

Mrs. Brown: Just what I started to mention, Harry Johnson, I don't know if you have come across anything about him, he was a caterer in Sacramento. He worked for the Legislature as a oh, a basically I guess it was a doorman, he kept people out that weren't supposed to come in and were supposed to come in and that sort of thing –

Mr. Jenkins: Like a sergeant-at-arms.

Mrs. Brown: And his, he was the only political, he and D. D. Mattocks were the only two political people, Black people in Sacramento really. The biggest thing that came out of Harry Johnson's connections and I'm not knocking it because I benefited by it was that when like for instance when the fair came along, well then he had a few little jobs to hand out, and um, some of us that were in college along about that time got to work at the fair. It was a big deal, we got to work at the fair as restroom attendants and that gave us enough money to buy our books and our clothes for school.

Clarence: So he had basically a system of patronage?

Mrs. Brown: Yeah, but it was very –

Mr. Jenkins: Actually, Harry Johnson's father was B. A. Johnson, one of the very earliest pioneers to Sacramento.

Clarence: I've run across his name, Beverly Johnson. Was this the same Harry Johnson that graduated from Stanford? If I'm not mistaken? I realize that one of his children graduated from Leland Stanford, Junior, College which was what Stanford University was called at that time. I was trying to figure out if that was the same person.

Mrs. Brown: Stanford, you mean Stanford in San Francisco?

Clarence: Yeah, Palo Alto.

Mrs. Brown: Palo Alto. I don't know, --

Mr. Jenkins: I didn't think he had any.

Mrs. Brown: I don't know. Whether, you don't know whether he had a degree or not, you mean or?

[Counter 300]

Mr. Jenkins: That's what I telling you.

Mrs. Brown: I don't know what his educational background is, now that you mention it, it's something worth looking at, but I don't know. He had a, there were a lot of Black people in catering, before the war --

Mr. Jenkins: That was a source of income.

Mrs. Brown: Well a side, I don't know of anyone that made a living at it, but you could make some pretty good money at it, and have fun too.

Clarence: What was the influence of George Dunlap as far as, you mentioned his name among the three, Mattocks, Dunlap, Johnson, what was—

Mrs. Brown: He mentioned him and I'd prefer not to discuss him.

Mr. Jenkins: [chuckles] Oh, he was a chef in the Pullman Company. He set up the Dunlap's Dinning Room. It was more or less exclusive. Their trade was Legislative bodies and Caucasians.

[Tape one, Side one ends, Counter 314]

[Tape one, Side two begins, Counter 314]

Clarence: Ok,

Mr. Jenkins: Of the pioneers there was stage drivers out of here. In fact they are mentioned in Miss Beasley's book. There were agriculturalists both here and in North Sacramento. In fact,

the very first cotton grown in California was grown in North Sacramento by a family by the name of Black. I guess the largest agriculturalists would be the Robinson brothers.

Mrs. Brown: The Robinson Brothers' Ranch.

Mr. Jenkins: Ranch.

Clarence: Can you expand on that. I've heard of the Robinson's Brothers Ranch as a recreation point for the community.

Mr. Jenkins: At Marconi and Watt Avenues, eastward.

Clarence: That would basically be where the Del Paso Country Club is today?

Mr. Jenkins: Right across from it. He also had the pond for North Sacramento, so he had all kinds of animals. Raised hogs, sheep, he had one horse, he had a tractor with steel cleats on it. I'll forget it because the thing climbed over backwards with me on and I jumped off. The orchard was irrigated by siphon irrigation, that is the horse pulled a sled, with huge wine casks and you took a two inch hose and put it down in the casks filled with water, cupped it and brought up and put it on to the tree. My dad wanted us to be sure to know what work was about so, room and board, summer vacations.

Clarence: So he was basically a farm laborer?

Mr. Jenkins: He owned the farm.

Clarence: No, I mean he hired out, people hired out to him to work during the summer.

Mr. Jenkins: Yes. He had been a teacher in an Indian school. The house still stands, it's more or less of a museum out there and it's right off of Marconi Avenue, just about a block east of Watt. It's white with rock side walls, and what work was performed by Manual and Daniel Gonsalves, who were also apprenticed as summertime laborers. [Mr. Jenkins chuckles]

Mrs. Brown: They were the Robinson brothers were members of St. Andrews Church, and they rarely attended, but they were very supportive of it. Their ranch was a site of fund raising activities and that sort of thing and they donated a lot of things to the church. If the church needed something, you know, in the way of what seemed to us then expensive equipment or something installed, why they would go and talk to the Robinson brothers, and they would usually come away with.

