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Glenda McKissic Baylor, Oral History Index

Glenda McKissic Baylor

Shannon Carter

Texas A&M University-Commerce

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Summary:

In this interview, Glenda Mckissic-Baylor discussed her experiences growing up in Mineola, Texas, during the 1960s. She was one of the first African-American students to voluntarily integrate into Mineola's white high school, where she worked to prove to her fellow students and teachers that she belonged there. She then attended East Texas State University, where she helped organize the first black sorority on campus, Alpha Kappa Alpha, on campus. In 1969, she was nominated to run for Homecoming Queen. She won the vote and became the first African-American woman to hold that title at ETSU. She graduated in 1971, and then became an educator in Los Angeles, California, where she received her Master's Degree. She moved back to Texas and worked for the Dallas Independent School District until her retirement in 2000. Glenda McKissic-Baylor currently lives in DeSoto, Texas.

Index:

- 0:00-1:00 [Introduction and biographical details]
- 1:01-1:25 CARTER: When did your brother graduate [ETSU]?
- McKssic-Baylor discusses her older sister being married, and then states that her brother attended ET in 1969.
- 1:29-2:14 CARTER: Can you tell us a little bit about your childhood? About your parents? Some of your favorite memories of growing up in Mineola?
- M-B: My childhood was a happy childhood, where I was always engaged in activities. In fact, as friends that I talk now they tell me about how I was always the leader. Always the one trying to get us involved in activities. Starting little clubs or whatever, you know as a teenager. Umm, so that desire, or wanting things to be better must have come at quite a young age.

- 2:15-4:43 CARTER: Can you share with us an early memory of things that needed to be better? That you saw needed some change?
- She mentions the population of Mineola at that time, and how the African-American children in the community were only able to use the church or school for recreational gatherings. The park in town, was segregated. She organized a social club, when she was a pre-teen, for African-American pre-teens, and teenagers, to have meetings, parties, or community service once a week. African-American children in the community would play baseball and football in vacant fields to pass the time.
- 4:44-5:00 CARTER: What did you guys call that first club? Do you remember?
- M-B: Uh, the first club, it was a song by Ramsey Lewis, *The In Crowd*. We were *The In Crowd*.
- CARTER: Oh, nice.
- M-B: A group of girls. We were called the *In Crowd Club*.
- 5:01-5:32 CARTER: And that was largely what you guys did at your meetings coming up with things the community needed, and hosting parties?
- M-B: Yes, yes. Hosting parties, and then that way we would get an opportunity to develop social graces, because we had no place to go to do that. We were learning in school from the textbooks. You know, how to be sociable, uh, but we had no gatherings for that because you didn't have social gatherings at the church during those days.
- 5:33-6:06 CARTER: [inaudible]
- M-B: Oh no, no, no, no. You just go to church and learn the scriptures, and all of that kind of thing, but no social graces. So, in our homes though, we could host little teas, you know, have a little, use our little dishes, and whatever, learn how to put the forks on the correct side. So, those kinds of things came out of those meetings, because whoever was hosting the meeting, uh, had to provide food, and whatever, so we learned how to put those things together.
- 6:07-8:17 CARTER: Who is your, who were some of your role models in your community that you may have drawn inspiration from?
- She discusses different teachers, counselors, and townspeople who she looked up to based on their kindness and success. She also discusses how during her childhood, it was a time where the entire community would watch out for each other, and help correct and raise each other's children.
- 8:18-8:50 CARTER: So, you helped desegregate the high school there...

M-B: I did.

CARTER: Can you talk about that experience? [There is an interruption of people coming into the interview room and disrupting the interview for a few moments until M-B can answer the question].

8:51-16:33 CARTER: So, if you could talk a little about that experience of desegregation.

M-B was one of five African-American students to voluntarily go to the white Mineola High and start the desegregation process. She was asked by her guidance counselor, Mr. Watson at the black school, to volunteer based on her academic quality. He wanted students that could prove to Mineola High that the black school had students who were top quality and competitive in academics before the forced integration would occur the following year.

CARTER: What year was that?

This was in either 1965 or 1966, because she graduated from Mineola High in 1968. She played clarinet in the school band, and was the only African-American student in the school band. M-B was not accustomed to band students starting school a few weeks early for marching practice, nor was she aware of chair tests in band, because the band in the black school was so small that these things were never done. She started out as fifteenth chair for clarinets, but she practiced very hard to become third chair, and remained there based on her merits and not on her race, as the girls in first and second chair were very good. She was very joyful and felt successful for placing in third chair, and her bandmates were surprised and congratulatory. She remembers how everyone in band was pleasant and non-aggressive towards her presence there, and no one called her derogatory names, except for one use of a racial epithet N-word. She was very anxious on her first band trip because she was uncertain on who would share the hotel room with her, or sit next to her on the bus, but the trip went smoothly and the girls she was paired with were “very nice.”

