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JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

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You have been asked for information to be used in connection with the Oral History Program at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. The purpose of this program is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

A tape recording of your interview will be made by the interviewer, and a typescript of the tape will be made and submitted to you for editing. The final retyped and edited transcript, together with the tape of the interview will then be placed in the oral history collection at Jackson State University Jackson, Mississippi. Other institutions or persons may obtain a copy. These materials may be made available for purposes of research, for instructional use, for publication, or for other related purposes.

I, Leola A. Wentley, have read the above and, in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, and in return for a final typed copy of the transcript, I knowingly and voluntarily permit Jackson State University, Jackson, the full use of this information. I hereby grant and assign all my rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information, whether or not such rights are now known, recognized, or contemplated, to Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi.

Ms Leola A. Wentley
Interviewee (Signature)

6/19/78
Date



JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

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Interview Agreement

You have been asked for information to be used in connection with the Oral History program at Jackson State University. This information is being gathered and preserved for historical and scholarly use.

A tape recording of the interview will be made by your interviewer. The goal of the project is to transcribe each interview. In the interim, we will provide you with a copy of the audiocassette.

The final version of this information will be used by Jackson State University in a variety of ways. Its uses can include radio, television, internet and other forms of electronic media. This information will also be placed in the oral history collection at Jackson State University.

I, Lola M. Westley have read the above information and in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, I knowingly and voluntarily permit Jackson State University to allow students and researchers access to this interview. I give Jackson State University all of my rights in relation to this information whether they are known or unknown.

Lola M. Westley
Interviewee's Signature

Date of Birth 1-22-24

Alferdeen Harrison
Interviewer's Signature

7-11-05
Date

Oral History Number Assigned 0741

Revised 03/05

O.H. 05.23

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Farish Street District
Jackson, Mississippi 39217

INTERVIEWEE: Mrs. Lola Weakley - *131 West Oakley Street*
INTERVIEWER: Mr. Willie Washington
SUBJ: Recollection of Early Life in the Farish Street Area
DATE: June 19, 1978 (Date of Interview)
OH 78.02

This is an interview with Mrs. Lola Weakley for the Jackson State University Oral History Project, interviewed by Willie Washington. This interview is taking place in the home of Mrs. Weakley, 131 West Oakley Street, Jackson, Mississippi at 4:30 PM. There is a special interest on Attorney Carsie Hall.

WW: Mrs. Weakley, what are some of your early recollections of your early life in Jackson?

LW: I was born here as I said back in the twenties. My mother and father moved here in the early twenties. This is not their home. My mother was from Flora, Mississippi and my father was from Durant, Mississippi; but they had been here since way back after the World War I. He was a veteran of the first World War and she was a seamstress here in Jackson. I had a brother and sister and I am the oldest of the three. I went to Farish Street all of my life. As I can remember from the time I was big enough to go somebody watched me to the corner and somebody took me to church. My mother, as I said, was a seamstress. She attended Smith Robertson School from the beginning until she stopped, in the fifth grade. She built in this area back in the 1900's; 1919. She owned this house. At that time, Farish Street was thriving and a mostly all Black community as I can remember. I would like to state my recollection between 1924, the year I was born to 1933, vaguely. We moved away from here in 1929 over in the Jackson College area out on Einstein Street. We lived there approximately four and a half

Cover letter mailed w/ copy of transcript on 9-3-82. The xerox machine out of order - no copy of standard form cover letter available.

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LW: years. My mother built a house out there. During the depression, 1930's or something like that, she lost the home. She moved back here to this home which as I say, is her property. In 1933, I started to school, Smith Robertson, in 1933 in the fourth grade. Mrs. Eddie C. Marino, another pioneer in this area, the YWCA is named after her, Marino Branch YWCA. She was my fourth grade teacher, and I also took music under her at the time. She lived on Grayson Street at that time. Now it's Lamar up near the Cemetery. She was, as I said, my fourth grade teacher and a very good teacher. I remember that year under her I made a double promotion from the fourth to the sixth grade and of course I attended summer school. at Lanier High School ~~summer~~ session and came back to school.

