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Rowena Ferrell Brady oral history interview by Ericka Burroughs, August 23, 1993

Rowena Ferrell Brady (Interviewee)

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Rowena Ferrell Brady: Yes, my first name is Rowena, and I always carry my maiden name, which is Ferrell, and last part is Brady.

EB: How long have you lived in Tampa? All your life?

RB: All of my life, with no age.

EB: What school did you go to?

RB: Well, I attended Harlem Elementary, which is on Harrison Street.

EB: Is that different from Harlem Academy?

RB: That's Harlem Academy.

EB: And that was on Harrison. Was it like on the corner of Harrison and Jefferson?

RB: Right, wait a minute—no, no, Morgan and Harrison Street. It's right next door to historic St. Paul A.M.E. [African Methodist Episcopal] Church.

EB: Oh, do they have a marker there?

RB: No, we don't have a marker. We have gotten a grant from the State Department to restore our church. And we are in the process of restoring it.
EB: I know about St. Paul. I know that St. Paul is getting restoration done very soon, but what about Harlem Academy?

RB: It's torn down. We use it as a parking lot. The School Board allows us to use it as a parking lot.

EB: Okay, so you attend St. Paul A.M.E.?

RB: Yes, I do.

EB: Do you know when Harlem Academy closed? Do you remember?

RB: I have no idea. I have to do a little research in the room for that, and I don't think I have it in my notes right here.

EB: Okay, that's fine.

RB: But the minutes are accessible to you downtown if you want to find out exact dates and what have you.

EB: Okay, okay, good, thank you. And what high school did you attend?

RB: Middleton Senior High School. Before we got there I went to Booker T. Washington Jr. High School. It's now a middle school. And then from there, we stayed there three years, and then we went on to Middleton Senior High School in Belmont Heights. Booker T. Washington is still in existence, the existing site, but it's a middle school.

EB: Where is that at?

RB: It's on—what is that? Fifth Avenue and Nebraska [Avenue], I do believe it's around 5th Avenue and Nebraska, right off Nebraska. Do you know where the library is on Nebraska?

EB: No.

RB: Okay, well, it's right there.

EB: No, I'm gonna look for it. I think Robert Saunders went to Booker Washington.

RB: Oh, yes, he was ahead of me in school.

EB: In Middleton. I'm working with him on his book.

RB: He'll be able to tell you lots about civil rights.

EB: Oh, yeah, he's our main source of information for the civil rights movement. And so
you went to Harlem.


EB: Was your—is your brother older than you?

RB: Oh, yes.

EB: And he was principal at what school?

RB: Ah, I have—

EB: Your brother is A.J. Ferrell.

RB: A.J. Ferrell. Let me get this—this is Tampa Florida Sentinel, when he passed and a lot of information was in there and I thought—

EB: What issue is that?

RB: Oh, this issue is February 6, 1979.

EB: Okay.

RB: If you want to, I can give you a copy.

EB: Oh, wonderful.

RB: He was principal. He retired as principal of 1971 from Middleton and right after that it became a junior high school. But in this article is a lot of information before that. He was instructor at Lomax Elementary, Booker T. Washington Jr. High School, and was principal at Dobeyville Elementary and Harlem Elementary; they dropped the academy. He then took a brief leave from the school system to enter into public housing, and was the first Black manager of the North Blvd. Housing Projects, and he served there eight years. Then he returned to—I wrote this, that's why I want to keep in section—he return to the school system as principal of Carver Elementary and Booker T. Washington, before retiring from Middleton in 1971.

EB: Oh, okay. Let me ask you a little about where you grew up at in Tampa. Did you grow up in Carver City?

RB: No, do you know where the African American Museum is?

EB: Yes, ma'am.

RB: We own property right there where that museum is, and we were brought up there,
EB: Okay. So they had houses over there?

RB: Oh, yes, definitely. All that area was houses.

EB: They removed those when the freeway came through there.

RB: Most of them.

EB: They removed those houses?

RB: Yes. Most of the houses went when the expressway came through there. It just missed us by one block—is it one block or a half a block? We were in the next block and the expressway came right on the other side of Scott Street. And we were right there where the African Museum is, that's where I grew up.

EB: What is the name of that street?

RB: Marion Street, 1310 Marion Street.

EB: Were you still living at the address when they brought in the freeway?

RB: Yes, I didn't move out here, I moved out here twenty years ago. I was the only existing house left down there. We were right next to the—right in that area where the Museum is. We sold that lot to General Telephone Company, and that building became the GTE Credit Union building. And then we had our house torn down, which is the parking lot right there and I moved out here. There was no housing around and I was the only little soul left downtown, my husband and I. We had lots of ideas.

EB: Where did the people move—where did your neighbor move to?

RB: All over, all everywhere.

EB: Have you been able to keep in touch with them or do you how to?

RB: Oh, yes, definitely, we've been able, those who have not passed on. But this section is composed of people who lived in the vicinity of the West Tampa area and the North Blvd. Housing Project and the freeway. Let me see, the freeway took a lot of them, and there was a Black hospital, Clara Frye Hospital, down in that area. I don't know if you know where St. James Episcopal Church is or not, but the hospital was located right behind there. It no longer exists.

EB: Right, because they tore the building down like '73, I think.

RB: My neighbor across the street, who is deceased now, she moved out of the West
Tampa area because of the housing projects, and the expressway coming through. And it had a lot of people to relocate out here. And just recently, they talked about bringing the expressway—I don't know if it's the Veterans' Expressway or not—through this area again. And we have already been relocated one time.