Mr. Jenkins: Like whenever they needed coals for the furnace they had a chicken, a Sunday chicken, afternoon chicken dinner, and I killed 125 chickens for that dinner. [Clarence and Mr. Jenkins laugh]

Clarence: They supplied all the chickens?

Mr. Jenkins: They had the chickens, they had the hogs too.

Mrs. Brown: They were nice men.

Clarence: After World War II, when the social scene in Sacramento started to change, when the political scene started to change, what types of changes did you notice as far as relationships of Blacks among themselves. Did you notice anymore political unity or social unity among the community? Was there any type of consideration given to forming political organizations to better conditions in Sacramento at that time?

Mrs. Brown: Not at first, because there were so many people from so many different places so suddenly, you know, that I think that they hadn't had a chance to become a community yet. In fact like, I would say that they are still in the process, although I think they have made tremendous strides, you know. But at first, I think that people tended to sort of cling in little groups like the military kept to itself, and there was a large community of Louisiana people here and they sort of clung together and that sort of thing.

[Counter 350]

Mr. Jenkins: This is when Bill Curtis opened Dye House, too. After World War Two. And we began getting more Louisianans into the community then.

Mrs. Brown: But there, I think like I said because there were so many people here and there were so many new and that was a period when a great many store front churches popped up all over, you know. It didn't take long for them to stop being store front churches and being, you know, major churches. I think there was a great deal of learning done by the old Sacramento population from watching the new people. Because the new people just seemed to have more moxie.

Clarence: That brings me to another person, that I think we should talk about as far as his influence on Sacramento life for the Black community. That person would be Nathaniel Colley and his early fights against the city to secure certain things in the community. Did he receive a lot of support from the community in his fight to desegregate some facilities like swimming pools and things like that?

Mr. Jenkins: They didn't have trouble with the swimming pools.

Mrs. Brown: Yes they did. He had to sue over at Riverside Baths.

Mr. Jenkins: Oh Riverside Baths, yeah, will that

Mrs. Brown: His daughter wanted to go and wanted to swim there and she was turned away and he sued for that. I would say that –

Mr. Jenkins: Nat came from –

Mrs. Brown: Support was pretty much fragmented still, you know. He received support from the NAACP, which was a very small, relatively small functioning body. It's hard for me to say, because I too, remained in my little circle, you know. I was active in the NAACP and I was active in church. I think it was pretty much as I said. Wouldn't you say that there were just little-

Mr. Jenkins: Just very little, but Nat you see came after World War Two. He was a very close friend while at school, with Clarence Canson. Clarence more or less encouraged him to come to Sacramento.

Mrs. Brown: Well and he married a Sacramento woman.

Mr. Jenkins: Well, yes.

Mrs. Brown: That had to encourage him to come here.

Mr. Jenkins: Yes, that part too. At that time it was a small community along Capitol Avenue in that neighborhood. There were small businesses, there was a drug store, there was a beauty parlor, there were liquor stores, I think

Mrs. Brown: There were two -

Mr. Jenkins: And two nightclubs.

Mrs. Brown: The Mo Mo and Zanzibar.

Mr. Jenkins: The Mo Mo and Zanzibar, yeah. Uh there were one or two rooming house down there run by Blacks, but that was one segment of Sacramento. Then the other was in Oak Park, and another one out in Del Paso Heights.

Clarence: What are your earliest impressions of, not your earliest impressions excuse me, but what are your impressions of the West End now that its done. Did you find that to be the center of activity in Black Sacramento at any –

Mr. Jenkins: The West End?

Clarence: Yes.

Mrs. Brown: What do you mean, do you mean where the clubs were?

Clarence: Yeah, I mean as far as the cultural and economic and social life, was the West End pretty much the center of Black activity in Sacramento?

Mrs. Brown: You are probably asking the wrong people—

Mr. Jenkins: Yeah.

