

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Vera Payne

COLLECTION: 4700.2550

IDENTIFICATION: Mossville, Louisiana resident

INTERVIEWER: Chelsea Arseneault

SERIES: Mossville History Project - Field Interviews

INTERVIEW DATES: July 3, 2015

FOCUS DATES: 1950s-80s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 4483

Geographical boundaries of Mossville; changes in physical appearance of the community; considered it “one of the best places on earth”; community leaders; Joshua Rigmaiden the unofficial mayor, Dallas Moss instrumental in community affairs, and Frank “Jim” Johnson involved in getting public water to Mossville March 6th, 1969; well water; public sewage came later; street names; grandfather Earthy carved out Prater road with horse and wagon; subdivisions in Mossville; weddings a community event; integration didn’t faze her because of the tight-knit nature of the community; soon moved to California, which was much more progressive; family picnics; great-grandmother Mary Vincent could feed three kids on one egg; parents rented from family members the first years of marriage; she got married by the justice of the peace in Texas, but years later had a wedding; she didn’t want to leave Mossville; holiday traditions; special food dishes, like Irish potato pie; husband came from a large family and taught her how to cook; neighbors growing up; the old school-house; teachers; community discipline; entertainment like record hops, house parties, and canteens; her mother made their school clothes from fabric she got at J.J. Newberry’s; music and fashion growing up; wading on flooded Prater Road before it became blacktop; white store owner Rougeau; post office; memories of another store owner, Ira Garrett; earliest childhood memories; remembers how green and wooded the area was; crawfishing in ditches; getting hit by a car and having to wear a full body cast; a lady who “lost her mind” from time to time and grandfather [Joseph Vincent] using bean poles beneath her window as a protective barrier from the lady; spending time with Walter Smith, her grandfather’s friend, at the branding pen; grandfather taught her how to name stars, and instilled values into her; mother was a role model, was strict but giving; taught them to voice their opinion and attend church; mother’s struggle with leukemia; her father is her step-father, but the family always accepted her as a Prater; grandparents’ home destroyed by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita; grandparents and their home; grandfather Earthy Prater would take the horse and buggy to grocery shop in Westlake; as a teen-ager, she would ride the bus to Lake Charles to shop; Uncle Bo crippled from polio, and used ropes to maneuver; great-grandfather Ben Vincent kept raisins

under his pillow; behavior in front of adults; mother and grandmother took care of discipline; segregated movie theater; memories of Paradise Club; television shows; chores; didn't grow plants for home remedies, just vegetables; the root man sold different teas; Dr. Charles Fellows's offices were segregated; grandparents used almanac for planning; ordered medicinal items from Watkins catalog; economic changes in the 1950s; George Braxton Sr.'s trash business; midwives; teachers; white teacher named Amy Reynolds; attended college in Lafayette for nursing, but had to stay off campus because of segregation; dating Wilfred; differences in education then and now; values her parents instilled in her, for example a sense of responsibility, honesty, faith in God and perseverance; career as a nurse; Mossville history and original families; area Saprack rumored to be haunted; hates to see Mossville gone, but grateful the history will be preserved.

TAPES: 1 (T4483)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 36 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 58 pages

PHOTOGRAPHS / PHOTOGRAPHER: Two photographs of Payne taken during her oral history day interview. Photographer Kyle Tanglao.

OTHER MATERIALS: Interview questions (4 pgs); Correspondence; Newspaper articles (6 pgs)

RESTRICTIONS: none