EB: That's right. So are you attending City Council meetings? Are they letting you guys voice your opinion?

RB: Well, we had a big meeting, but you know when City Hall decides to do something; they fought it once, and there's little you can do. Finally got that jail out of here in Carver City.

EB: Where was that?

RB: It was over here on Spruce Street, right off of Lois [Avenue]. So that county jail, that ah—I don't know what they called it, Jail West, County Jail West or whatever they called it. They finally got it out of here. The building still remains so I don't know what they are going to do with that property.

EB: I know where you are talking about. I came down earlier to see if I could find your house.

RB: You did a dry run?

EB: Huh?

RB: You did a dry run?

EB: Well, I had the directions, but then I realized that when you gave me directions, you must have thought, that I was gonna come off of Dale Mabry North instead of Dale Mabry South.

RB: Oh! You didn't tell me.

EB: I got off at Dale Mabry North. I got off at Dale Mabry North, and I said wait a minute—Dale Mabry South, if you go straight you are going to run into Wal-Mart parking lot.

RB: Where did you come from?

EB: I was coming from USF.

RB: Oh, see you said I may come from, I thought Ehrlich Road, did you mention Ehrlich Road?

EB: No.
RB: I don't know.

EB: No, no, I live up there, maybe that's why you thought that.

RB: Maybe, I thought you said, "I would just come on down Dale Mabry."

EB: It was really easy to find, because I figured it out, "Oh, she thinks I'm coming off of Dale Mabry," so I just got off on Dale Mabry North and—

RB: It's confusing to people at times. It's very confusing.

EB: Yeah, but when I got back in the neighborhood, I don't know, maybe I didn't write down the directions, the only thing that I remember was Arch and Grady Street. I had that written down, and so I had to look for Arch Street, and I finally found it, cause the way the neighborhood is really planned out really well, easy to find the streets, once you get back in there. And then I looked for Grady Street and then—

RB: Because I thought I told you about the big Jim Walters building, past that, there's a car place right on down to Grady, turn left.

EB: But when I found your house, it was like around 11:23, and so I said it's too early. So I left and I went to Wal-Mart. So I was looking around in Wal-Mart and then I came back over and I got lost again.

RB: Oh, no, you didn't.

EB: Yeah, so I ended up getting on Spruce Street, turn down Lois, and I found Arch off of Lois. So that's why I know where you are talking about.

RB: But that's why I was going to give you that landmark of the big Jim Walters building on Dale Mabry and whatever, Lois—I mean Laurel [Street] or La Salle [Street], whatever.

EB: It was Laurel.

RB: It was Laurel, I get them confused. You know, I know where I'm going, so I just don't pay any attention to streets.

EB: Was this neighborhood like a traditionally White neighborhood before?

RB: No; palmettos, weeds, very undeveloped.

EB: Oh, it was undeveloped.

RB: And this area developed because Blacks were uprooted. They bought—I can
remember, we bought a lot for $10.00 down and $10.00 a month. And I think a 50x100 [foot] lot was running about $150.00 and now it's up in the thousands. We paid less than a thousand for this lot. People relocating. I know a lady down the street there, she was over in Central, the main part of Tampa, downtown area and she was uprooted. Now they want to bother us again.

EB: I really can't imagine because when I drive down there now, I just see—like well, I see like the freeway. I see Perry Harvey, Sr., Park and I just can't imagine what Central Avenue would have looked like. It's hard to imagine.

RB: Really? Let me see if I can give you a little view of what it really looked like. I'm doing this book and I don't know if it's in here or what. You see, Blacks lived in a section called the Scrubs, and I have pictures in here that I'm going to put in my book, if I ever get some money to do it with. See this area right here, this was a downtown area, and they were rent quarters on the end of your street school. Are you familiar with Meacham Elementary Childhood Center?

EB: No, I'm not, but what—I have driven down in the area where those housing projects are now...

RB: Well, Central Park Village. Well, that was Tampa Scrubs, where low income people lived and all that, and they called it the Scrubs. This one of the bars on Central Avenue, Watts Sanderson Beer Garden, which was later called the Blue Room—no, it was later called Club Broad.

EB: Okay, who has the Blue Room?

RB: Watts Sanderson; he had the Blue Room and then about four guys took over and it was—I can't remember who all those guys were—Club Rose. Rose from somebody's name. Abe, I know it was Schulman, Lewis Schulman, but it spelled their names. Bennie Schulman owned part interest in that club. Then you had Chick’s Lounge down on Central Avenue.

EB: I don't know that one. Was that in existence for a long time?

RB: That was on Scott Street, right around the corner from Central. See, all of that was the main, as they called it, the main drag for Blacks. And you had some problems. They all mixed up, cause I usually take this sometimes when I'm showing. Okay, further down Central Avenue you had the Pyramid Hotel, which it was later called Hotel Rogers. I'm not meaning to cut you off.

EB: No, no, no, that's the one that was operated by Ozepher Harris?

RB: No, she only had a little—one of these places down here, maybe you can see it better, was her dining room, Rogers Dining Room.
EB: Where is this, so this all was the hotel?

RB: And then she later moved in the—not the next block, but the second block from this place. You can't see it but it goes right on down here, by here, and she moved her place when they built another building up to date, modern facilities.

EB: So this all was the Pyramid Hotel? I thought it was smaller than that.

RB: No, no, no, no, no. A big place.

EB: I don't know why everybody keep saying it was small. Maybe they mean the rooms were small.

RB: Maybe so, cause I never went in the rooms, maybe some people did, but I didn't go.

EB: But it was upstairs, right?