Mrs. George Dawson lived on Davis Street at that time. She has passed on now.

I remember the time Farish Street and around in this area was a very thriving community. Had quite a bit of homeowners here in this neighborhood, rather in the Bloom Street area and all around. At that time beyond Lanier High was just woods. We'd be on the playground and you could just look back of Woodrow Wilson that was just a wooded area. There was no Woodrow Wilson at that time. All of that was wooded area back in there and we had some friends come to school from that area. They'd walk through the woods from back over there. They called it "Trip Crossing." They'd walk over to Lanier High. I finished the seventh grade at Smith Robertson and went to Lanier for two years. Then I came back to Smith Robertson in the 8th^x grade and completed the 8th^x and then went back to Lanier in the 9th^x grade.

WW: You mentioned a lot of Black people owned land in this area. Was land very cheap at that time or was this just an area that attracted mostly Blacks?

LW: No! It was very cheap. I remember my mother said when she built this house, course it wasn't as large as it is now, it's ten rooms in this house now. When she built here it was five rooms and I think \$1,500

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LW: is what she paid all total. So, before, and I think from what I remember her telling us that she and a few others were about the first to move in this area after . . . This was what you called the White Red Light District. All these houses were mostly two-story houses, it's a few left. At the time she built this, this was a vacant piece of property. No house has been on it as I can remember her saying, but there were some two story houses in the neighborhood on down. Mostly Whites lived in this area, no Colored. It was some Colored on Mill Street. I say Colored because that's what Negroes were then, Blacks. Some on Mill Street in the area where Jitney Jungle's warehouse and bakery is now. There were a few Colored in that area.

Well, those houses burned down and as I said, my mother built here and a lady across the street, Mrs. Ingram and the Prices. Mr. & Mrs. Bolton Price, a science teacher out at Jackson College and his family. They moved in and bought several houses and rebuilt in this area. The Prices lived here until four or five years ago. Mr. Bolton moved to California, he and his wife and sister. She taught at Smith Robertson. She also was a student at Smith Robertson cause I remember her. I use to go down there all the time and she would ^{help} help me with my lesson. I remember her telling me she graduated from Smith Robertson in the 8th grade and at that time Smith Robertson didn't go any further than the eighth grade when she graduated. When you graduated at that time from the eighth grade, that's as far as it went! She went to Jackson College what they called "normal." Normal, you know, each summer to study and go back to the classroom to teach and she did that for a number of years. I'll say twenty years before she actually received her college degree.

WW: How did you have fun as a teenager in this area during that time? What was some of the things that you did to have fun?

LW: Well, when I was nine years old when we moved back in 1933 we just played ball in the area and in the street. It wasn't as many cars as it is now. Back here behind me on Hamilton Street, that place is vacant still, it was a big house there. It was houses there then.. It was a big

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LW: vacant lot and we kids would go down there and we would play in the area in the street; just play ball, you know, things that children usually played at the time. . . Hide and go seek. I was the type of child my mother didn't let me ^{play} play very long. By the time I was eleven years old she started me helping her sew so my brother and sister played. I being the oldest, I always had to come in and help her cook and whatever in the house. So, I didn't get to play too much. (Laughter)

I remember another fellow in the neighborhood, Mr. Collier, he was the grandfather of Mr. Elvix Cox, Mr. Cox just passed on last year. He lived in this area all his life and his grandfather had a horse and he use to bring it back down here. . . had a lot of grass. . .

At that time, houses were all back in here. A lot of old train built houses you know and outdoor toilets in lines, like five or six outdoor toilets and that was the only toilet they had, these people round here. Well, they called it the "Jungle," really. It was just Blacks and they drank anything they could get thier hands on. Corn whiskey, grain alcohol, shoe polish, you name it and they drank it and fought out in the middle of the alley. They gambled down there all the time. So, this old man would come by and tell my mother, he called her Old Miss, "Old Miss, you're not going to be able to raise these kids here because of all this. . ." My mother was very strict. She had this fence that went around the house and we didn't get any further than that fence and if anything was going on too unusual, you came in the house because she didn't want us to see that, but she always told Mr. Collier, "I'll raise um here."