Mrs. Brown: Because even, now I worked in the, in the Mo Mo Club. When I was first married, my husband was sick right away, he got sick right away and he had to go, was hospitalized for several months and I came back to Sacramento, alone, that was a long time, but anyhow later on I worked in the Mo Mo Club while I was working at the State during the day and I worked in the Mo Mo Club weekends at night. But um, as far as clubbing, and going to clubs, I never did it. I hated it every minute that I worked there, even though it was good money and I needed it. I don't think any of us were clubbers, you know.

Mr. Jenkins: No.

Mrs. Brown: My youngest brother, who is dead now, he played –

Mr. Jenkins: We both did –

Mrs. Brown: He was a musician, he was the only one of us who really continued, and he played trumpet with some of the local dance bands, and that. But he wasn't a clubber, he went to, you know, he went on the jobs dance jobs, which weren't at clubs. Sometimes they paid off at the club afterwards, they were met and paid off. But we just weren't clubbers. Not that I have anything against them, but we just weren't. So I don't know. I know that there was a great deal of patronage for the clubs.

Mr. Jenkins: Yes.

Mrs. Brown: But as to whether that –

Mr. Jenkins: The [hard to hear, counter 94] jitterbug, were very active. Charlie Davis

[Counter 400]

Mrs. Brown: But I don't know that you could say that they were the center of social activity. They were the center of Black nightlife, you know, club life. But uh,

Mr. Jenkins: That was not –

Mrs. Brown: Not only Black, they were probably the most popular clubs in Sacramento, among Whites and Blacks. Those two clubs were at the time.

Clarence: Since you worked at the Mo Mo and probably had access maybe to the Zanzibar Club too, I've often heard it said that the different clientele, the White and the Black clientele used the club at different times of the evening. Maybe the Whites would come in at an earlier time, and the Blacks would come at a later time. Is that, can you verify that? Is that a fact, or is that uh—

Mrs. Brown: Not at the Mo Mo while I was working there. It was pretty much mixed. In fact, sometimes the musicians were even mixed. Mostly they were Black musicians, because that was what was popular. But no I can remember, seas of faces of all hues.

Clarence: So there was no real racial friction as far as the club scene in Sacramento. Like you would find in other cities where –

Mr. Jenkins: No.

Clarence: Whites would have their clubs and Blacks would have their clubs exclusively. There was some interracial participation in the nightlife?

Mr. Jenkins: There were White clubs, true, for instance Will's Point, which was a western country style of music, and several others, but no, there was –

Mrs. Brown: I remember, what was that upstairs of the Elks building, the Top of the Town or something.

Mr. Jenkins: The Top of the Town, yes.

Mrs. Brown: In my young married life, we were quite chagrined, we had some out of town guests and there were several couples of us and we decided we were going to take them to the Top of the Town, well after standing at the door, they finally decided to let us in, they were

hemming and hawing around, they didn't say anything, but they and they let us in and then, I can't remember quite what the circumstances were, but there was some reluctance to serve us. They came up with all kinds of excuses and so forth. We were embarrassed because they, not only offended, but embarrassed because the couple that we were trying to show a good time were from San Francisco, where, and you know, and we knew that they weren't having those kinds of experiences there so.

Clarence: As far as the type of entertainment that these clubs attracted, would you say that it was good entertainment, was there any big time participation by well known bands, nationally known bands at any of these clubs?

Mrs. Brown: Not particularly.

Mr. Jenkins: No.

Mrs. Brown: Not big bands, but they had

Mr. Jenkins: Well they had entertainers, yes.

Mrs. Brown: I can't remember the names, but they had some of the major, not all of the time, but they did on occasion have some major entertainers.

Mr. Jenkins: In fact, [hard to hear] was one of the ones I can remember who were there.

Mrs. Brown: See I can't remember the names, but there were, you know, like Little somebody or somebody or something, you know.

Mr. Jenkins: Tom Deleo, danced on the bar. I can't remember, it has been so many years ago. In fact, all of that in the town, Lord that disappeared.

Mrs. Brown: But the social life of Sacramento was –

Mr. Jenkins: Well it was involved with, with, the [hard to hear, counter 436] Post, they gave dances at the Moose Hall and at the auditorium, things of that sort.

Clarence: Maybe that's who it was, maybe that's who sponsored the [hard to hear, counter 437] because it seemed to have a fraternal, the pictures that I have of it seem to have a fraternal countenance to them —

Mrs. Brown: It could have been, it could have been.

Mr. Jenkins: They had the –

Mrs. Brown: You see that would have been before our time, or our age time, and my parents didn't –

Mr. Jenkins: No they didn't go.