RB: The rooms were up stairs and they had this little, ah, what is this, they had the clubs down here, they had a big grocery store on the corner where Blacks used to go all the time. You can see it right here. And then across the street were beauty shops.

EB: Where is this place I keep reading about called the Greek Stand?

RB: The Greek Stand was right on the corner of Scott Street and Central Avenue.

EB: Was that owned by a Greek or a Greek family?

RB: I don't know how the word, where the word Greek was derived from.

EB: But it was Black?

RB: It was White-owned.

EB: Oh, okay.

RB: These places were Black-owned.

EB: Okay.

RB: But the Greek stand was operated by Whites and they had the best Cuban sandwiches in Tampa. Because we would get off the—no, we caught the street car. We didn't go to Middleton High on the bus. We caught the street car. The street car came down Central Avenue and we caught the street car to go to Middleton Senior High School. And I was much closer to Hillsborough [High School]. There was another school, it was a high school on, I think it was on Columbus Drive, but we couldn't go there. We had to go to the segregated school.
EB: So where is Middleton then?

RB: It's still there. It burned twice, but it's still there. It's on right off of 22nd [Street], between Chelsea [Street]—is that Chelsea? You know, where that graveyard is on 22nd and Martin Luther King Blvd.?

EB: No, but I can find that.

RB: Well, it's in the next block from there, the back of it; the front of it faces another street and I can't think of the streets today. And then you had this little place, I don't know if you heard of Moses White.

EB: Right, right!

RB: All right, he owned, what was the name of that, the Palms Dinette [Palm Dinette]. I think that was the name of it. And our ex-county commissioner was in there, Rubin Padgett and his wife and somebody else was there. And you had Schulman’s Sundries. It was a little eating place and his wife is still living. She's my good friend. Let me see what else was on Central Avenue? I don't have all my pictures. I can't drag all those pictures out.

EB: Oh, that's okay. But did those businesses close before the riots, can you remember, or did they close?

RB: That helped close it. See we don't ever do anything to others, we do things to ourselves. Every time we do something, we do it to ourselves. And then you have other Black businesses close by there. You had two of our prominent funeral homes close by, Stone Funeral Home and Pughsley Funeral Home, and this was right around the corner from my house. This is the kind of house that was downtown.

EB: Who's house is that?

RB: That's Mr. and Mrs. Edward Stone. Not Edward Stone here now; that's her son.

EB: Right, but they owned Stone Funeral Home.

RB: But they [owned] Stone Funeral Home originally, so he has money.

EB: And his dad is the one who started that, his father is the one?

RB: Yeah, yeah, no, he 's the guy.

EB: Oh, he's the guy who started?

RB: And that's his wife.
EB: Where was their house at?

RB: That was on the corner of Constance—it wasn't Constance, is it Constance now—and Morgan Street. We had our houses, great big houses, something like this, our family houses. We had big houses like this.

EB: Were all houses like this?

RB: No, not really, it's just like here in Carver City you have people who built their homes, I guess to satisfy their pocket books. Because you have big houses, you have tiny houses. The first home in this area were built by the government—what did they call these little houses? Well, anyway, they were tiny little houses, like the house on the corner; she has never changed her house. And then some people have remodeled and added on, but we built from scratch. They built from scratch. And we got some big beautiful homes out here, you have to look—there's a nice pretty home behind me—then we got the tiny homes.

EB: If you don't mind me asking, what did your parents do?

RB: My father was a minister. He was presiding elder of the Tampa Conference and my mother was a school teacher.

EB: And he was a minister at St. Paul?

RB: He went into the ministry out of St. Paul.

EB: And did he have a congregation, his own congregation?

RB: No, only one, two years, and I happened to be born—he was moved to Plant City where I happened to be born, and I don't tell anybody I was born in Plant City. And they had me and they had my sister next to me. They had seven children, and all of them are dead but me. My mom taught school over there, and then she moved back to Tampa, and she was one of the first Black school teachers at Harlem Elementary. Where is she? She's in this book somewhere. They all there. There she is.

EB: So when you got to Harlem Elementary, they did, was the staff was all Black or they were still?

RB: Oh, all Black. Christina Meacham, you heard of Christina Meacham, she was the principal.

EB: Yeah, she the one Meacham Elementary is named after.

RB: Yeah, but she was principal at Harlem Elementary.
EB: And didn't she also have something to do with the teachers' salary, equal salary lawsuit?

RB: No, that was Hilda Turner and what's Davis’ name, Edward Davis from Orlando. I think Ben Griffin was mixed up in that somehow.

EB: I think so, too. I think so, too. I remember reading that. Okay, so Christina Meacham didn't have anything to do with that?

RB: No, not with—she was very influential all the way downtown, but she didn't have—

EB: Was she around at that time, was she still teaching at that time?

RB: I don't remember her.

EB: Because she may have been retired, I don't know because that was in 1946.

RB: She was dead during that time.

EB: I thought that, like, 1946 or something like that.

RB: I went to college in 19—I was in college, that was earlier than that, I was in high school.

EB: Because I remember reading, reading an interview with Otis Anthony and, I think, Marian Anderson. And she was saying that Christina Meacham was involved, I don't know.

RB: I don't think so. No, I really don't think so. Now you have other Blacks owned businesses out on 22nd. I don't know if you heard of Lee Davis. You were talking about the bars. He had a place call the Paradise Lounge on 22nd and I don't know the name of the street.

EB: Did that come like afterwards?

RB: This was before the riots, they built it. The night they had the funniest thing, I was sitting up in my living room—we had a two story house—and I saw all this smoke and fire above all the buildings. I said, "What is going on?" So I ran downstairs and jumped in my car. I knew it was probably was coming from Central Avenue, because we were four blocks away.

