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Interview with

NORVELL REED

March 11, 1988

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Richard Byrd

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Oral History Collection

Norvell Reed

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Mr. Byrd: This is Richard Byrd interviewing Ms. Norvell Reed for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on March 11, 1988, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Ms. Reed in order to obtain her recollections concerning the Denton Christian Women's Interracial Fellowship.

Ms. Reed, can you please tell us a little bit about your background--when and where were you born and things of that nature--just a biographical sketch, so to speak?

Ms. Reed: I was born right here in Denton, Texas. I attended Fred Moore High School. I finished high school in 1940. Well, do you want to know about my family and all?

Mr. Byrd: Yes.

Ms. Reed: Well, I'm from a family of five children. My maiden name was Hill before I married. I'm a member of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church.

Mr. Byrd: Could you tell me what it was like growing up in Denton, Texas, when you were a child?

Ms. Reed: Well, I had a happy life growing up and a nice family--a

good mother and father. Things were quite well. My dad had a good job. He worked at the college--at the college store--and then later he worked at TWU as a pastry cook. My mother was a housewife. I just had a real good life coming up, a nice school life. I like Denton, and it's my home. I don't have any bad memories.

Byrd: When you were living at home, were you living in town proper or on the outskirts?

Reed: I lived right here in town. I was born and reared right here on this street--not at this house but just up on the next block. I grew up right around here.

Byrd: In your neighborhood was it a segregated neighborhood or mixed neighborhood?

Reed: No, at that time it wasn't a mixed neighborhood. After you crossed the tracks, blacks lived on this side.

Byrd: Did you have any contacts with whites while growing up--in your recreation activities or school?

Reed: No, not really. I walked to school. We went to school over in the other section of town. Well, I'd say it was across the creek where the school was located in another community. I went to Fred Moore School. The only contact we had was when the white and black kids passed each other coming and going to school. Most of those kids lived on the hill, and they were going to Robert E. Lee school at that time. That was about the closest contact we had with white and black kids. We went to just one school--the all-black school.

Byrd: How about, say, merchants in town?

Reed: Well, you mean the stores? The places we were able to shop?

Byrd: Yes.

Reed: Well, we could go to most of the stores to shop, but there were some limits. If you went into the drugstore, you weren't served. You couldn't sit at the counter on the stools. But if you went in to buy something as a kid, you could buy an ice cream cone or a Coca-Cola or whatever, but you took it to go. When you were young, you wondered about those things, but you didn't know at that time. You just happily took it and went on out with it and went on down the street eating it. Of course, the cafes and whatnot were not open to blacks at that time, but some of the cafes would serve you if they had a back entrance where you could go. We went to the movies. We sat upstairs. I remember the westerns. As a kid we went to the movies in the afternoons sometimes after school. We sat in the balcony, and the whites sat in the lower sections. Then on weekends we would have what you called midnight shows, and some of the main movies we could go and see after hours. After the whites had come out, then they would show it, and blacks would go in and see these movies.

But I think that all in all, there was a pretty good relationship between the whites and blacks. We didn't have any big problems. At least at that time, I didn't notice any. Like I said, my dad always had a pretty nice job. He

made a nice home for us. We understood that there were certain places that we didn't go and couldn't go, so we didn't.

Byrd: Was that just kind of a working rule, or was that enforced in any kind of way in terms of knowing where not to go and when not to go?

Reed: Well, you didn't want to be asked out. In the grocery store and places, you knew that blacks weren't to--way back at that time--drink from those fountains. So there were certain things that you knew were not for you, so people learned. Like the little laundromat up here, well, they had on the door the sign "Whites Only," so you knew you didn't use that. To me, I guess, at that time it was just a way of life. You just knew this, and you just accepted it and went on.

Byrd: So this was prior to, say, the 1940s?

Reed: Oh, sure. This was prior to integration. After Martin Luther King, a lot of places opened after that was all over. Of course, a lot of the signs and whatnot came down, like, on the buses. All of those things began to gradually change.

After the interracial organization came about, well, they joined in and helped and went to place to place. Groups would get together and go. They would tell us to come, and we'd go with them. We'd get together and go. Then the streets...I remember the streets were muddy and

unpaved and everything. We decided where we would have the meetings, and we would all meet at the church right up here---the Baptist church, the church that I belong to. We would walk and go from house to house and get the people to sign up. Then the group went back to the city council, and finally that came to be a reality.

Byrd: What about after your graduation from high school? Did you perceive any of these constraints either from the enforcement position or from what, I'd say, an informal power structure making the separation continue?