16:34-18:08 CARTER: There weren't additional tensions when the true integration began?

There was some tension and fighting mostly between the boys. The African-American athletes had been a winning team going to state championships and playoffs; however, the white athletes had not been a winning team, so the African-American students felt that there should be more African-American athletes on the football team for Mineola High, but that was not the case. The African-American athletes would be at practice and fighting for positions with players who were not as good, along with the fact that the African-American coach was made an assistant

coach with no authority, tension was created amongst the desegregated student body.

18:09-18:38 CARTER: When would the voluntary, we will get to the ETSU topic but this is fascinating, so I hope you don't mind if I stay on it a little bit longer. When you were doing the voluntary part, were there any other athletes involved in that cluster?

M-B: No, no.

CARTER: Ok, so these were hand-selected, academically-oriented, socially-oriented trial based.

M-B: Yes, yes, absolutely.

CARTER: Hand-picked.

M-B: Hand-picked. Five of us to go over there

18:39-20:59 CARTER: Were your friends from your previous school, I guess there were a lot of questions, a lot of curiosity, can you share with us some of those conversations?

Many peers wanted to know why she would want to go to the white school, and said that they would not go until they had to. Others wanted to know what it was like, and she would tell them about her experiences and that she was treated nice. However, the main question she received was on the state of the academics at Mineola High. She then discusses how her mother raised her to hold herself to high standards and that helped her believe in herself and her aptitudes.

21:00-21:55 CARTER: Did you know of anyone who lost out on graduation because of the transfer?

Some had to go to summer school for failing grades, especially for government, because the teacher in that class was particularly hard, and was old, and set in her ways. She would refer to the African-American students as "nigras," thus upsetting the students and causing them to lack motivation to work hard in her class.

21:55-28:00 CARTER: Was she fair?

This teacher was a harder grader on them, even on McKissic-Baylor. She knew she was in a class full of bright students, and even they tended to score lower in this class than normal. The students had been academically competitive at the black school, and were now competing in the white

school, and it made her work harder to be better. This taught her to “be better” and to “work harder.”

CARTER: When you were, before desegregation began, were your teachers preparing you for it? Everyone knew it was coming, as a baby boomer everyone knew it was coming, so what sorts of things were teachers, parents, or community members doing make sure how to anticipate and handle this sort of thing?

Teachers would motivate the students to work hard and always do better because once they join the white school, “they don’t care who you are and are going to fail you if you deserve a failing grade, you’re going to get it.” There would be no community outreach to the parents from the white school. But she felt that there was no real difference in the teaching styles between the two schools and that helped with the level of competition in academics.

CARTER: So, um, Joe Tave a friend of yours, a friend of ours, he’s a year older? Two years older?

He is about two years older than M-B.

CARTER: Was he, were you guys friends in back [trails off inaudibly]

He was friends with her during the *In Crowd Club* days, and they started a street dancing party. She was around thirteen years old, and she and Tave, went to City Hall to ask for permission to have a block party, and they were granted permission and the street party was a big success.

28:00-32:33 CARTER: The inequities that you saw in the community, it sounds like they were primarily the neglect that happens under Jim Crow.

M-B: Yes.

CARTER: [Tells an anecdote about Joe Tave noticing differences in the two schools regarding science lab microscopes quantities and qualities]. What did you notice about the difference in facilities? And it sounds like it didn’t so much make you mad, it made you work hard, of course he did [trails off inaudibly].

M-B: Well, first, when I was at the black school, every year we would get the second-hand books, where in the cover of the book you write your name and the year. When we would get the books, virtually there was no place for us to write our names because all the lines had been used. And that meant that they had used those books for years, and passed them on to us.

So, at the beginning of school, at the black school, it was always a mad dash trying to get the best book.

CARTER: That competition was there.

M-B: Exactly, that competition to get a good book that wouldn't have missing pages, and all this, that, and the other. When I went to the white school, my name would be the first one on the line, and wow that felt so good. You know, I have a brand-new book. And that was the first time I had a new book. When I went over there to get a fresh book with my name, and it was like everybody else will see my name when they get this book. Not me having to find a place to put my name.

Mineola High was larger and had better facilities and equipment. They had all of the necessary tools for science experiments, which was lacking at the black school.

CARTER: How'd you do it?

M-B: We didn't. That was the first time I did it when I went to the other school. The microscopes like he [Tave] said we had one where everybody had to share to look at whatever. Uh, we just didn't have the resources for us to have individual, or even to work in pairs. Uh, I think the most exciting thing to me, was when you had a coin and some solution you put on it made it look brand new, shiny. That was fascinating at the black school. That was the most scientific thing we had, to see it actually change. There was enough of that solution for everyone to take out a coin and make it new, you know look brand new. Uh, but over at the other school, dissecting frogs, I mean bisecting frogs, no, first time I did it was over there. I had never heard of anything like that.