WW: What about some problems maybe you have had with police brutality? Was there any?

LW: Well, at the time it was quite bad down here in this alley and around on Farish Street. The Blacks gambled, sold whiskey, and the police would come in and kick the door down and beat up on anybody that was in there and drag them out and put em under the car and if they said

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LW: anything sassy, they'd take em to the fairgrounds and beat em half to death and then throw em in jail. I remember it was a man stayed down here, Mr. Irwin. His cousin stayed next door to us here. I don't know what happened that they broke in on him that particular morning, but he was sleep. I was a kid about twelve years old. He didn't answer the door fast enough and they kicked the door in and went in. Naturally he jumped up out of bed and they hit him with the billie club and broke his neck. Nothing was ever done about it. They just called an ambulance. The coroner didn't come out in those days. You didn't have a coroner in those days. The ambulance would come out and they picked him up and carried him to the undertaker. They had a funeral and that was just about all that was said about it. You know what I mean. In those days they didn't have to do no explaining that the Negro was resisting arrest or nothing like that. He was just another Negro dead. The police would walk in a place, some of the cafes downtown and if they felt like kicking on you or beating up on you, they did it. Nothing was said about it at that time.

WW: Okay. I'd like to focus on a few of the important individuals in the area. As I said earlier, one person in particular is Mr. Hall. Can you tell us of some of your early recollections of Attorney Hall when you first came in contact with him or when he first came into the area as you can remember.

LW: Okay. I can't remember what year, but I can first remember him when I was a teenager in high school. He was a Postman at that time. We all know Carsie as he is now. He has never changed. He has always been the same. Everybody looked up to Carsie because Carsie was a person that was and still is. . .he seemed like he had the. . .anybody that was in need of anything, Carsie would help them. Everybody liked him and he was a Postman, as I said. He worked on Capitol Street for a number of years. I don't know any other place he worked, as I can remember, other than Capitol Street as a Postman. I remember him say-

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LW: ing that he started in the Post Office as a very young boy or young man. From the way he talked, he must have been less than 18 or 20 something like that when he started working. He was a person that everyone was carzy about and they still are. Everybody liked Carsie. If it was anything he could do for you he did it. He always teased, was also humorous and everybody liked him and he too is a member of the Farish Street Church.

WW: You know of any organizations that he is a part of or offices that he holds in the Church?

LW: Yes. He's a trustee. He refused to be a Deacon. (Laughter). He is a trustee and I tell you he must be very influential because I tell you the pastor will do nothing without going to Carsie first. I can tell you one thing about Carsie, he's outspoken, and he's frank. If you do something or if the pastor does something that he don't like, he can be sitting at the back door, he'll say wait a minute brother pastor, stop right there. So, this might be one of the reasons before the pastor does anything you know, make any type of changes. He'll go to Carsie before he goes to anybody else and talk with Carsie about it. It may be he might not want this known, but this is our pastor we have now. I don't know about the minister we had before him. Rev. Johnson is our Pastor now. He'll go to Carsie because Carsie is one of those kind of people that'll tell 'em, I don't like it, I don't have any problems with it, but I just don't like it. He don't mind telling you. He's a Sunday School Teacher. He has a class of young adults. A lot of older people like his class too, he really sets you to thinking. He just might say that Jesus is a man just to get an argument in the Sunday School Class, I mean just to see how you are thinking. So, he's a Trustee, Sunday School Teacher, and I think that's about all concerning the Church--Carsie is so busy otherwise.

WW: What about some of his legal work? Do you recall any outstanding cases that he has been involved in?