Reed: After it was all over? Do you mean after this change?

Byrd: What I was getting at was how the separation of the two races was maintained. Was it done in a formal situation, like, by utilizing law enforcement, or was it just kind of informal? Was there an informal power structure maybe outside the city government or anything like that?

Reed: Well, it seems like here in Denton, it was just kind of accepted. At the colleges and everything, the workers...well, leaflets were put out and whatnot, and these were picked up. It seems that those who were in authority there at the college had all of these picked up. That's why I'm saying that it seems that it was very peaceful and smooth. It went through very peacefully around here.

Byrd: It's my understanding that North Texas State University integrated its student body prior to the integration of public schools in town. How did the townspeople respond

when Tennyson Miller came to school here, or Abner Haynes? How did the town seem to respond the integration of the college?

Reed: You know, not being out there or anything, I don't think there was any kind of trouble, I mean, nothing that would really stand out, other than maybe leaflets being put out by some group or something like that. Other than that, I wouldn't know anything. Of course, the papers carried nothing. Now they couldn't live on the campus. The first person was turned away. But after they were accepted--Tennyson Miller and everything--well, it seems there was no kind of uprising or anything like that. The students who came attended the college, but they had to live in the black part of town. People had rooms and would rent rooms to them. Then some of them fixed up around the block here a building that was built kind of like a little rooming house.

Byrd: Did you say that was up the street? Do you remember what street?

Reed: Well, that was right there in the building where the funeral home is now. It was built there for that purpose--housing black students.

Byrd: How many students, do you think, would it hold, or how many lived there?

Reed: I wouldn't know exactly, but I would say maybe about twenty.

Byrd: Was it for males? Females? Was the boarding house built for men students or female students?

Reed: I really think it was for men students.

Byrd: Ms. Mohair, whom I talked to the other day--you may recall Billie Mohair--said that her family took in several students over the years.

Reed: Oh, yes. And I did, too. I had students--girls. Well, one year I had girls. Then if I kept boys, I kept boys; and if girls, I kept girls. Up the street where my family home was, my mother had a garage apartment, and she rented it to maybe three boys or three girls. They would be up there at the different terms. All over town the blacks would rent rooms.

Byrd: Was it a group activity or just individuals who rented rooms out on their own? Was it a group action?

Reed: Really, you signed up to do it. It seems they knew from the college. They knew what homes they were living in. They kind of kept contact as to where they were living and how many students you could keep and all of this. You just kind of kept a record of it, I think.

Byrd: How about the situation at TWU? Were they a mixed student body, or was it segregated, too?

Reed: It was segregated, also.

Byrd: For the same length of time? This is one thing I hadn't realized before. Until I talked to Ms. Mohair, I didn't know they had been segregated, too.

Reed: Oh, yes, it was segregated, also. I couldn't be real sure about it, but I think North Texas was the first to open its

doors. Now I wouldn't know the first students were that were accepted out at TWU.

Byrd: Your childhood home...does you family own property, or is that rented?

Reed: No, my family owned the home. We owned our family home.

Byrd: What about your neighbors? Were they mostly landowners or property owners, too?

Reed: Yes, it seemed that most of the blacks had their own homes all through here (gesture). These people bought their property.

I was actually born up there where the city park is now. Blacks were living there. Of course, that was near the college, and as the college began to grow and everything, well, they moved blacks out. Then that's when they divided, and some bought in that section over between the tracks, and then others bought out in this section. The guy who sold this land was Mr. Miles; he was a white landowner. When he first sold this land, the first house that was built out here, well, a group burned it because they didn't want this sold to blacks. But he got up a group, and he told some of the black guys that were buying some of the land that if they would come with him, then he would see that they were protected after they built their homes. Some of the people moved their little homes from over there where the city park is. Let me see...what's that street now? I can't remember the street right now. But when they moved the houses from

over there, well, then some bought in this area, and some bought in the other area.

Byrd: What about this burning? I hadn't heard about this.

Reed: Burned the house?

Byrd: Yes.

Reed: Well, that was the first house that was moved out here.

Byrd: Oh, so the home was moved over on the property?

Reed: Moved over here, yes--the first one was moved. They were objecting to him selling the land to the blacks. But he just insisted that he was going to do it. He stayed out here and guarded this house. They didn't burn it completely down, but they set fire to it. But he guarded it. There's and elderly man here who remembers all of this. He's still living. He's up in his eighties, but he was young then at that time.

Byrd: Do you recall offhand what that year was?

Reed: Well, I'm sixty-six. I think my mother told me I was about two, maybe, when they moved, so I wasn't old enough to remember the moving. But after we got over here, my mother and them moved the old house.