She had seen school supplies for math classes, protractors, and compasses before but did not know what they were for until she went to Mineola High. Mineola High was also better when it came to the band room and the various instruments available.

CARTER: The uniform?

M-B: The uni...oh my gosh! Oh, the uniforms! You're absolutely right. The band uniforms. Everything, everything was better, everything.

32:33-40:04 CARTER: So, when you went over to the school as part of this volunteer group, some were saying "why where you doing that, I'm staying as long as I can," was there some talk about race traitor kind of thing?

M-B: Well yes, some kids called us a traitor. Uh, but I think really, they knew, because I didn't get a lot of that. But, yes, yes, there were some kids that would say, "Oh she's over at the 'white school.' Yeah, she wanted to go. We aren't going until we have to go over." But yes, a traitor, I was called a traitor. You know, "we're not good enough for you over here because you going over there." But them not knowing, but then my defense was "well I didn't choose to go." You know, I did choose to go, but Mr. Watson asked me to go over there, and talked to my parents and everything.

CARTER: You were all going to have to go over anyway.

She believes that going over early was to her advantage because it made her the "big person on campus," and all the new African-American students would come to her with questions about teachers, the cafeteria, and how to do things.

M-B: Now, when I was in the band, being the only black, going... we used to go to parades a lot. Uh, you know the Sweet Potato parade in Gilmer. Whatever, you know, the little festivals. The band traveled a lot. And, football games. I remember once we had to go to a game in Grand Saline, and Grand Saline, was that place that blacks don't stop through there. And even on the train, if going through Grand Saline, you're supposed to put down your shades, so that the people in the city wouldn't see that there were blacks on the train. You just didn't want to be seen in Grand Saline.

The band had to go to Grand Saline for a football game, and it got there before the football team. Her parents were worried about what would happen to her, being the only African-American in the band, in Grand Saline, and did not want her to go. Mineola High's principal and Mr. Watson, assured her parents that she would be safe. Joe Tave went to the game, as well, to watch after her. Nothing happened to her, and she had a positive experience. The stadium, and band, in Grand Saline were bigger and better than anything she had experienced at her black school. The Mineola band played well, and it made her proud.

M-B: It was exciting, in a quiet sort of way. You know, I felt that I needed to be reserved, because who was I gonna share that with? The others couldn't understand that feeling I was experiencing, because that was what they experienced all the time. But it was like, "wow, I wish I could share this. I wish they [African-American students from McFarland black school] were here to see this, and to be a part of this." But, it was just me.

During a parade she heard a little white child pointing out to his mother that there was a "nigger" in the band. There was no malice in the child's comment, but awe, and she remembers that it made her play her clarinet with more pride. She had a positive experience, and felt as though she fit

in and was like everyone else, and that her color did not matter. She never felt as though the teachers treated her as though she was “less than” the white students.

CARTER: You wouldn't believe them anyway.

M-B: I wouldn't. And I performed to that level, so it was never like, “well you're not doing what you're supposed to do,” so I never got that. But, when everybody came over, then I started hearing different stories. You know, those who were not academically inclined, the work was harder, um you know, then you started hearing the complaints.

40:04-40:21 CARTER: Were your parents from Mineola? Had you guys been there a long time?

Her mother was from Golden, Texas, and her father was from Jamestown, Texas. However, she was born and raised in Mineola.

40:21-41:04 CARTER: What brought them to Mineola? And how far away were the communities they were from?

Her parents' hometowns were not too far away, and she believes they came to Mineola for work at the pea factory and other packaging factories in town.

41:05-41:47 CARTER: And you and your brother were very close?

Yes, and still are to this day. He is present at the interview with her.

41:47-43:22 CARTER: So, did you guys, why East Texas State University? There was the Black College, Texas College that was really close, right? Had you thought that you might go there? Or were you always thinking you'd go further?

Before desegregation, she had visited many different black colleges during Homecoming games with the marching band. She saw how the dorms were crowded and they did not appeal to her. After desegregation, she came to Commerce and saw how spacious the dorms were, how large and nice the campus was, and knew that she wanted to go to ETSU for college.

43:23-45:00 CARTER: And what brought him [Joe Tave] here was apparently a similar experience. Looking at our dorms here versus the dorms that were at Wylie.

M-B: Wylie College, yes. Wylie, Prairie View, Jarvis--

CARTER: [inaudible] We hear it again and again it was the cafeteria, the big salad that gets [inaudible].

M-B: It was all of that, all of that. Everybody having to use this one restroom, you know with all of the stalls and the showers. And then over here, when I came, two people one bathroom. You know then you have your own shower right there, closets and oh no, no, no. You know, I've just always wanted better, and uh, wherever that better was, that's where I wanted to be.

CATER: It's not exactly our way the better that you want, you'll make it that way?