EB: Right.

RB: I jumped in my car to go, to pursue what was happening, and when I got to Harrison, right by this hotel, because I made a circle, I saw all the dogs and the policeman. And I immediately turned my car around and jumped right back in my house. So this same
brother of mine called and he said, “There’s a riot over there, come over here.” I said, "No, I'd better stay over here, because the National Guard is—they are taking their places." But we were right across the street from the sheriff office.

EB: That's right, so when did they build that, when they built a sheriff's office there?

RB: Well, first they had a—

EB: That's still there.

RB: It's still there and then they have added on to that jail. I didn't leave because I told him to come here. He lived in West Tampa, in a very nice section. I said, "No, because there is a lot of protection over here for me, because the National Guard and all the sheriffs and everything." I saw Kirk when [he] came down the steps, Governor [Claude] Kirk. Yeah, I saw him when he came down the steps during the riots. But anyway they had what is called White Hats. Some of the Black guys, Jim Hammond, I think Brookins was in there, Dr. [J.O.] Brookins.

EB: I don't know Brookins. Everybody you've named so far I recognized the name, but I don't know Brookins at all.

RB: Well, anyway, there are several of them, and you may can get their names from somewhere. I don't have them.

EB: But he was a doctor at the time, or he wasn't?

RB: Dr. Brookins was—I think Dr. Brookins was in there.

EB: So he and James Hammond helped organized the White Hats?

RB: Who else was that, it was several of them, and they went down and helped quell the riots, but the damage was done then. They were burning and looting and everything else. See, we only hurt ourselves.

EB: Just like [the 1992 riot in] Los Angeles?

RB: Oh, yeah.

EB: So after the riots occurred and these businesses closed, a lot of them couldn't afford to reopen?

RB: They just didn't. I know the bars, I think Lee Davis, he was on Central at one time, I don't know if he had a pool room or what. But he went to 22nd Street and then that became sort of like another hang out for Blacks. We don't need hang outs or main drags, we really don't need them. We need to really do something constructive for our...
EB: Let me ask you about Kid Mason.

RB: Kid Mason Center.

EB: Right, was that center named like after urban renewal and everything or was that going?

RB: Well the center had been there for years and years and years.

EB: What kind of things did they do there?

RB: Recreation, strictly for kids. It was formerly the Central Life Insurance Company. Long years ago before the brick building, it was a wooden building and then they turned it into the Kid Mason—they named this—I use to have a picture here, called it Kid Mason Center, Ralph Kid Mason Fendall. His name was Ralph Fendall.

EB: Didn't he have a business, too?

RB: Yeah, he had a business right next to what you were asking about, the Greek Stand. It was right in there somewhere. They sold—it was like a sundry shop or something like that, and I don't know what else they sold in there.

EB: Charlie Moon, he owned a lot of business more than just—he didn't owned the Blue Room, what did he own?

RB: No, he owned the Silver Moon.

EB: Okay, it was the Silver Moon.

RB: And that's where—wait a minute now. Charlie Moon was—they were what you call Tampa's Black racketeers. I know, what was Mr. Gardner name, Isaac Gardner, they called him Pig Bear. He was one. Then there was the Savory right on the corner of Scott and Central, and there was, right across the street—no, before the bar, I have to think a lot—upstairs over this bar, were all the doctors’ offices. Like Dr. [Reche Reden] Williams and who else was up there, Dr. Hodges.

EB: Only doctors I know are Dr. [Edward O.] Archie and Anderson.

RB: Okay, Dr. Anderson owned—that was Marian Anderson's dad.

EB: They didn't mention that in the interview.

RB: Yeah, that was her dad and he was well off. That was my father very good friend, Dr. Williams, one of Tampa's first Blacks. You have Dr. J.A. White, whose office was right across the street from Dr. Williams, and his was upstairs. You had the Palace Drugstore, where all Black teenagers wanting to get of age so that they could stand by the
mailbox on Sunday afternoon after church. As soon as I got old enough, there was no more, it had—it was a nice place. On one side it was the bar, where you saw all the bar people going in. And then on the other side was where all the high school students, my older brothers and sisters, went to get this ice cream sundae on Sunday night and then they stood around this mailbox. It wasn't anything but a mailbox.

EB: That's where they hang out to talk and stuff.

RB: Oh, yeah. You wanted to get grown so bad, so [you] could hang out at the mailbox. That's where they talked and all the little girlfriends, but there was no more mailbox when I came of age. That was right across the street from the Greek Stand. All this is in a radius of four corners. The Savory Lounge, across the street was the Greek Stand with the doctors over it, the doctors' offices over the Savory, and then on the other corner—

Side 1 ends; side 2 begins

RB: You ready?

EB: Where they had the best banana splits.

RB: Best banana splits in town—well, I didn't know of any others. That was the only place we could go to get banana splits. There was another drugstore—these were owned by Whites, but operated by Blacks. And there was another drugstore.

EB: What about the Greek Stand?

RB: Owned by Whites, but operated by Blacks.

EB: Oh, okay, so that was operated by Black people.

RB: Oh, yeah. All the places were. If they were not owned by Blacks—but most of the places were owned by Blacks, I do believe. Now—

EB: I thinks so too. I don't know, but just from my research, I think most places were owned [by] Blacks.

RB: Yeah, they were owned by Blacks and we had Black funeral homes. We had—I want to tell people that's what prompted me to do this book, because we don't have any history as such, to let you young folks know what happened in Tampa.