Byrd: So that would have been in the he twenties, then, when they moved?

Reed: That would have to be in the twenties, say, maybe about...I was born in 1921, and maybe that would have been along about 1923, I guess.

Byrd: You say this Mr. Miles was more agreeable...

Reed: I think he has a son. I think he's still living down in East Texas someplace. I could probably look that up because when we built on this land here, we had to get deeds and abstracts and all these kinds of things straightened out. He's long been dead--the old man--but he had this son. I remember my husband drove down there to get him to, I think, sign some papers for him to clear everything, to clear this land. So he did sign. That's all on my deeds and abstracts and stuff like that. I could have had that with me if I had known these were going to be questions, but I do know that he owned all of this.

Byrd: Do you know if he faced any opposition from maybe the other whites?

Reed: His son?

Byrd: Yes.

Reed: No, I doubt it. I think the father cleared all of this. He would almost daily ride through, and we all knew him. He had one of these--what you would call--a painted horse. I remember him so well as a child, and he had his big cowboy hat on. As a child we would stand out, and we would always wave. He would always ride through ever so often. Of course, all this wasn't particularly settled at the time. Just houses were here, yonder, and there--just not particularly settled. He gave land for the church.

Byrd: Now you say he was a white fellow?

Reed: Oh, yes.

Byrd: I was just wondering, after the house had been burned, if he faced other hardships.

Reed: Oh, yes. That's why I said that he got a group together and told them to watch by night to see that it wasn't burned. You know, it frightened people, and they weren't going to buy the land. Naturally, they weren't going to buy because they didn't want their new houses burned after they had gotten moved over here. He told them that he would guard it and would see that it wouldn't happen, that they didn't do it anymore. So it didn't. It didn't happen anymore. So as I said, he came around through the day, so maybe he was coming around through the night, too. I don't know (laughter).

Byrd: Was credit a problem for those property owners? Did they buy with cash, or did he help carry the notes? I don't know what the land prices were or whatever. I'm just wondering if he helped to get credit for those who might have needed it to buy the land.

Reed: Well, you see, the city bought the land from them. So they had that money to put in, you see, when they purchased it from them because they owned their homes out there. I just can't remember right now. I don't know the name of the street, but it's where the city park is located now. My mother told me that our house was located along in there where the Senior Citizens Center is--right in that area. That's where our house was. But I don't know about whether

he helped to get them in there, whether they had to have loans. It seemed they just wanted the land. The houses they could take, so the houses were moved.

Byrd: You were talking a minute ago about public accommodations. You were talking about the drugstores and things like that.

Reed: I remember my brother. He was just a little boy, and he went to the drugstore. We knew, you know. We were a little older, and my mother and father told us, "You don't go there and get on the stools to eat." He would see others do it, so he thought...he was just a little boy, so he hopped up on the stool and ordered him an ice cream cone (chuckle). They served him the ice cream cone, but the cook that worked there in this particular drugstore saw him. So she came out, and she whispered, "Now you go on out and run on home with your ice cream cone and eat it." So he hopped down. He was just a little boy. He hopped down and was on his way with his ice cream cone in his hand (chuckle). Right now we laugh about it. He decided to sit on that stool and eat his ice cream cone, but he wasn't old enough to understand.

Byrd: How about restaurants?

Reed: They would tell you, "We don't serve you." Then when you were traveling, you had to go to the bushes; you couldn't stop at a filling station and go to the restroom. That was even in...I married in 1941, and we were traveling to Marshall, Texas, to take my husband's mother, and that was really the time that I really noticed it most. She took

sick on the way, and we stopped at a little filling station to see if she could use the restroom. The filling station owner told us that he was sorry, but they didn't have one for blacks, and he couldn't allow us to use it. So then we had to find a place along the highway where he could take her out behind the bushes to find the growth where he could take her and hide her from traffic on the highway. All of this was just like that, and you learned to just accept it as a way of life for you.

Byrd: How did you get involved with this particular organization--the Denton Christian Women's Fellowship?

Reed: Really, when the schools were integrated, I was concerned about the children going to the schools. So this lady, Euline Brock, after they integrated the schools, offered to help tutor the children. She took a particular interest in my daughter. She helped get up a group. Other parents wanted their children to have the help, so then she got up this tutoring group. There were students from the college who came. At first she started with these two--Dickie Rogers and Irene Williams, who was my daughter. She started working with them because they were both in high school. She would come and pick up my daughter and take her out to her house, and they would work with her. So then they decided they would...others joined in, and then she got groups of students who were willing to tutor, to help these kids in anything that they were having problems with by

going into the school. So that was really the beginning, I think, of this organization.