One way that she wanted to make ETSU better was by joining a sorority that was welcoming to African-Americans. There had not been a sorority on campus, and that made the African-American co-eds feel as though they were not welcome, and it also left them with nowhere to go recreationally. African-Americans were also not welcome at local places like Dairy Queen or the bowling alley.

45:00-45:45 CARTER: We were desegregated, so they should have been open, but they weren't?

The openness was reliant on the level of bravery of African-Americans to go to these locations. Many people just did not bother going because they did not want to deal with fights that might happen. This situation is what led to the idea of starting their own sorority, in order to have their own events to go to.

45:45-47:36 CARTER: So how did you decide which chapter you would want to establish first? You ended up establishing the first African-American sorority on campus.

There were no African-American sororities, but applications had already been put in for Delta. She tried different sororities, but never felt like she fit in. She and a group of girls put in an application to start Alpha Kappa Alpha, because they felt the qualities of poise and hardworking fit them more than other chapters.

47:36-47:57 CARTER: Was there resistance? Was it difficult to get this group started?

It was not difficult because they submitted an application and the Dean of Women helped them.

47:57-50:15 CARTER: So, your second year here is when you ran for Homecoming Queen?

Yes.

CARTER: So, we had never had an African-American Homecoming Queen before. Had we had any that had run?

There had been one young woman, Brenda Bailey, who ran the year before. Rumor was that she should have won, and there was a call for recount, but it was not granted and she did not win. This motivated the African-American students to try again, and they nominated her through ASSET—Afro-American Students Society of East Texas, which was an activist group, created by Joe Tave, to help African-American students' voices on issues be heard. Issues such as equal housing, representation in faculty and in courses, and employment. She did not know what to do to run for Homecoming Queen, and ended up asking Brenda Baily how to run. She also saw what the other nominees did, and she created cards and signs telling people to vote for her.

50:15-52:02 CARTER: Did you have a team of friends that were helping you do that?

She says that it was mainly the guys that would help her put out signs and placards.

CARTER: What role did ASSET play in the campaign part of it? Did they play a role in that? Or was it mainly just—

ASSET helped mainly by word of mouth and Joe Tave, who was the president of ASSET at the time, was spearheading that aspect. He was highly respected on campus, so it was very helpful. She did not receive any negativism during her campaign, and actually had some white students encourage her and cheer her on.

52:02-56:29 CARTER: The vote actually happens, when did they count the votes? Did that happen right before Homecoming? How does that work?

She does not know when the votes were counted, however they had to be counted and known prior to the Homecoming game. She did not go to class that day; instead, she stood outside the student union building and reminded people to vote for her.

CARTER: Do you remember when you got the news that you won?

M-B: Right out there on the football field. Uhm, I don't think anybody knew until it was announced. You know, of course the "administration" may have known. But, I remember the president. I was wearing a big afro, and uh, when my name was announced he said, "Well, you're gonna have to help me with this. I don't know how to put a crown in all of that hair, you know I've never had to do that before." And it didn't dawn on me, and he said before, I think before my name was announced. And I'm looking at him

going, "What are you talking about?" You know, it didn't register. But then when my name was called, the amazing thing, as I reflect on it, and as Joe and I have talked about it, and other people. My mother, my Godmother, and father were in the bleachers on one end. And you know, most of the college kids, we would all sit together, kind of in the middle. By the time they called my name, from the time they called my name, to the president putting the crown on, my mother and Godmother were on the field. Now can you imagine how fast that had to have been? They were in the bleachers, and by the time he got ready to place the crown, they were in the pictures. So, you'll see on some of those pictures, my Godmother and mother are actually in those pictures.

CATER: Wow.

M-B: So, they beat it down there, my dad didn't run out there on the field. But in route to the field, my mother was wearing a wig, her wig fell off because my Godmother, they were jumping, jumping, jumping up and hugging each other, so my mother's wig came off. She just reached out and put it back on. And in some of the pictures her wig is not quite straight. But, you know, it's like, wow! You know, that was just phenomenal. And the excitement that I heard in the stands, you know, I'm out here on the field, and to hear the excitement, and see people jumping up. And it was blacks and whites. However, you know, some whites, you know you could hear the moaning and groaning on one end, but the excitement on the other end of the field. And it was just, it was surreal. It was like, taking all of that in at one time. You know, the fact "I actually won," you know "I'm actually the Homecoming Queen." And then hearing the excitement here, and seeing all of the other take place. But, as I reflect on it, and then during that time as well, I can truthfully say, that people were leaving the stands because I won. Because during half-time, what do people typically do? They go and get refreshments, go to the restroom, but that could be the optimism in me, as well. I just always tend to see things for the better, and not for the worst. So, some of those people were leaving, yes. But to say that all of them got up and left because I was crowned Queen, I wouldn't say that.

56:29-57:39 CARTER: And this is, you hear the story that everyone got up because you were crowned Queen, was perpetuated in the news [trails off].