EB: Well, that's what prompted our research.

RB: We did not always live in Carrollwood and Temple Terrace and Brandon. We had big beautiful homes, even though they were scattered. And so I'm showing some of beautiful homes that Blacks owned, some of the businesses that we owned, dry cleaning business, and everything. But we are no more. It seem as though we want to get on
everybody else's bandwagon and we don't want to do anything really for ourselves.

EB: A lot of people seem to think that. We don't. I don't know why. It seemed like after urban renewal came through and the freeway came through, the Black business sector just vanished.

RB: It just vanished.

EB: And it's not really anything like it was back then? While I have been doing the project, it's been so much fun. It's been so interesting finding out about Black businessmen and what they were able to do and accomplish. It's really neat. I'm just sorry that none of the things are here for me to see. It's hard for me to imagine, like all the neat little businesses on Central Avenue. It's like there is no Central Avenue.

RB: It was like five blocks and folks dressed up and they went down on the main drag. There was no killings and well, the only thing—I'm not gonna even say that on that tape recorder. But that's where we had to go. To the drugstores to get ice cream, to get sandwiches, to get dinner. Oh, we had a movie. The Lincoln Theater and Central Theater were down there. Jimmy Gray—Johnny Gray also had a sundry right in that area. That was Black-owned.

EB: I don't know Johnny Gray either.

RB: That was Black-owned. You had another eatery right across the street from Club Rose, I know he called him—oh, Milton Thompson owned that place. Blacks owned business, beauty shops; they weren't scattered all over everywhere, most of them were down on Central Avenue.

EB: So let you when you went to FAMU [Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University], when you came back, what did you do?

RB: Oh, I went straight into the school system.

EB: And where did you teach?

RB: I taught at Lomax [Elementary School], while they were readying College Hill [Elementary School], which is now Lockhart [Elementary School]. They were building that school.

EB: Where is College Hill at? I've been there only one time.

RB: It's on Lake Avenue near that Ponce DeLeon Project. Okay, it's near 22nd, it's between 15th and 22nd, it's still there.

EB: 15th and 22nd on what street?
RB: On Lake Avenue, which is 30th, I think that's 30th. And I taught there eighteen years; brand new school, all Black faculty. And then desegregation came about. And I was moved to Miles Elementary. That's out in Northgate. If you ever go on 275 [I-275] and you pass Fowler, you can look right over in my school yard, Miles Elementary, a very good school.

EB: And when they moved you there? In 1960-something?

RB: No, in the seventies [1970’s]. I taught there eighteen years to, so I did thirty-six years all together. I retired in, what, eighty-four [1984].

EB: And I see you're in Zeta Phi Beta [sorority].

RB: What are you?

EB: I didn't pledge.

RB: Oh, you didn't pledge?

EB: No, I was—I thought about pledging and I just never—I sort of never got around to it.

RB: What were you going to pledge?

EB: I didn't know. They had, at my school, all of the sororities. Even though I went to a small school, all the sororities were represented.

RB: Where did you go?

EB: I went a college in Charleston, in Charleston, South Carolina. And it was small and they had even a smaller population of Blacks. But all the sororities were represented. I remember the—at one time the AKAs [Alpha Kappa Alpha] were the biggest, and at one time the Deltas [Delta Sigma Theta] were the biggest. But when I left the Zetas were the largest.

RB: Yeah, that's right, they do that.

EB: They grow and—

RB: Some are larger on some campuses than the others.

EB: I remember we had Sigma Gamma Ro, and they only had like four girls in Sigma Gamma Ro, because they had just started the chapter at that school.

RB: I don't know if we have many out at the University or not. We used to have a very strong chapter, but I don't know. That's my brother's picture. I have a better picture of
him up there, my whole family is up there on the shelf.

EB: And so is your husband a Kappa [Kappa Alpha Psi]?

RB: Yes, my husband is a Kappa.

EB: And what does he do?

RB: He's dead. He's deceased.

EB: And do you have any children?

RB: One; she lives in California.

EB: Oh, really. So far away.

RB: This is my daughter, and there she is—I told her the other day, please send me a picture. I have these old pictures.

EB: She's pretty.

RB: That's my grandbaby.

EB: That's your granddaughter in the yellow? She looks just like her mama.

RB: Yeah, that's my granddaughter.

EB: I thought that was her, your daughter, she looks just like her mom.

RB: Would you like to have this picture with more of a write up about my brother?

EB: I would love to. What was his name?

RB: Andrew Jackson Ferrell, Jr. and it's all right there. We called him brother.

EB: Thank you very much. And let me just ask you about Afro-Cubans.

RB: I grew up with them a lot of them. They were my friends in high school, and why I don't know how to speak Spanish, I don't know. I think it was awful that my associates were of Cuban decent and they talked all around me in Cuban. And I did not learn the language and I hate myself today—because you see, you have so many Cuban Americans in Tampa. You go in the store and the man is talking Spanish and you don't know what the heck he is saying. Because I took four years of Spanish is college, but that's pure Castilian Spanish and I need conversation.

EB: The same thing with me. I took three years in high school and one year in college, so
that's four years too. And I had the same problem. We just learn Castilian Spanish and I have some Spanish friend now and I can't understand what they are saying. I just bought a Spanish English dictionary today.

RB: Where did you get it from?

EB: At the bookstore at school.

RB: How much was it?

EB: It was only like $3.99.

RB: What's the name of it?

EB: I don't know. They have bunches of them.

RB: Spanish English Dictionary.

EB: They have bunches of them.

RB: They may have conversation, too. I'm going to go out there and see.