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- LW: No, I have used him as an attorney for a number of years myself but I wouldn't really know of any outstanding cases that he has dealt with.
- WW: Do you think that most of the Blacks in this area use Attorney Hall?
- LW: Quite a few. Even now that he has so called retired, which he has not, I know that a friend of mine is here now from Chicago to see about his sister's property and I told him to call him to work on that and I have some proeprty that is in question. It's really my husband's family's property and he's working on that and I know he's working on Mrs. Ethel Miller's estate. So he still does quite a bit of work. I think most of the people in this area, along with Jack Young of course, (Jack is dead now) they used Carsie and Jack Young quite a bit.
- WW: What about some of your recollections of Attorney Young?
- LW: Now I don't really know if I can tell you much about Attorney Young. I do remember his brother, Henry Young, and how I became acquainted with Henry. He was Secretary of one of these Masonic Lodges. Mr. Randolph, a plumber, one of our old plumbers here in Jackson, and his wife at the time lived right here until she met, well she wasn't his wife at the time. . .The lady he married lived there which was Mr. Edward Lee's mother in law.
- WW: Edward Lee, is this the hotel owner?
- LW: Yes. His mother-in-law married Mr. Randolph. This is how I came in contact with Mr. Henry. My daddy, Mr. Henry and Mr. Randolph were all in this Lodge together. Well, then I found out that Mr. Jack Young was his brother and they had another brother that I knew. He passed on and I don't know too much about him, but I do know that he was a Postman also. He and Carsie were very good friends and I guess they both ventured out into the law field about the same time and that was after he retired from the Post Office.. Both of them re-tired and both of them went into the law field. I don't know whether they did any studies or whether they took courses or what. I do know

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LW: Carsie went to Jackson College. That's where he got his education, at Jackson College. So, far as the law part of it, I don't know where he got that education.

WW: Now most of this area, Lamar-Farish Street area, has been predominately Black and owned by mostly Black. Is the land still owned by mostly Black people?

LW: No! NO! NO! Now as I said, it was quite a few Black families, ^{start} but now in some areas it was a lot of Whites. The houses here and all this property behind me and this across the street now belongs to Whites. You got a Colored family right there and the Wilsons that lived here a number of years. Mrs. Katie Wilson, their houses have both burned down now. The library has Mrs. Wilson's property. Mrs. Moore is in the nursing home now. Myself and Mrs. Deer, we are about the only Colored families. Oh yea, Rev. Curry, Rev. D. R. Curry, he has been here for a number of years. Course, he has passed on too. His wife is still there, right down the street. Most of, . . . now you find Whites have been buying in, buying up the rental property which I think is about the worse thing to happen because most people, we have to keep up our property, but they don't do anything to it.

WW: Okay, the Farish Street area--what businesses on Farish Street is still owned by say some Blacks that you can recall?

LW: Well, Dr. Redmond, Dr. Redmond's property, he owns his property. Dr. McCoy, he's dead but he owned a lot of property and his wife still owns a lot of property. The Hodges owned that property first. Mr. Hodges, Mr. Clause Hodges owned all that property on the east side of Farish Street but he sold it to McCoy. It's still in the McCoy family. His wife still owns that property and houses on this end of the street. There's Dr. Birtton and there's Collins' Funeral Home. It was across the street but it moved and built on this side because I think they were renting that property on that side. They moved and built where they are now back in the 40's, 1940 somewhere back there.

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LW: Most of them have sold out to Whites or else built other buildings as the "Y". Now Dr. Redmond's daughter still has property down here on Farish Street. Right there in Big John's area and. . .the Big John you know. . .street area, well that's still his property.

WW: We were questioning, possible, some of the changes that have been made. What's the biggest change, the most upsetting thing that has changed say from your time as a young girl in Jackson's Farish Street area until now? One thing that has upset you most about the area?

LW: Well, it's quite disturbing, the prostitution and gambling. I've known several people that was in prostitution and gambling but it wasn't in the street like that. It was something that I only found out about after I got grown to really know ^{what} ~~that~~ ~~this~~ was happening. The prostitutes, the pimps that hang out on the corner, you can't pass the street sometimes, even a woman driving alone, they just fall up on your ^{car} call. I mean they don't know whether you're a man or woman. This disturbs me quite a bit, and they just hand in the street.

Now I remember when Sehphard's, Stevenson's and some more people who had restaurants, now they were nice. You could walk in, have dinner on Sunday after coming from Church and everything. It was nice. Then all this changed after they died out and somebody else took over the restaurant. ^{can't} Con't hardly go in them and buy a nice dinner after coming from church or something. You might want to stop and drink a coke, can't do these kinds of things anymore.