I believe this organization really started a little before the public school was integrated. The children were allowed at first to remain in Fred Moore, or they could transfer. That was the first beginning of it. Then, of course, they completely integrated. But at first they had a choice of going.

Byrd: How did that choice work? Was it kind of a transfer from one school to the other? Just how did that work?

Reed: Yes, they could transfer from the Fred Moore School to the other schools. There were a few because they knew that those schools were better equipped and everything. Now at the time, when they built the new Fred Moore building, they had a library, but this was never completely equipped as a library at the time. It wasn't completely equipped as a library. Then they had a little place for a chemistry lab, but to my knowledge it was never really equipped, say, equally.

Byrd: Now you said the new Fred Moore. Was that a new building from when you attended?

Reed: Oh, sure. This is new from the old building that I attended.

Byrd: Could you compare how the new one stacked up to the one that you attended--the facilities in the high school? You're one of the few people I've talked to who was an alumnus of Fred Moore.

Reed: Well, it was small. I believe there were four classrooms and a homemaking room, and that was it. The homemaking department was added just before I went into high school. I attended the homemaking department.

Byrd: This was in the old Fred Moore?

Reed: That was in the old Fred Moore. Now we had a nice-equipped homemaking department.

Byrd: Compare the facilities in the old one to, say, the new one. Was there a whole building built, or was it just added on to or what?

Reed: The homemaking department was added on. It was added on to the old building. The old building was just a frame building. There were four classrooms, as I told you, and we had outdoor outhouses at that time. But we were so proud of that homemaking department, so glad to get that, because we had a good homemaking teacher, and we felt like we really had something, something that we needed. She taught sewing and cooking.

Byrd: Were there more girls than boys?

Reed: In the homemaking class?

Byrd: No, in Fred Moore generally speaking.

Reed: I think it was about equal. I think it was about equal. We had the game of football. The boys would get the old suits from North Texas. They would give them the suits. I can't remember just...maybe in the 1930s--somewhere in the 1930s--they started having the football team. North Texas gave

them their old suits. They would go out and get the old suits (laughter). The boys would find one they could wear. Right down here on Hickory was where they played the games. They went out and marked it off themselves. At that time they didn't even have a hired coach. A guy who had gone to Prairie View College kind of coached the boys and taught them to play football. But prior to that, we didn't have a football team. As I said, the suits and shoes and things, they'd bring in a load of them, and then they just had to go through those and see what they could wear and pick out what they could wear. They formed this football team.

Byrd: Who did they play? Did they travel around or play some of the closer schools around Denton or what?

Reed: I think at that time, they played just the closer schools, just the schools that were close around that had the little football teams at that time.

Byrd: Did they play any white teams?

Reed: Oh, no, no. No white teams. They never played white teams.

Byrd: Compare Fred Moore High School at the time you were going there to the local white high school. Can you draw a picture of, say, facilities?

Reed: There really was not much comparing you could do. It was just on the order of the old schoolhouse. We had the room with the little gas heaters. When the weather was cold, kids came in--walked from all of these different communities to the school. We had one little gas heater that all the

kids would gather around to warm up when you got in half-frozen (chuckle).

We always had a chorus or something like it. The kids would sing, and that was one of the things. Ever so often they would invite the Fred Moore chorus up to sing at the high school or the junior high school here. Then we would get to see how nice the white school was and how different it was. That was the way we learned that it was really different because we just didn't have all those things. Then for so long the books that were used were given to Fred Moore School, so we would always have books that were used.

Byrd: Did you resent going to school at Fred Moore with the older books and maybe a shortage of facilities overall? Did that play any part at all with your wanting to get involved with the group and especially at the school before being integrated?

Reed: Oh, yes, it did! You wanted your kids to have all of the things and to be able to have all these courses and everything. My sister finished Fred Moore, also, and she went to Praire View. Well, you see, living here even with the two colleges, you couldn't enter the colleges here, so you had to go to some of the black colleges that were near. A lot of the kids went to Texas College in Tyler and then Prairie View State College. When she went, she went to study to be a nurse. She said that when she got there, she found that she knew nothing about the subjects she had to