EB: Yeah, because they probably do. I'm sure they do. Because they people who are taking Spanish classes and they take strictly conversation classes.

RB: It should be mandatory that everybody takes Spanish in the early years.

EB: Yeah, that's the problem. We don't learn it until high school or later.

RB: Right around here to this store was Black-owned, and now it's owned by Cubans. You can't hardly tell the difference between Cubans and Italians. You get them all mixed up. But it's run by either the Italians or the Cubans, and it was once owned by a Black.

EB: What's the name of that store?

RB: Do you know I don't know. Oh, Carver City Grocery. Carver City Grocery, that's the name of it. Oh, I got gobs of pictures, I'm going to get these pictures out of my house and into something. I guess before I pass away.

EB: Let me ask you, who were some of your Afro-Cuban friends that you remember?

RB: There were the Callases. They owned, for years they owned, the dry cleaners on the corner of Marion and 7th Avenue. It wasn't there but it's been in the area, same areas for years and years and years. You had—I'm getting forgetful, I can't remember—the Garcias, the Martinezes, which were Black. They weren't related to Governor [Bob] Martinez, our ex-governor. The Subadiez, those are familiar names, the Griñáns.
EB: That's the first one I recognized that you've named.

RB: Really? She lives across, around the corner from me.

EB: Sylvia?

RB: Sylvia Rodriguez.

EB: Now I know them because—

RB: You may not know this particular family, but you know the name.

EB: Oh, okay, right, I know the name. I know Francisco Rodriguez.

RB: Okay, he was one of Tampa's first Black lawyers.

EB: Right, his daughter is working on this project. His daughter is Cheryl.

RB: Oh, yeah?

EB: Yeah, she just recently got her Ph.D., like last semester.

RB: She did!

EB: In the fall semester of ninety-two [1992], and she is one of the reason why I am interested in this project. She's one of the reasons, because I took a class with her in African American history and she's also helping me out with my master's thesis.

RB: Now what are you working toward? Is this going to be a part of your thesis or what?

EB: It's probably, it's probably going to [be a] part of my thesis. My thesis is centering around—as of now, it's centering around the civil rights movement, but it may change. It's going to be something in African American history in Tampa. But it's just so much in African American history in Tampa, you really have to focus it on one thing. You know, I could do a thesis on Central Avenue alone, but I'm not.

RB: Any time that I can be of help, with my bad memory. But I'm trying to get these pictures together. Lopez was another family, Frank Lopez family. They are members of St. Peter Claver Catholic School.

EB: I think I've met him.

RB: He was associated with the NAACP, that's why.

EB: Does he have a lot of pictures of Central Avenue?
RB: He gave me those.

EB: Okay, so I know who you are talking about then.

RB: I got those from him, so don't steal them. I'm going to use those in my book. Do you know where I can get a grant from?

EB: Well, I was going to tell you—Susan Greenbaum is the anthropologist.

RB: Susan, how do you spell her last name?

EB: It's G-r-e-e-n-b-a-u-m, Greenbaum. It's one word. She is the director of our project and she is a professor there [at USF] and she wanted to talk to you about your book, to see what type of help that you needed. Because she could probably help you get some funding.

RB: Really, that sounds good. What's her telephone number?

EB: It's 974-2138.

RB: 974-2138.

EB: And if you could just call her, she knows—in fact I think the last time I was talking to her, she was naming some publishers that might be able to help you.

RB: Really, oh, that sounds interesting. I will follow it up.

EB: Yeah call her, she'll be glad to talk to you, because you are helping us with our project and she'll help you and she's very—

RB: I'm going to call and make an appointment with her to camp out at the University library. Why are you laughing at me?

EB: Because you are right, camping out is right, because at that library [in] Special Collections—

RB: No, that's his name, that's his name, Paul.

EB: Oh, Paul Camp. Yeah, I see what.

RB: It's another one, Paul Camp, it's—

EB: Tom Camp and Paul Camp.

RB: Right, oh, I don't mean camping out, oh, no. Oh, I go out there frequently to browse.
EB: That what I'm saying. But it's just that they have so much stuff that you have to keep pulling it out of there. They have so much stuff, they don't even realize how much stuff they have.

RB: Oh, no, I don't [know] what they are going to do with all that stuff. I don't know, all—like that room of mine in there that's all packed up with pictures and they haven't gone anywhere. They're still packed up. I'm putting them in albums and like that. But one of them, I have Altamese Hamilton. She's retired now, from Hillsborough Junior College. She going to help with my writing, of the little paragraphs under each picture.

EB: Oh, great!

RB: She's been very helpful. I tried for a grant at the Foundations on 7th Avenue, but they don't do books of any sort. So I'm having to go this route and then I have to put the book on hold, something comes up and I have to put it on hold. But I would just love to see these pictures get out of my house into some kind of a book, because what may seems junk to some folk, that's history.

EB: That's right, exactly.

RB: Because so many people have thrown out good pictures. I say, “Why you throw that out? Don't throw it out.” And the Library has any number of pictures that they will loan me, just as long as you say special courtesy from USF collections. Everything is so expensive to reproduce until—

EB: I noticed some of your pictures in there, I think they have.

RB: You want to go through them?

EB: Please, thank you.

RB: What do I have there?

EB: The shortest man in the world, in the all American—

RB: He appeared with Royal American shows, which was owned by Leon Claxton, I don't know. That was a Black-owned show which appeared every year with the Florida fair.

EB: He's the one who had the dancer, right.

RB: Oh, you remember the dancer?

EB: No, I remember seeing a picture—
RB: I wish I could get a hold of that picture.