WW: Were there any kinds of community organizations to say battle with the "Red Light District" or the prostitution?

LW: Yes. My Pastor of my church has really been out after it. Mrs. Sanders down in the area down here on Hamilton Street. . .I've known times when I guess Mrs. Sanders spoke to the officers about it but nothing had been done until Rev. Johnson really just took to the

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LW: street with marches up and down the street and that sort of really the reason all this took place. We had a shooting right out here in this vacant lot a while back. This White man shot this prostitute right on our church lot. Sometimes when the children would be out there playing on Saturday on the church lot they might see a man naked running who would have had dealing with these prostitutes in one or two houses up there off Church Street. This really became disturbing so the church took out after them and it quieted down. I notice it is probably building up again. I don't know what has happened, but I noticed it. Sometimes I can set on the porch and see them popping out of trucks and cars, out there. That's the most disturbing thing.

WW: So the problem of prostitution from the early days up until now is still bugging you?

LW: Yes. It's always that. . .course we had a lot of whiskey selling in the Farish Street area. Of course, we have back here now, behind me here now. . .they are quiet and there's nothing so much I can tell you. There's nothing you can do about (ti) and I'll tell you why I say that. The police sets them up. I have seen them go maybe away with somebody else. I guess they bring whiskey there and give it to you. So, who can you got to?

I can remember this lady had a garden, she'd give us vegetables so we had nobody to complain about, but now most of those corn whiskey sellers just ran out. Now she sells wine and stuff like that. My mother and father use to say, "well, who can you complain to," because the man on down was taking bribes. I mean it wasn't known at the time. The ~~anyor~~ ^{Mayor} and everybody knew about it cause the guys, I have seen them come out of there with the policemen, four in a car, you know, with a paper. . .I sewed in that. . .I'm a seamstress now, that's my profession.

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LW: I have seen them come out through there like nine and ten o'clock at night with this big cardboard paper box between on the back seats, just counting money. You know they were all going around to all these different political places and they'd get the . . . is that what you call them, they'd take and inhale in the back and they would laugh awhile. They weren't Black. They use to count all the money that was in the box. They just run their hands all through it and laugh and get. . . that's why. . . see I'm setting up in that sun and I can look right cross those ^{there} in the streets you know, so I spotted the car. I'd see them.

WW: What about some of the leading health problems? Did the people in the area have enough doctors to supply the community? If possible, can you remember that far?

LW: Yes I can remember. Well, not Black doctors. No, you didn't have enough Black doctors, but at that time when I was a kid, most of them was White doctors. Most of the people went to White doctors because you just found a few now and then who was a doctor. Dr. Brown was in our family for years. We had ourselves, Dr. Smith, Dr. Leroy Smith, Dr. Brown, ^{and} Dr. Johnson, ^{and} Dr. Hall. ^{those are} That's about the only Black doctors I can remember back in those days. So most people went to White doctors. You had a few Blacks, but now the health problem, one thing that really stood out in my mind was syphilis. We, at one time, syphilis was just raging cause you know, I'm talking about my community experiences. I don't know too much about the other community, ^{id} but they would come down in here in these vans at the time and would hold like eight or nine people and pick up people and carry them up to the Health Department you know, just be picking them up. Now, how did they know about and why. . . you know they had. . . this disease I don't know but they would take them up to the Health Department and examine them and I guess maybe send them off to Meridian. Most time you wouldn't see them for awhile. Of course T. B., ^{tuberculosis} . . . I remember we had two or