Mrs. Brown: Didn't socialize, not because they didn't approve of it, but because they were poor and just homebodies really.

Mr. Jenkins: [says something to his sister, Mrs. Brown, that was too low to hear or understand]

Mrs. Brown: [says something back to her brother, Mr. Jenkins, that was too low to hear or understand] [they laugh] [counter 439]. Interests were in the family.

Clarence: Did you, as a family, get to go out of town or interact with people from other parts of California, Northern California? Either in the surrounding areas of Sacramento or in the Bay Area or even Los Angeles or Stockton or places like that?

Mrs. Brown: Uh huh.

Mr. Jenkins: Los Angeles was a two day trip in those days.

Clarence: Two day trip.

Mr. Jenkins: Uh huh.

Mrs. Brown: We made it once, when our father took us down there.

Mr. Jenkins: Yep.

Mrs. Brown: Well we used to go to the Bay Area quite a bit, you could ride the what was it, \$1.—

Mr. Jenkins: Quarter, roundtrip.

Mrs. Brown: \$1.25 for a roundtrip to Oakland and \$1.35 to —

Mr. Jenkins: No \$1.25 to San Francisco and \$1.00 to Oakland.

[Counter 450]

Mrs. Brown: Oh, a \$1.00 roundtrip to Oakland, on the train. [laughs] We, as teenagers we just about wore the Southern Pacific out there, and also to Marysville —

Mr. Jenkins: Fifty cents.

Mrs. Brown: Marysville had Fourth of July picnics, which drew people from Los Angeles and the Bay Area and all around. We used to go to that.

Mr. Jenkins: Yes, and then had a New Year's Party too.

Mrs. Brown: Oh, yeah. In fact Marysville had more social life than Sacramento did and it was just –

Mr. Jenkins: That's true.

Mrs. Brown: And it was just a little burg, you know, but, and Woodland used to have –

Mr. Jenkins: Oh yeah, the Country Gentlemen, they still do

Mrs. Brown: Marysville social life dated back so far that my Aunt Lucy who was Lucy Ray, that would have been my, my grandmother's sister.

Mr. Jenkins: Great Aunt.

Mrs. Brown: That's right my great aunt. Won a waltz contest in Marysville, at the Marysville Fourth of July picnic when she was just a teenager, so.

Mr. Jenkins: She is the one who taught me to dance.

Mrs. Brown: So I am saying that is how long, even though Marysville was always a small town, it's I guess older than Sacramento, huh?

Mr. Jenkins: Well it was one of the, about the same age –

Clarence: About the same age —

Mrs. Brown: Or at least as old.

Mr. Jenkins: It was one of the feeders to the gold fields, Yuba.

Mrs. Brown: And we used to go to Woodland.

Mr. Jenkins: And Guinda. [laughs]

Mrs. Brown: Well you went to Guinda, I didn't.

Clarence: Was there was a sizeable Black community in Guinda at the time?

Mr. Jenkins: Fairly good size. There are still some up there. The Hacketts, I guess, are about the largest clan in there. Do you have relatives up there?

Clarence: No.

Mrs. Brown: But he means, relatively speaking good size.

Mr. Jenkins: Well –

Clarence: Were there at least, say 100 people there?

Mrs. Brown: Oh, probably not, were there?

Mr. Jenkins: I don't think so.

Mrs. Brown: You mean 100 Black people?

Clarence: 100 Black people.

Mr. Jenkins: No, I don't think so.

Mrs. Brown: It seemed like there were hardly 100 Black people in Sacramento. [They all chuckle.]

Mr. Jenkins: There weren't, really.

Clarence: Because I've heard, I've heard quite, I've heard Guinda mentioned two or three other times you know? In the interviews I've given.

Mr. Jenkins: Well you see, there's there were gold mines up there, there were gold mines out of Marysville, Yuba City area, Auburn, out of Jackson, all around here actually you could travel Highway 49, that's the Gold Trail, all the way up into Northern California. The City of Sacramento was a hub for the distribution of food and materials and a place to celebrate when they came down out of the hills in the winter time. Or to go on down to San Francisco.