take, so it made her have to take extra subjects along with those subjects she would naturally have to be taking. I'm talking about those pertaining to the nursing courses she was taking. She had to just double up and really study hard and everything in order to take up these courses that she hadn't had. She said some of the kids from other schools, even other black schools where they had had some of these subjects maybe in their schools, they didn't have to take the extra courses in order to keep up and to be able to get into it. So she would call home and cry and tell my mother she just couldn't take it any longer. She wanted to come home because it was so hard and everything. That was when I was telling you that the library was really never at that time equipped and everything. She said she didn't even know how to go to the library and check out the books and things. She said she had to have others to show her--those who maybe had come from schools where they did have library facilities. This was kind of embarrassing and everything, and it was hard. She would call and call, and she would call back and tell my mother and dad to come and get me. She said, "I just can't stay." My dad would say, "Well, I'll just go and get her. She's having such a hard time." My mother said, "You're not! You're not! She's going to <u>stay</u> there! She's going to stay <u>right there</u>! She can <u>do</u> it!" And she did. She'd always be crying. She stayed and she made it, and she's a registered nurse today. She taught

nursing, and she attended TWU. After she was grown and out and teaching, well, she attended TWU to take some more work on it.

But it was those kids who really struggled and stuck in there that made it at that time. There were so many things that they could have had that they didn't have. That's why we were anxious then. If you remember, they had first "separate but equal." But, see, that didn't ever really come about, either, I mean, completely. That's why so many people were happy and wanted their children to get in where they could get on these things that were not offered. Now it wasn't that we didn't feel we didn't have good teachers. We did have good teachers and people who were really interested in the children and made it known to them that they needed to stay on in school and needed to get everything that they had to offer there. But it was just that things weren't offered. The school wasn't equipped with so many things that they were going to need when they did go into the colleges. That was one of the things that made us feel good about the schools being integrated, because we felt like they would have a chance to get it. Whether all of them really took advantage of it, they had the chance to get it.

Byrd: Describe for me how the Denton Christian Women's Fellowship worked on this tutoring project. How did that come about, and how did it get underway?

Reed: Well, after the schools were integrated, well, see, some of the kids were having problems getting some of the work that they had to do. In order to keep these children from wanting to drop out and losing interest completely, well, they started the tutoring: "You have some help. We're going to help you." Euline Brock was really an angel. She really got in there, and then others joined. She was really the one who came to help and stuck there with us.

Then after we got that, we moved on to different other projects, like, the picture shows. You couldn't go to this one; you couldn't go to that one. Well, then they began to go in groups, like, we'd go together and see whether they were going to let us come in or not. So they went along with you. They didn't say, "Well, you go on and try it yourself."

Byrd: Who all was involved in that?

Reed: You mean, do I remember some of the women who went? Trudy Foster, Dorothy Adkins, Euline Brock, Robbie Donsbach, Elsie Hampleman. I often wonder where Elsie Hampleman is. She taught school in Lewisville, I believe, but I haven't heard from her in a long time.

Byrd: All of these women were white?

Reed: All of these were white, yes. There were others that maybe I can't just recall right now. But these were some that participated. Linnie McAdams...of course, she's black...Catherine Bell...oh, just a large number of blacks.

Byrd: Describe for me going to the movies.

Reed: To the movies?

Byrd: Yes. Would you go as a group or in pairs?

Reed: Well, gradually it seemed that it just kind of happened. If you were going to a movie, you could go to the movies. As I said before, Denton didn't seem to put up a big fight. I can say this for Denton, too, that there always seemed to be a pretty good relationship between blacks and whites. Where other places were having big problems, it seems that Denton really never had just a lot of big problems. It seems that they were able to solve most of their problems without things getting out of hand.

Byrd: Were any of you ever denied admission to the theater when you would go there in a mixed group? Did it initially happen.

Reed: I wasn't just a real big movie-goer, myself, and I wasn't in a group that...I just went as a child, but after being grown I didn't go that often. But it seems that those who went in the group had no problem. After integration it just dropped the bars or whatever. At the washateria, the sign just left the door (chuckle). One day you would look, and the sign wasn't there anymore. In Denton there were no big problems. At the schools there was a little name-calling, and those kinds of things would happen, but those things were minor. It seemed that the school principals and all the faculty worked with the children and everything and just

kept everything going and made it just go through smoothly for them. There were a few problems, but very few. There were not too many things that really stood out because it seemed that everybody kind of worked to try to keep it that way.

Byrd: It was stated to me that some of the black women in the group originally were kind of suspicious about the group. You know, like, "What do these white women want to be dealing with us for?" Could you address that?

Reed: Well, I think some of them were suspicious. I never felt that way about it. I just felt like if they were going to do it, they meant it. I felt that they were for real; they wanted things to come about. I just felt like they wouldn't have come if they hadn't meant well when they came.