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tuberculosis

- LW: three cases of T. B. in this area. At that time you didn't have the sanatorium like they had down here at Magee. So, people just stayed home until the stuff was out and passed on. Well like, I can't remember anything else that was so difficult other than the usual like measles, mumps, and what have you. Other than that I don't know anything else. Other than that I don't know anything else. . . other than I remember how they use to come by and just pick up people and carry them over to the Health Department. Sometimes the police had to come by and get them because sometimes they just wouldn't go, you know, they came and get them. The lady. . . they called her "Mama" she's a Black lady that comes with the driver. She'd make them go and she's tall as you. . . She's a great big old woman. She'd wear those . . . you're going to the Health Department and I guess they were getting angry. I don't really know but since I've gotten grown, I've heard tales that persons that were afflicted, well say, I was with that person. . . this person, and they would come out and pick them up.
- WW: Most of the people that live in the Farish-Lamar area today, are they native Jacksonians or passing, like coming down through the family line?
- LW: I doubt it. Most of the people that I knew back, long time ago had homes up there. Some of them are dead and the family like moved away.
- WW: You mentioned. . .
- LW: But there are few others. . .
- WW: Excuse me, you mentioned the lady that owns the funeral home, Mrs. Collins.
- LW: Yes.
- WW: What about some of the influences she's had in the area?
- LW: Oh, she has been a great help in the community cause a lot of kids. . . I can remember since I been grown that she had taken them under her wing and clothed them and sent them to school as far as they could go and get them jobs in the community. At Christmas she would have this party for the kids you know, and she'd give away bikes and things

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LW: like that. In all, she's been a great influence in the neighborhood. Now seh's from Meridian. She grew up from a young girl, I think she told us she was fifteen years old when they first came to Jackson. I don't know whether she attended Smith Robertson but I know she's done a lot of things for Smith Robertson cause I remember when I was P.T.A. President over there. . .there wasn't a time that we needed anything that she couldn't help us with it. I remember we took on a project. . .a Whitfield project. . .like they would go over and give parties for the patients. Whenever we were ready to have a party, she would always give \$25.00 or \$30.00 to the effort. She would always say if you needed anything else, just let me know. She was always. . .her mother and father were both the same way. So, I think, as I can remember, the Collins have always been helping. If anybody needed anything you know, they ^{were} the first ones to go out and help them with it.

In this area you will always have welfare, the Collins would always help the children. If it meant taking them in the house with them... I've known quite a few. . .take several kids in and, you know, in the house with them. I don't mean at one time. You know maybe one child at a particular time and then they would grow up working around the funeral home and going to school cause the family couldn't see after them, or the mother was drunk and the father was drunk and nobody to see after them. So she would take them. . .Go/Come to the PTA meetings and follow them up in school until they decided, well, I'm not going any more. One of those young ladies is working with her now. She started working with her when she was in high school. This was a family she knew and she sent her through college. She is now working in her office. She did send her to her part of the World. The girl didn't want to stay up there in the country so she came back and went to Jackson College. So, she finished at Jackson College and she's down there in the office now. So, it's been so many people she has

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LW: helped in this community. She's always speaking out against anything that's. . .well she always had influence with the Mayor and Governors, mothers and fathers.

WW: You also mentioned Mrs. Marino.

LW: Yes.

WW: The YWCA is the. . .

LW: Right.

WW: Can you recall anything about Mrs. Marino?

LW: Oh, when I first knew her she was a very old lady. Well, what I guess I'd say. . .cause I know now that if you're fifty years old, you don't look like people look at fifty in those days you know. I'm saying she might have been fifty-five. She was a little short red lady, typical school teacher. She was a music teacher. I will always remember those huge columns and what have you on her house. I was always scared to go by that house. She liked me and I was in her class and my mother talked to her about giving me music. So, this is the only thing I've ever known her to do, to teach music and to teach school. She taught school for a number of years even after I left her class, even after she retired. She was way past retirement age, cause in those days you know, Negroes didn't retire, nobody but the railroad men. That's the only somebody that I know that retired. If you was a railroad man, they would retire you when you got a certain age. I don't remember what age that was. I heard people say, well, he is a retired railroad man. He's a primer of a railroad, what's the name. . .but other than that, teachers didn't retire, they just got too old to teach and stopped. So I can imagine when she retired she was way past her time in age. I don't know where her home was. This home that she lived in, I understand a number of years later, she was living in it for somebody else. Her home was next door to that. It was a little small place, but this big old two story house (it use to be the Graystone Hotel), after she moved out the owner sold it.

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WW: How did the depression in that time affect the life or livelihood of the people in the Farish-Lamar area...I guess that would be more personal?