M-B: Yes, yes. And, even though I believe some did leave because, like I said, I heard cheering and excitement where the black kids were, and "ugh," you know the rumblings, you know the "boos" down on the other section. You know, cause even then we were segregated. The blacks were here, and the whites were here in the stands. So, I heard the two, but I chose to tune in to the positive, and the excitement of it all, and what it meant to so many people. You know, that uh, we're changing things. We're changing. And uh, not for the worse, but for the better. We're moving and making things better

for all of us at ET. You know, if it hasn't happened all these years, eventually it's gonna happen.

CARTER: You believe that in every fiber of your being.

M-B: Yes. Yes, yes. Eventually it's going to happen.

57:39-1:00:00 CARTER: Did um, can you tell us some of the broad strokes of what happened next? I imagine it was a whirlwind.

M-B: It was. It was. Ok, after being crowned and the pictures, and all of that, I remember looking at the girls who were runner ups. One young lady I think was truly genuine, in that she accepted the fact, you know, "ok good for you. I'm happy for you." But the others were, the looks were like of disdain, "well, how could she?" You know.

CARTER: Because you were black or because they lost? Or a little bit of both?

M-B: I think a little bit of both. I think a little bit of both. More or less, because "she's black!" You know, "how can this black girl win out over me?"

CARTER: [inaudible].

M-B: Yes! Absolutely! And as I look at the Beauties. The ET Beauties and all of that, you know, all white, all white. And not just the Homecoming Queen, but Miss ET, everything, you know, just that "beauty queen white." And all of the sudden now, they're the ones that are "she won over me?" I think for two of the young ladies, they could have accepted it better had it been a white girl. [There is an interruption to the interview here for a few seconds]. But uh, after that umm, uh, you know for all of the black students it was, oh gosh it was euphoric. For all of us.

CARTER: And that euphoria continued, I'd imagine, even amidst the controversy that followed?

M-B: Oh, yes, absolutely! Absolutely. And negatively, I received a few phone calls, uh calling me the N-word, and "you better watch your back." And I would go to the library a lot, because we lived in building F4, which I don't know if it is still there, uh, you know where all the sororities were. And I didn't have to go very far to the library. But then it became apparent that "maybe I better be," and I would go in the evenings, you know at night after the dinner meal, go to the library, come back home. I mean come back to the dorm and start. Uh, then I got, you know, I started feeling a little bit uneasy. You know, people were walking behind me, uh laughing, and whatever. It was like, "oh my God." You know, are they conjuring up something, to do something to me? And, and so, just out of safety, my brother would start

walking me to the library, or I would go with some other girls. And uh, some guys would say, [inaudible] "Queenie," they started calling me Queenie. "Well, Queenie, we better go with you. Let us know when you're going to the library, we'll walk with you. Let us know when you, how long you'll be there, and we'll be there to walk you back. But other than that, a few phone calls. Uh, not too much. Not too much.

1:00:48-1:07:19 CARTER: And you were saying that when the photographs, were taken in the woods instead of in the president's house. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

M-B: Yes, ok. Uh, if you look at all of the ET books, the Queens would take the pictures in the president's "mansion." We call it a "mansion," you know students, "oh the president's house." [Heritage House] Wherever the president was, you know, it was a beautiful, pristine environment. And when the newspaper, the ET newspaper, and the photographer, came to get me, I'm thinking, "I get to go, wow, I get to go to the president's mansion." And he said, "Well, you know things have changed. We're not going to the president's home for the pictures." "Oh, ok. Well where are we going?" "Well, we've spotted this nice, rustic, fall scenic place, that we want to take some pictures." Well I'm thinking, "Well, ok. Alright." But when we drove there, parked the car, and then we had to walk into the forest. I call it a "forest," had to walk into the woods, and I'm in my long formal, in heels, and everything. It's like, "something is not right with this." You know, "why am I having to walk down here?" And then I started thinking, "are they going to do something to me?" You know. It was just me. Me and them. It was like, "Oh my God!" You know, just a lot of things started going through my mind, but then the optimism, you know that "everything is going to be ok. They are just going to take pictures. Everything is going to be ok." But, all the time I'm thinking, should something happen, I won't say what, but bad things, rape, you know, what if these are not the real camera people from the ET paper? After the fact, it's like, "Oh my God," you know, I'm out here with these two guys, one is the reporter and one is the camera guy, "what if they're not the real people, and they've brought me to these woods." Oh, my heart was beating fast, and I just prayed, and you know, "everything is going to be ok, everything is going to be ok." And then in my mind, if something should happen, be prepared to defend yourself, to run, whatever. But it didn't happen. Thank God, you know, they were the "real" journalist and camera guy. They took the pictures, and when those pictures came out, other people reacted to them. I had already experienced what they were seeing, you know, me going into the woods, and umm, and as I look at my face now, I was looking in that ET paper, I think it was *The Locust* not the paper, the yearbook *The Locust*, for the year '69 [her picture is in the 1970 yearbook]. I was looking at those pictures, and I have over the years, and my face is not completely

relaxed, I can tell that. Umm, maybe others can't, but I remember what was going through my mind, and uh, you know, and I look at the Queen, the ET Queen's picture in the mansion, and she just looked so happy, so radiant, and so regal, and here I am in the woods.