Byrd: You were made aware of the group by Dr. Brock's participation with the tutoring. Were there others that you knew in the group or knew before you actually became a member? Were there other people in it that you had already known?

Reed: No, I didn't know any of these people before then.

Byrd: How was the organization structured? Were there identifiable leaders, or was it kind of formal officers or anything like that?

Reed: After we got it all started and everything, mostly it seems to me that we just worked as a group, and then we would go from house to house, even into the white homes. We could go

into their homes. We would have a little business night that we would talk about the things we felt needed to be done. And they were busy going to the city council (chuckle). We would work out the things we felt needed to be done. Everybody would get together and kind of discuss the things we felt needed to be taken under consideration.

Byrd: What kind of things would you go to the city council with?

Reed: Well, most of this was for the property clean-up and streets and all these things that you would go through when we got all into this.

Byrd: Who in particular, would you say, went the most to the city council meetings?

Reed: I know for one...Trudy Foster (laughter).

Byrd: I figured you were going to say that.

Reed: She didn't mind getting on in there.

Byrd: How do you think she was received by the council members?

Reed: Well, they weren't too welcome at first (chuckle). At first I don't think they really were just too welcome.

Byrd: Well, we've talked about a couple of projects. We talked about the tutoring program. Dr. Brock said that particularly those who would be graduating that first year were the ones targeted.

Reed: Well, there were two of them that first year. My daughter was one of those.

Byrd: And how did the tutoring program work for her?

Reed: Oh, it was a big help. It was a big help.

Byrd: It sounds sort of like a crash course, so to speak.

Reed: Well, I guess she was a pretty good student, and she really wanted to get on in there and study and everything. By the way, one of her teachers there in high school just passed away and was buried, I believe, last month--Mrs. McKelvey. She was really a big help to my daughter, also.

Byrd: Did your daughter pursue education beyond high school?

Reed: Well, she went to night school. She's a secretary now with the International Adoption Agency. She works in Philadelphia now. But she took those courses at night, and she finished all those secretarial courses, and that's the type of work she does.

Byrd: Okay, we talked about two activities--the tutoring program and the streets program. Could you tell us more about how the group organized or whatever to...tell me what the paved situation versus non-paved situation was. In other words, where were the streets paved, and where were they not?

Reed: In the black part in this section, called southeast Denton, none of the streets were paved at that time. Finally, we did get gravel put on the streets. Then when they started working with it...well, the streets were muddy, and they actually helped us get rid of the mud. That's what they helped us to get first, was the gravel put down, because we were in the mud (chuckle). They walked the muddy streets. Trudy Foster can tell you all about that because they came down, and we just got out and walked the streets. The

streets at times...I think we had a rain, and they really knew what it was like, because it was mud.

Byrd: The gravel...now was that at the city's expense or at the neighborhood's expense or property owners'?

Reed: Well, the property owners. We paid so much. The property owners had to pay so much, and then the city, I guess you'd call it, matched it. But the property owners paid some money. But it was like that, and then they hadn't even run the sewer lines. The sewer lines weren't out here. They were all dry toilets. Of course, all those lines had to be run out here. None of that was out here. The city had never put that out here. So all of these things hadn't been done.

Byrd: My understanding is that the group--in fact, I saw a copy of this the other day at the library--had put together a survey of the streets or whatnot and property owners along those streets.

Reed: Right. And some of them didn't go along with even then. You know, we had some who refused to sign, and there were a few streets where one-half the street was paved and the other half was left unpaved.

Byrd: Now would that be the part immediately in front of a residence.

Reed: Right in front of your property--that property that was left unpaved if you didn't go along and pay for it.

Byrd: There's one thing we were trying to figure out. It's my

understanding that most of the property owners who actually lived here who owned the property and lived on it came up with the cash or whatever to get the property paved or the front of their property paved. The problem was with some who were absentee landlords, folks from out of town who owned rental property.

Reed: Right. If they didn't pay for it, you didn't get it.

Byrd: What I'm trying to figure out is, about how many...

Reed: I think even up here on Morris Street, there was a strip of that where it was unpaved because it seems that they could never locate the owners. I don't know about now, whether they finally found them, but at that time, when it was being done, they hadn't located the owners of this property. They hadn't been able to get in contact with the owners of this property. Therefore, one side of the street was paved, and the other side was left unpaved.

Byrd: When you women were all getting together, you said it would alternate from home to home--white home, black home. When blacks would come into the white neighborhoods, black women coming up to these meetings, did you folks ever have any resistance, say, from the neighbors of the white members?