LW: Yes, well I think. It kinda puts people on a limb, I tell you. . . I'd like to tell you that. They didn't call it relief then, they called it NRA. I remember they had a name for it. . . anyway you didn't get that much of anything, that little food they gave. . . a little rice, I think this week you go down there to the place, if I remember down here on South Street where the train tracks come across in the back. You go there in the back. We had a fellow who lived here with us. He'd always lived with us for years and years back. He had one son and his son just left him, so he was an Indian Black man. My mama use to cook for him, and he lived with us. He was just like my grandfather. So we use to go with him. He worked at the Mississippi Mill over here. . . Hardin's Seed Mill. I remember him falling through that shoot in all that cotton seed soil. He was disabled to work after that. You know, as I said, when you became disabled to work you didn't get any handouts like they give you now, you know, supplementary and that pension, you ^{was} just out. So he lived with us until he died which was back in 1952. He was ⁹¹ ~~ninety~~-one years but we use to go with him to pick up his _____ as they called it in those days. Some weeks we go up there with a big croaker sack. He always had a croaker sack under his arms. He'd carry us with him. Yes, we were just going for the heck of it, just children going down to South Jackson. Some weeks he would get a sack of potatoes. . . that croaker sack full of potatoes, maybe a little bag of rice. One of the kids would carry one, four or five oranges and maybe the next time you go down there, say the next day, you pick two or three weeks, you might have got nothing. Sometimes you go down there, he got butter and some of those old speckled peas. Pinto beans or whatever you call

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LW: them. But anyway, he would go everytime these folks come. He got a small check. It was less than \$30.00 but I am not too sure cause I was just a child. Now why I say it was \$30.00 is because when I got grown and my father and my mother got on old age pension, my mother only got \$30.00. They didn't give my father any because he was working. . .he was a veteran. . .so way back in the 1940's, he got less than \$30.00 because it was in the 1950's or something like that when my mother got \$30.00.

They had job corps for younger men that didn't have jobs, and they would go out and dig these ditches. You didn't see anybody but Black men digging these ditches. I remember my daddy when we were living out West. . .my daddy worked for \$2.00 a week.

WW: So you mentioned that you moved out West for awhile. . .

LW: Yes.

WW: Do you recall the reason for you moving in that area?

LW: Yes. My mother was ill and the doctor said that if she would move out . . .well at that time we called that life the . . .rural.

WW: Suburb?

LW: Suburb or rural. We'd say rural at that time. But anyway, he thought she would get clean air and everything, so we moved out in that area, and of course they built out there. This man I'm talking about, Mr. Brown, lived there. He had some land out there and he sold it to my mother and father. Right there where Bert Wilson, that big house that sits right there on. . .right in front of. . .what is that now over there. . .Narco use to be that recording studio. . .it's right below the President's house, right along in there, and we lived right on that corner there. . .the corner at that time when the big house sat there . . .got a porch all the way across the corner. Right below the Jackson College ballpark. That's the new coliseum. Well it wasn't a house then, just a big open bridge. Well we lived in the house. That's probably all the way out there. We were out there about four or five years.

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LW: It was during the depression and my daddy wasn't making but \$2.00 a week. Then he got this WPA and he wouldn't work on mornings we had rain. I remember him telling me they put them to digging ditches in water up to the waist. My daddy just come up out and stuck his shovel in there and came on home. He said, "well, I'll just starve first, because I am not getting in that much water." So, they had a White guy standing over them because I remember that creek that goes back round . . . all back round in there now. I remember they use to have men out there digging that creek out with shovels and picks, with this White man standing upon the bench.

WW: You mentioned. . . going back to your education. . . you mentioned you went to Smith ^{Robertson} will?

LW: Smith Robertson.

WW: Smith Robertson, excuse me. (Laughter) Smith Robertson. Approximately how many students were at Smith Robertson during the time that you were there and what time was this?

LW: Oh, I was there from 1933 until 1937 or 1938. I don't know. Smith Robertson, Mary Jones and Jim Hill were the only schools then except the college. So, we had quite a few children over there. I mean, it was two grades of every grade. First grade. .two grades, second grade. . two grades. .two groups up until the seventh grade and eighth grade., but it was quite a few kids over there. The classroom was. . .at that time, teachers didn't have, they had like thirty to thrity-five and sometimes forty children in the room. They had Mr. Marshall, Mr.L. J. Marshall was one of my principals. Mr. Lanier had gone on to Lanier High when I went over there.