CARTER: Right next to the lynching tree.

M-B: Oh gosh, so, so, all of that I think came through in the pictures as I looked at it. Uh, it wasn't like "I'm regal, I'm a Queen," that, that was not the feeling at all.

CARTER: Wow, but the contrast between you actually getting that crown, and your mom and your godmother behind you, and everybody just screaming with glee. And then the pictures [inaudible].

M-B: Yes, yes, yes. All of that, uh yes. And then too, I think the reception was before all of the picture taking. And then for the court, not showing, that was the first time ever that the court did not show. That was just an automatic, the Queen and the court showed up to this reception, and I think, one young lady came. The others, I think, in the book that I brought, said they had other commitments, you know, whatever was going on, they couldn't make it. But this was after the fact, and I think after the students reacted to it, then the sororities the young ladies who were runners up, felt obligated to send a little card explaining why they weren't there. You know, it had nothing to do with me being the first black Queen, but they had other things to do. But, never before. That was always a priority, you know. The Queen and the court, that was a priority. Plus, with as many people that didn't show. I remember the tables being set with food, you know, and it was in the ballroom over at the [inaudible]. Now, you don't get a ballroom if you don't expect a lot of people to be there. Traditionally, it had been filled with everybody coming to the ball, to that reception. Didn't happen. It did not happen.

CARTER: Did that make you sad?

M-B: Yes, yes, yes it did. Umm, you know, if, if you had lost, which they did, be gracious about it. Do the protocol things, and then go about your way. It was just for one more day, you know. Just show up, and then go about your business.

CARTER: Your sadness was maybe more, you thought more of them then what they actually displayed?

M-B: Yes, yes. And then, you know, it was like, all that grinning in your face, and "Congratulations," you know, you didn't mean that. You know, it

was fake. That wasn't really what you meant, because you didn't show up.

1:07:20-1:12:59 CARTER: So, what did you major in?

Business.

CARTER: So, when did you graduate?

August of 1971.

CARTER: And then you went to UNT for the Certification?

She moved to California to live and work there as a teacher. She earned her Master's Degree in California, and then moved back to Texas nine years later, and then she received her Certification in Administration.

CARTER: So, you spent your career in DeSoto?

She spent it in Dallas Independent School District.

CARTER: And so, the whole time you were there, in the Dallas Independent School District?

Yes.

CARTER: Did you expect as a child that you would be a teacher, and then an Administrator in Dallas?

She never thought she would be in Dallas because it was the "big city," but she always knew that she was meant for "big things." Her father had a sixth-grade education, and her mother graduated high school, and then attended Business school. However, she never used that, because there was not a demand for black-female secretaries at that time. Therefore, they instilled the ideals of education, and aspirations for bigger and better lives, to their children. M-B originally wanted to be a stewardess, so that she could dress nice and travel. She has always, and still does, feel as though she has not reached her full potential and continues to push herself to do so. She feels as though people think she has accomplished so much, and she believes that she could have, and should have, done so much more than she did.

CARTER: Probably everybody has those kinds of thoughts about themselves [inaudible].

Her father was quiet but always supportive. There was only one car in their family, and he always made sure to pick her up, and drop her off, for piano lessons. He changed his work shift in order to drive her, and her siblings, to the white school after integration, so they would not have to walk all the way from their side of town. Her mother was a more vocal supporter, telling her that she could do anything because she was special. She would tell M-B how much she wanted her to get an education so that she could go on to better things.

1:13:00-1:18:17 CARTER: I want to ask you a couple of more things about broader, more global things. And I think we will definitely want to see if we can follow up. You were in Mineola during a couple of pretty significant events, that I'd like to ask about. For example, where were you when you heard about JFK's assassination?

She was in her English class at McFarland black school. The windows were up because there was no air condition, and they could hear the lady across the street come out and start yelling that the president had been shot. She mentions that there were no televisions at the black school, however there were at the white school, and so they were not sure if it was true until the Principal came on the announcements to tell the school what had happened.

CARTER: What was your reaction? What was the reaction of the children around you, once y'all discovered it was real?

They were shocked, because they couldn't understand who or why someone would do that to such a nice man. She was in eighth or ninth grade when it happened, so she was not affected by the political ramifications, she was dealing with the humanistic side.

M-B: Because black people liked him, you know, everything is black and white. You know, because he was advocating integration, and everything that was going on during those times of the mid-sixties. That's why they killed him, they don't want blacks to progress. They don't want us, it wasn't blacks, they don't want us. It was them against us, they don't want us to move forward.