Reed: No, not ever. I don't ever remember having any problems at all with the neighbors.

Byrd: How about on the reverse side of that coin--whites coming over to the black neighborhood?

Reed: No, no, no. No, nobody showed any kind of resistance.

That's why I said Denton was really exceptional, I think. People just went on about their way, and they just never seemed to bother or pay any attention or really wanted to offer any kind of resistance. Nobody did, even when we went out to some of the nicer sections of town where the whites lived. When we would go out there as a group to the homes, nobody bothered us.

Byrd: What about the husbands of the group's members? Were the husbands supportive?

Reed: It seems that they were. Oh, we always had a big Christmas party, and that was always held at one of the big white churches. First Methodist and First Presbyterian were two of the places that we would have this big Christmas dinner. Everybody would bring a covered dish, and we would have a Christmas party and have music and, oh, just have a real good time together. It seems that husbands on both sides were in accord. We didn't have any problems with it--no problems.

Byrd: Generally speaking, the men here were supportive of your activities?

Reed: Right. Most of the husbands came and went right along with us. They went with us from house to house, door to door, trying to get the people to see that we needed to get together to have the streets paved. Many of the husbands came right along with us.

Byrd: I've heard on several occasions that some of the folks who

didn't want the streets paved--not the absentee landlords but the folks who lived there--had some kind of suspicion, that it was a trick trying to get them out of their property.

Reed: They did! That's true! Some of them couldn't understand this. They were suspicious of it; they really were. There were a lot of them, and they let it be known when you went to those houses and knocked and asked them to sign. Well, some of them wouldn't because they felt like it was some kind of trick or something.

Byrd: When one of the black members of the group would, say, come to a black household, were they suspicious of the blacks as well as the whites?

Reed: Well, they didn't know whether to believe that this was really something that they should take part in. They just weren't sure about it.

Byrd: It wasn't necessarily a thing of just because it was maybe a couple of dollars coming out of their pocket? They were just suspicious?

Reed: No, they were just suspicious of it. I think that was what it was, really. They were just suspicious of it.

Byrd: Do you think that suspicion maybe lingered over when came the time when urban renewal, itself, was an issue in the city?

Reed: Yes, yes. Yes, because most people had worked and everything to own what they had, and they were afraid they

were going to maybe in some way lose what they had. So they didn't trust it. Oh, sure, that was really the reason why--they didn't trust it. They didn't want to lose what they had. Even though sometimes it might have been some kind of a little shack there, but still that was home.

Byrd: A thought just struck me when you were talking earlier about the fellow whose house, after he had moved, had been burned or whatever. Were there still residents here involved in that first move from where you say they built city park and then they moved homes down in this part of town. Were any of those who had been involved in that first move still living?

Reed: Still living? Oh, sure! My family, my mother and dad, were still living. Oh, sure, they were. They were a young married couple at that time.

Byrd: Was your mom in the group?

Reed: My mom was in the group. Yes, she was. Oh, yes, she took a very active part in the group.

Byrd: And what was her name?

Reed: My mother's name?

Byrd: Yes.

Reed: Othella Hill.

Byrd: I thought I recognized that name. You kept referring to your daughter.

Reed: Yes, Othella Hill. My father was Thomas--T.C. Hill. Everybody called him by his initials, T.C. Hill.

Byrd: Were they in favor of the urban renewal? The streets program?

Reed: Yes, they were in favor. I think my mother just caught on to about everything that came by. She thought this was going to be something better (chuckle). She always wanted everything done that was going to help you and help you in your life, so she was for it.

Byrd: From the reading and whatnot I've done, it seems to me that urban renewal was eventually beaten.

Reed: Yes, I don't think it was very well excepted here. I don't think the people...now there are other places where they said it went over real big, but I don't think here it did.

Byrd: You think it had anything to do with that suspicion of maybe losing property?

Reed: Oh, that was it. They didn't want to run the risk of losing their homes. That was really it, even though it was going to repair them.

Byrd: Mrs. Bell said that there was a chartered bus, and a group of concerned citizens chartered a bus, and they went down to some of the areas where, I think, urban renewal had been accomplished in Dallas and, I believe, Fort Worth.

Reed: I didn't go with that group. I think there was a group that went down, but I didn't go with that group.

Byrd: Well, there's one other project that was a little later down the road in the group's activities. That was the jobs program and whatnot. Were you involved in that?

Reed: Yes, and then came the jobs program. In the past, whether you were qualified or whatnot, you weren't given a chance to even try or to prove yourself. There were just certain things that you could get to do, and that was it.