Mrs. Brown: Oh I was going to mention, somebody said something about a household, he was talking about a Robertson house that was still standing and I wanted to mention the fact that the house that my grandmother and grandfather built is still standing, the home, they built it themselves. In fact my grandmother put most of the roof on the house and my mother recalled they couldn't afford to wallpaper the house so it was, she and her sisters used to have to save, go through the newspaper and save the pages that just had the fine print and didn't have pictures and big ads on them, they used that to paper the house. It's still standing right out over out there

Mr. Jenkins: They used flour paste.

Clarence: Flour paste?

Mrs. Brown: In fact the last time George was here he went out to take some more pictures of it just to make sure he had them.

Clarence: What was the location of the house?

Mrs. Brown: It was in Oak Park, it's on about 12th Avenue, I think, isn't it?

Mr. Jenkins: It used to be Rose Avenue. I can remember it today because there is an old black pump out there and we had [hard to hear, counter 489] two holer, grandma and my mother, our mother used to make lye soap and they had a stove, a four lid stove about that square, there was always a boiler, a copper boiler on that darn thing, heating water to do the washing with, I'll never forget that. I'll never forget grandmother and that Model T that,

Mrs. Brown: What would you say that, my [hard to hear, counter 494] is that 12th Avenue?

Mr. Jenkins: I don't know whether that is 12th or 14th, sister, I haven't been out there in so long.

Mrs. Brown: On about, because it used to be Rose Avenue.

[Counter 500]

Mr. Jenkins: Yes it used to be Rose Avenue. Because there was a boardwalk about Joyland, and you had to go around –

Mrs. Brown: I guess you have heard about Joyland by now?

Clarence: Yes.

Mr. Jenkins: That's prior to William Land Park. Joyland caught fire

Mrs. Brown: You mean prior to McClatchy Park?

Mr. Jenkins: No, I talking prior to William Land Park, the zoo.

Mrs. Brown: Oh, I was –

Mr. Jenkins: Joyland caught fire. They transferred the animals out to William Land Park and Joyland then became James McClatchy Park, after they tore the Giant Racer down and all the rest of the stuff that used to be out there.

Clarence: So Joyland was the center of the –

Mr. Jenkins: Of activity, it was,

Clarence: For young children.

Mr. Jenkins: Well they had a theater, they had an amusement, it was an amusement park. Giant Racer, a skating rink,

Mrs. Brown: You see, Oak Park wasn't a Black community then.

Mr. Jenkins: No, it was owned by the P. G.& E.

Mrs. Brown: You mean Joyland?

Mr. Jenkins: It was owned and operated, Joyland was.

Mrs. Brown: I didn't know that.

Mr. Jenkins: Yeah.

Mrs. Brown: So it was the, it was the recreational center for all of Sacramento, not just the Blacks.

Mr. Jenkins: And it was separate from the city itself, see. It was so far out at that time. Sacramento didn't actually extend beyond about 21st Street, in those days. In fact I remember that old C. P. Huntington locomotive you see sitting down in there in the railroad museum? Going up our street to Folsom pulling passenger cars, open passenger cars on Sunday afternoons. Sparks flying!

Clarence: [laughs]

Mrs. Brown: But I think there was, originally you asked about the interaction of the surrounding communities, I think that there was quite a bit of it because people used to marry to you know –

Mr. Jenkins: My dad used to say, “don’t talk about anybody because he might be a relative.”
[They all laugh.] It usually turned out that way too! [They laugh again.]

Clarence: So you are saying that the families from Sacramento went from the outlying areas to marry each other and extend their families to these different towns and surrounding areas?

Mrs. Brown: Like I, okay, I’m married to a Marysville, I was married to a Marysville man, he [Mr. Jenkins] married a Woodland woman, you know.

Mr. Jenkins: Actually –

Mrs. Brown: And half of my in like Earleen and Betty Jane’s generation that’s about a half of a generation before me, I think half the boys in town married those girls from Bryte and Broderick, you know, what were there names?

Mr. Jenkins: Uh huh.

Mrs. Brown: There was a big family, 16 or something like that and all the boys, they were very pretty. And all the boys went over there and married them. The Sacramento boys did.

Clarence: Well I'd like to thank you for your time and your recollections. I hope that we can do this another time, you know, when it's possible for us to maybe do, go back even farther or maybe sooner or.

Mr. Jenkins: I just wish that George had been around.

Mrs. Brown: Maybe he will be the next time.

Mr. Jenkins: He is the historian for the family.

[Tape one, Side Two ends, Counter 538]

[Interview ends]