CARTER: You were in high school, your senior year when Martin Luther King was assassinated, you were at the white school. What do you remember about that day?

It different from when JFK was killed, because integration had already happened, and they did not know how people in the white school felt so they [African-American student body] felt as though they could not show their feelings or emotions about his death.

M-B: In fact, I remember hearing a boy, whether he meant it or not, saying, “Good for the coon. Good for him. Somebody got the coon.” And it was like, “Oh my God!” So, with that situation, I didn’t want to say, or do anything, that would cause a riot.

There were only two or three African-American students per classroom, so they always knew they were outnumbered; always needing to be on guard, and having “to assimilate to the white culture” and values. The African-American students were never nominated or voted into student council offices.

M-B: I was always justifying [the lack of nominations of African-American students for class officers], “well they don’t know our names.” Because these nominations would take place at the beginning of the school year. “we haven’t been here long enough for them to know us.” You know, so how could they nominate Glenda McKissic, because they “don’t know my name.” But, they grew up with each other.

1:18:18-1:20:40 CARTER: It occurs to me, again, that your interest and your desire to organize, and how much of a sacrifice you made going to that [inaudible] going to that all-white school, knowing probably going in that, though you had been very likely in route for something like a Prom Queen, [inaudible] that was not going to be something that you get at the white school. Did that cause you pause? Or were those things you weren’t so obsessed about these things, I’m sure?

M-B: No. Uh, because I figured it was for a greater cause. Umm, what I sacrifice is nothing, to open the doors for everybody else, or to pave the way for everybody else to come. You know, to get this barrier thing out of the way, so that when everybody else comes over we won’t have to go through riots, won’t have to go through being on T.V for Mineola High School for blacks and whites not getting along. I was more like an ambassador.

Because she did not receive any negativity, or name calling, from the white students when she volunteered to integrate the year ahead of everyone, she would tell the African-American students that everything was fine as long as they did their homework. She also had white students come to her for advice on things.

1:20:41-1:26:04 UNKNOWN #1: I have a quick question [a quick interruption by Carter]. My quick question is, what was it like going from Texas to California? And then, coming back, nine years later? And was there much of a change in North Texas, after the nine years in California.

She had changed, but Texas had not. She was accustomed to traveling ever since she was twelve years old, and all her experiences exposed her to the different ways in which segregation was, or was not, used. She always felt that no matter where she was, or who she was with (regardless of race), that she would always be with the best of people. Although, when she did come back to Texas, she could see racism and prejudice in things she had always taken for granted, because she Las Angeles exposed her to new things.

M-B: But I did see the differences in the black side of town and the white side of town. Or from the black side of town in comparison to the rest of the world, and there are a lot of injustices. They weren't imposed, but it was like, "we can do better," you know, we can do better for ourselves. We don't have to wait for other people to do it. Let us do it. Let us maintain our lawns, or paint our houses. You know, we don't have to be like this. And people weren't doing it and it was like, "why?" People weren't doing this everywhere else. But, lack of exposure perhaps, and I know income had a lot to do with it. Buy paint, or you buy groceries. Buy a lawnmower to do your lawn, or you buy clothes for your kids. And, I understand that. But then it was still like, we could still do better, because it was always instilled in me to do better.

1:26:05-1:40:15 UNKNOWN #2: I had a question, when we had one [inaudible], she said something about how before desegregation, it was a village attitude where everyone kind of looked out for each other. If you had to, as an educator and administrator in Las Angeles and Dallas, you've seen that transition occur in the black community, where there is no longer that village mentality. Especially, when you're teaching in inner-city schools. Can you talk about the transitions that you've seen, and the impact that you think that they're going to have on the future of the black community?

She was a the only African-American teacher at a white school in San Pedro. She saw that the students had everything, and she wanted to teach for inner-city schools where that was not the case. She wanted to pass on what she had learned to the inner-city students. She always felt a sense of community, even when she came back to Dallas as an Administrator. However, she does not sense, or see, that community today in the schools.

M-B: That sense of community, in our black community, is not there, and that is devastating to us. It is as though we are a ship, not even a ship, we're a boat in the big ocean, and there are a lot of boats out there, but everybody's in their own little boat with no connection. You know, I'm just going to worry about my one boat, and I see what's happening over

there, but that's not my business. And, I see the devastatingly effect on our kids, on our black kids, and I think that's one reason sagging has been allowed to take place. Because, in our typical "it takes a whole village," that would not happen, but ok that parent doesn't want me saying anything to their kid.

She has experienced this lack of community, and not being allowed to correct other people's kids, even within her own family. She got into a confrontation with a cousin at a family gathering, for having corrected her cousin's eleven-year-old daughter. She was hurt to see that the lack of community goes all the way to the family now. She has caught herself correcting random kids in public because the "teacher" in her comes out.