Byrd: How did the group address this activity to try to find employment for group members and whatnot? Could you tell how it was organized or what kind of activities?

Reed: There was a group who worked with that. I really don't know exactly how they went about the job appointments. I do know that they worked on that, too. There was a group who worked with that, but I really don't know just how they went about this.

Byrd: Okay, so Fred Moore was integrated in...

Reed: I do know that at Moore Business Forms, there were, I think, maybe about...I knew about two blacks who worked there. One lady served donuts there at the business place, and the other guy, I think, was kind of a janitor. At that time, those were the only two. Of course, after the integration and everything, I think that then they began to, I guess, kind of get connections or whatnot as to what they should do to get where they would hire blacks in other positions.

Byrd: Did Linnie McAdams work there?

Reed: At Moore?

Byrd: Yes, at Moore Business Forms.

Reed: I really don't know. I don't know if she did or not. I just don't know. I have a daughter that was one of the

first to be hired there, and she's working there now out at Moore Business Forms--my oldest daughter.

Byrd: Did she get her job there about this time, or has that been since the group's activities?

Reed: She was among the first group of blacks that they were hiring. It seems that they had someone to come down maybe from Washington or somewhere. When they came down to check all of these things, then they started putting in applications for jobs.

Byrd: This would have been around 1964?

Reed: I think that was the time they would hire a certain percentage. Maybe this was, I suppose, in the 1960s--somewhere in the 1960s.

Byrd: So this was right after she finished high school then?

Reed: Oh, yes, she had finished high school and gone to college a year or two. Then she didn't finish, but she had gone. That was after the integration here that she went to school.

Byrd: Did she receive any of this counseling from the group for the jobs program?

Reed: Oh, yes! Oh, yes! I guess it gave them that something that they needed to give them the courage to go on and try.

Byrd: What was your daughter's name--the one who went through the tutoring program and the jobs program?

Reed: Irene Williams, Irene Laverne Williams. She was one of the first blacks to finish out at the high school.

Byrd: Well, she seems to have benefited quite a bit from the

activities.

Reed: Oh, she did! Oh, she did! That really helped her. She had talked to one of them, and she said, "I want to be a secretary." I think somebody told her, "Well, you can." But today that's what she does.

Byrd: I have one last area I'd like to cover. The group started roughly...I've had three different starting dates. I guess it depends on who you talk to, but somewhere around 1964, the spring of 1964, it started.

Reed: Right, 1964. I would say it was 1964 because she finished high school out there in 1964.

Byrd: Then the tutoring program was first. I think that would have been about that fall of 1964 or 1965. Then there was the streets program. The ongoing activities included the pairs going to the theaters and restaurants and whatnot.

Reed: And maybe some of the stores, the bigger stores that wouldn't maybe serve you. Maybe if they would go in and want to buy something, they wouldn't want them to try on the things. The group went with them to these places, you know, because what they had planned was just kind of to boycott these places. If you were going to buy their merchandise and if they weren't going to allow you to try it on or whatnot, well, you just didn't go into those stores anymore.

Byrd: Economic boycott?

Reed: Right. But most of like the business places were pretty nice about it.

Byrd: What do you think caused the group...it's my understanding that the group just kind of faded away.

Reed: Well, I guess maybe it was like this: I guess we had accomplished most of the things that we had set out to do. Of course, a lot of these people were people who were out at North Texas. Most of these were professors' wives. I guess maybe they would move from here to other places. Then the black kids began to grow up and began to work, and we just decided, you know, that we had accomplished all of these things. We just said, "When we're needed again, we'll get together again. When we feel like we need to get together again, we will." So now, even when you see all these people, you know, those who are still around, well, we always just laugh and talk and are glad to greet each other, and it's nice to see them. We never forget all of the things that were accomplished with their help because there were so many things, I think, we would have never been able to do or even have had the courage to do without their help.

Byrd: One last question. Did the group advertise membership or meeting in the newspapers or on the radio or anything like that?

Reed: Oh, no, no, no. I guess it was from one to the other by word-of-mouth. As people would learn about it, they would come and join. I mean, that was white and black. I think we had a equal number of both white and black.

Byrd: Was that by design?

Reed: What?

Byrd: Was that a deliberate move to kind of keep the balance?

Reed: No, it just so happened that it just equaled out that way. No, I don't think we really had organized it on any equal basis by numbers.

Byrd: Well, I'd like to thank you very much for taking this time to talk to me this afternoon. I may want to talk to you again, if that would be agreeable.

Reed: Yes.

Byrd: Again, I'd like to thank you.

Reed: Okay, thank you.