EB: There is a picture, if you go to the *Florida Sentinel* and talk to Leon Cruz. I have his phone right here.

RB: Leon Cruz?

EB: Uh huh, and the phone number is 248-1921.

RB: 248—okay, I'll call him. I talked to Sybil [Barnes-Johnson], do you know the part, the portion of the paper that says pictures of the past?

EB: He's the one does that, Leon Cruz.

RB: I talked to Sybil one day as she came out of the Catholic school, after putting her children in. I helped out there for about two or three years. So I said, "Sybil, do you have any old pictures around? I'm doing a pictorial book of Blacks in the City of Tampa, in the past" and what have you. And before I knew it, and before I could get to her, there was a portion in the *Florida Sentinel* that said Pictures of the Past. So I don't like to talk about my pictures now, because people steal my idea and she definitely stole that one.

EB: Oh, I understand.

RB: Oh, yes, it did not occur and everybody says, oh, Sybil stole your idea. It had to come from there, because don't mention it.

EB: Yeah, what they do it like every week now or something?

RB: Yeah, Pictures of the Past. I even saw me in there not too long ago. Wanna see how I used to look?

EB: Yeah, these—anyway Leon Cruz is the man who does that. And I tell you, Ms. Brady, they have lots of pictures, and you just have to pay for the reproductions, but they do have lots of them.

RB: Will they loan them to you to reproduce?

EB: No, they'll reproduce them themselves, but you have to pay them.

RB: How much?

EB: I think like $5.00 a print.

RB: Yeah, that's the going price, usually.

EB: So Suzy Padgett was Rubin Padgett's mother?
RB: That's when she started out and that's one of her first patients.

EB: She was a nurse at Padgett’s, oh Padgett Nursing Home.

RB: Yeah, she's the owner. Yeah they got that place from her. She started that place.

EB: Okay, it's all fitting together.

RB: Oh, it's a lot of history in Tampa, lots and lots.

EB: So Rubin—I didn't know Rubin Padgett.

RB: That's me [in] fifty-eight [1958].

EB: Oh, neat.

RB: That's me. I'm going to send it to my daughter. She said, "Oh, you wearing the same hair style, huh?"

EB: You look so elegant.

RB: I sort of looked like that when I get all dressed up. I try to hold that same.

EB: Oh, there's Cheryl, Cheryl Rodriguez. That's her, she showed me that picture.

RB: Is that—that's Cheryl. I know her mama, Bea. Her mama's name was Bea.

EB: When I was, I guess Bea has this one too, because she is the one that showed me the issue, and she was like, "Look at Cheryl when Cheryl was a child." We were laughing, because Cheryl is my professor and I was teasing her.

RB: Oh, she is your professor?

EB: Yeah, she is one of my professor and I was teasing her. It was like, "Oh, Cheryl you were so cute—"

RB: I wish you could please give me a transcript of that.

EB: Oh, we will.

RB: When it's gonna be ready?

EB: We have so many transcriptions to do. What I'm going to try and do—before they do the rest of them and get—
RB: You think some of that information has been helpful? It's a lot. There's gobs more.

EB: You have, every person I talked to, they named somebody I hadn't heard of, and so I keep learning more, because you forget. But when you get everybody together...

RB: There were a few families and we were one of the them. There were the Gardners, the Stones, the Hewitts—he was a dentist here—his family, the Ferrells, and we had about five prominent families in Tampa years ago. The Williams, R. R. [Reche REden] Williams, that's the first doctor. I named the Stones, I think.

EB: Well, the Whites, would you consider them—

RB: No, they were Johnny-come-lately, later on people. I'm talking about people who were here when Tampa was a nothing.

EB: Okay, so what did the Hewitts do? I mean what—

RB: They were prominent in their own rights. Ah, what was she—they were in the catering and she did a lot of catering. Stones had the funeral home, Williams were the doctors, we were the educational type families. Who else did I name, the Gardners and that was the racketeers family, whose family—really they all were educated, and she later became one of our supervisor, principal on up, teacher, principal on up until—he's still here. He's a member of my church, Robert Gardner. He just retired from the [Hillsborough] County School System downtown.

EB: Let me ask you, what was Charlie Moon's real name? Was that really his name?

RB: Charlie Moon. That's a little bit before my time. Now what was Charlie Moon—but you hear about these people. I forgot. I'll have to ask some of the old timers. And the next time—

EB: Because I talked to Bea Rodriguez, she said that was before her, too. She couldn't really remember.

RB: Oh, my goodness, that was almost before her mama's time. Because her mama is a little bit younger than me.

EB: When did Charlie Moon have his business or whatever?

RB: He had that when I was, way back there in school, high school, not even high school, junior high school and what have you.

EB: Because I don't know and it seems like—

RB: Alton Horse was another one, what was his name? Oh, I need my mama now, or my older sister. Charlie Moon.
EB: You are the youngest child?

RB: I was next to the youngest. My mama had two sets of children and as I stated before, they all finished school with their master's and their doctorate. All that set is dead and then they waited about thirteen or fourteen years and then my dad started all over again with my mom, and they had my sister Carol, who passed about two years ago in Newark, and then me and then my younger brother, who works for Channel 10 in Miami.

EB: So they were all grown when you were born?

RB: No, they weren't grown now. They were in college and everything when I was born. They started all over again.

EB: So you had, probably like nieces and nephews that were your age, probably, or a little bit older than you or something?

RB: We weren't—we didn't grow into such a big family. I'll tell you who we are related to. The president of Spellman College married my second cousin, Jenetta Cole. I don't know him, but I'm very close with his daddy. And they have aunts and all. We weren't—we didn't string into such a big family and now look, everybody's dead but me.