M-B: But the kids respond. "Oh I'm sorry Miss. I'm sorry Miss." They don't know me, but "I'm sorry Miss." I guess it's that, whatever [Unknown says "authority"]. But that's in any setting, you know. It's like if I see you doing something you shouldn't do. I'll go to you in love, but I tell you that's wrong. You know, why are you doing that?

CARTER: I'm going to follow-up on her question, I'll give it back to her, but do you try then when you are working with the first-year teachers, do you try to push them to stay in the inner-city communities that need them? Because, my understanding is that one of the reasons why you kept being placed in these all-white, wealthier schools was because of your experience and strength as a teacher. And you start in the weaker schools, and then move out where we need the stronger teachers [inaudible]. So, is that part of your training to see if they can muster that long-term connection too? You taught in two districts that are really controversial. They're struggling on the national stage for quit a pass [inaudible]. With lots of struggling kids, lots of poverty, and lots of drugs.

She feels that she was placed in schools that were struggling because she was a strong teacher. But she was not getting a sense of fulfillment.

CARTER: Do you try to foster that in the new teachers, to see that they are on the route for something fabulous. But understanding that fabulous might not be Coppel, that "we might need you here."

She does try to get first year teachers, unless they feel they are above working in an impoverished school, to try and teach, and stay, at inner-city schools.

M-B: But back to your question [Unknown #2], I think it is such a travesty that we, even as African-Americans, don't feel comfortable talking to others when we see them not doing what they should be doing.

When she first moved to DeSoto, and it was mostly a white community, she still felt a sense of that “community,” because the few African-Americans had to stick together. Now, that the population is more diverse, that sense of looking out for one another is gone. She was getting breakfast, and stopped a street fight in her dressing-gown. She has not had any issues in the neighborhood since.

M-B: But we need to demand better, we really do. And, kids respond to that, they really do. When they hear your heart, they respond, I don’t care if you’re reprimanding them, or telling them to stop, or whatever. Same thing with the sagging. I’ll say, “young man,” and I’ll just look at them [inaudible], “I’m sorry miss,” you know how they pull them up, but they fall back down, but you know they pull them up. But a lot of kids, if you approach them the wrong way will look at you like, “well who are you,” but I’ve never gotten that.

1:40:15-1:40:41 CARTER: [inaudible]

M-B: I do. I do. But I long for those days when we look out for each other, and want the best for everybody.

1:40:41-1:46:28 UNKNOWN #2: So, do you think, obviously desegregation was a good thing for the black community, but what desegregation did, I remember talking to one of my professors last summer about how desegregation allowed for stratification in the black community. Whereas before, if you were the black lawyer, the black doctor, or the black [inaudible] janitor, you were still living in the neighborhood [inaudible].

M-B: That’s right. That’s right.

UNKNOWN #2: So, do you think that that’s had the economic stratification that’s created a huge issue in terms of being able to relate?

She feels that it has, and gives examples of how the African-American business people of Mineola stayed on the African-American side of town, and still are to an extent. She feels like it also has isolated the children as well.

M-B: But as African-Americans, we’re inclusive. You know, I think our culture is pretty much inclusive. We don’t want you to feel unwelcomed, you know, “can’t we get along,” so to speak. But it is when we have to assimilate into the broader communities, there’s very little outward effort to make us feel comfortable. We just have to do it ourselves.

CARTER: And that is still the case all these years later.

M-B: It is, it is. It certainly is.

CARTER: Is there any kind of final word that you would like to give us, we'll ask you back? I guess one thing would be that if you were going to go back to that young Glenda who's getting ready to organize that street party, or even earlier with your *In Crowd* establishment, what advice would you have for her and the incredibly complex times that she is about to embark on?

M-B: Wow, I think I was prepared, and people didn't lecture me. You know, the teachers, the principals, I've just always been one, when I hear something, I take advice. You know, some people have to experience it and go, "I know not to do that again." I can see what's happening top everybody else and I don't want that to happen to me, so this is the route I need to go. So, I took advice, and heard advice from those older than me. And, I think it just became a part of me. So, if I had to say anything it would be, "go, just go for your dreams." Which, I did and I didn't. You know, I think I went for what was immediately accomplishable, but, like when I got here to ET. I really wanted to major in, I wanted to be a lawyer. But, that was like, "ugh, four years of being down here, and four more years of law school." I didn't look long range enough. I've always been ok. "Deal with what you have to deal with now, and then go to the next phase." Uh, when I was here it was like, "just get out of here," so as a consequence I graduated in three years. I came in taking 21 hours, and that's unheard of now-a-days, but I took 21 hours each semester.

CARTER: You were always in a rush with life I guess.

M-B: Yes! To get to that next thing, whatever it was. So, "just slow down, and look long range. Put better plans in place. Just look more long range. And go for it. It's there for you, just go and get it."

[Closing thanks]