EB: Yeah, I'm glad you are doing this.

RB: And they died with a lot of memories and things. That's what we did on rainy days. I told a lady at the [Tampa] Tribune, my mom—we did creative things. We had no television and we were one of the first Black families in Tampa to have a radio. Because I think the day my sister brought me home from the kindergarten, they had it turned up so loud, so we heard it two blocks down the street. So my sister said, "Oh, Daddy brought a radio." It was a great big stand-up-on-four-legs Philco and I think it was expensive then. I can remember when we first got television, most people remember.

EB: Yeah, most people do, knowing my mom.—

RB: Where is your mother?

EB: In South Carolina now.

RB: What part?

EB: We are from Camden.

RB: Is that far from South Carolina State [University]?

EB: About a ninety minute drive, about a ninety minute drive.
RB: That's where my youngest brother graduated from.

EB: Oh, yeah, oh, okay, he graduated from State.

RB: Yeah, my oldest brother, which you will see in that article, did I give it to you? He finished from Wilberforce [University].

EB: Oh, where is Wilberforce?

RB: Ohio.

EB: Ohio.

RB: I was in Columbus this summer, but I was too far away to go to see Wilberforce and I wanted to see it. And I saw my mother's alma mater, Morris Brown [College], for the first time, summer before last, right there in Atlanta.

EB: They have a church in Charleston where I went to school at called Morris Brown, and I'm sure that's named for the college.

RB: Right. It is. It's so good to reminisce.

EB: It is, it really is. I love to create—well, that's one reason why I'm into anthropology now. I like to create pictures, like something of the past and stuff like that. What I plan to do when I get out of school is go into museum exhibits and creating exhibits of the places in the past and stuff like that. And it's fun doing the research.

RB: Oh, some days I go down to the library and I stay down there all day—

EB: You can, you really can.

RB: —researching pictures and oh, I could spend a small fortune having pictures reproduced. Also, I’m going to check that Florida Sentinel, and he’ll reproduce them for me.

EB: Right, yeah and they had a picture of Leon Claxton dancers. I remember that was so funny, cause it was like, "Oh, my God, they had dancers like back then."

RB: Well, when the Silas Green show came to town, then you would see some billboards and everything. I was a little girl then and all the Blacks would go to see the Silas Green show. There was a Black minstrel show and they would come to town under a great big tent. I couldn't go then either, because I was too young. Life was really good—excuse me—way back then. It wasn't anything compared to what's going on now. The only thing, we just did not have advantages that we have now. You could go anywhere your dollar would let you go or allow you to go. I did not want anything but to let my dollar carry me where I wanted to go. I had my personal friends and wasn't looking for any kind of
friendship and I think everybody should be a friend to man. But I was just looking for that dollar to carry me where I wanted to go.

But life was good back then, it was. My mom could leave home when we lived on Marion Street and go all the way downtown with the front door unlocked. There was no locking, I did not have burglar bars on—we did not have burglar bars on houses.

EB: When did you put those up?

RB: I put those in here about—well, soon after I moved in here. I think it was about eighteen years ago. Because they came in one night when I was sitting up in church, singing.

EB: Did they take stuff?

RB: Oh, yeah. They just took all my jewelry and threw it into a blanket and wrapped it up and there went my mom's precious wedding rings and things. You know, things you couldn't replace. Luckily I had on my wedding rings.

EB: Well, there's one more question I wanted to ask you and that was about Clara Frye Hospital and the Lily White Hospital?

RB: Okay, the Clara Frye Hospital, there was a little hospital on the, where was it, originally it was on Lamar [Avenue]. I don't know. I got the history somewhere around here concerning that place, and Clara Frye, too, in a little blue book that tells you the origin of the Clara Frye, but it was Black staff.

EB: Oh, yeah, I know the origin, but did you ever go there?

RB: I had my baby there. My daughter was born there.

EB: And the Lily White Hospital, was that in existence at the same time Clara Frye was? I know Lily White came later and it didn't last that long. Because it was when desegregation occurred, it was still in existence. In fact, I think that some of the people say, well, because of integration it kind of like went out of business.

RB: It did, right. That was under C. Blythe Andrews, who founded the Sentinel. His organization and the Lily White Organization.

EB: Was it big—was it a big hospital?

RB: You can still see it. It's on 22nd right off of Lake Avenue. Let me see, I tell you to go right when you get there, but if you—right over in that vicinity, the building is still there, and I think the cornerstone is still there that says Lily White Organization, because they had this Benevolent Association.
EB: So this is near College Hill Projects?

RB: No, what is it near? Do you know where the New First Baptist of College Hill?

EB: Now I'm not familiar with that area at all. I gonna have to—

RB: Well, you go straight out Lake Avenue, going—

EB: See, I don't even know how to get to Lake Avenue. But I can find it, don't worry about it. I have a map.

RB: Someday you need to come over here and I'll take you on a tour.

EB: Yeah, I need to do that, I really do because—

RB: I need to take you on a tour of Tampa and see some of the—you know one of my girlfriends, we grew up together, and she's a doctor at the University of Minnesota. I bet I went a hundred miles riding around in the City of Tampa, plus St. Pete and Clearwater and she said she enjoyed that more than anything.

EB: I know I did. We went—I went one day with just me and just a couple of friends who are also working on this project. And we took the video tape recorder, the video cam recorder, and we videotaped downtown where Central Park used to be, and Central Park Village. We had the most fun, like looking at the ah—

*end of interview*