WW: Was Mr. Lanier from this area too?

LW: I don't know where he lived but he lived, he must have been from this area but I think it was up in the north part of, in or around Ash, back over in there. I'm not too familiar with him. But Professor Wilson, Charles Wilson, he was from this area. He was the principal over there

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LW: too. He was from off of Lamar Street and of course he was the principal there three years before after I got there. He left and went to Lanier. He was over there at Lanier teaching. Then there was Mr. Marshall, L. G. Marshall was my principal until I left and went to Lanier. Of course it was some good ones at Lanier at that time. Then following him was Mr. Sanders, I. S. Sanders, was my principal.

WW: The YWCA and the YMCA, what enrichment programs did they bring to the area?

LW: Well now the YWCA, I can speak more or less of the YWCA when I was a kid, course the only thing now, you didn't have a YMCA at that time. We just had the YWCA and it was a house. It was a little two-story house. It was two sisters who owned this house and I don't remember their names but they just turned it over as the "Y", you know now. We would go down and play. We had other programs. We had sewing, embroidery and things like that. Then I remember they opened up the YMCA. When my boys grew up in this area, the "Y" was just like a second home to them because it began to be so many cars on the street and they would go to the "Y" and they loved it. I was glad to know that they had a place ^{to} go go that had a little protection at that time. I could always call up there when Miss Chambers, Bertha Lee. . .big Bertha Chambers at that time and I could find my boys there. She would say yes, they are here Lola. I didn't want them to be in the street, so I would rather see them at the "Y".

WW: How many boys do you have?

LW: I have three.

WW: Three boys? Any girls?

LW: One girl. One girl, she's in school now. The boys have already married and one of their daughters is still in school. She's doing her internship now, this summer at the Criminology Department with the Highway Patrol.

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WW: Mrs. Weakley, can you recall any other outstanding people or contributions of some people that we might not have mentioned?

LW: It's no doubt I'm sure I have, but I can't think of anyone.

WW: Oh! I'm going to ask one last question. What program or project would you encourage to more or less initiate some progressive change for the Farish Street area?

LW: Well, I agree with you. I would like to see it revived, I tell you. We have, I would like to see the Black businesses build up again. We only got a few good businesses down there now. One time we had a business school down there, doctors offices. I would like to see changes like that made. All those old cafes and things of course, if they were decent places to go in and eat in, it would be alright but as they are now, I don't particularly. . . I wish they would move. So, I would really like to see Farish Street revived again because as it is now, you're afraid to walk down there at night.

WW: That's bad.

LW: That's right. I never leave out. I don't leave my daughter. You know sometimes we use to walk down there and get a coke, go down to the cab stand and get a coke, but I don't even let her go that way now. You know, of course we have a car now and we'll jump in a car and go and get something some place or something like that. But just to walk out on Farish Street to pick up a coke or something at night, especially if it's dark, after 6:00^{p.m.} PM, you don't do this. We're just afraid. She had said, "woman I'm not afraid," but I am afraid. Even I'm afraid to just walk down there by myself because there have been cases when this, right here beside my house, I have to go out there and stop somebody from cutting somebody up, taking their money off, even at night. Since the other night she woke me up, she said momma, "somebody got this man running and he's hollering out here," and it was about four young boys and when I looked out they ranged in age from about sixteen years old to nineteen.

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LW: They were trying to take this boy's money and he kept telling them that he didn't have any money. I've seen them just take the shoes off, you know. I just have to call the police. I've called the Police and it takes them so long to get here. But, see, you have to do something because they ^{re} beating him and kicking him and you know, I'm reminded of a lady that use to live right across the street from us. She was a hard working lady. Well, she drank ^d a lot on weekends. Her name was Katie Mae. Katie Mae, on Fridays when she got paid off, she just drank beer. She left Home Dining Room at that time, I don't know whether you remember Home Dining Room or not, I don't know how long you've been in Jackson. They've tore it down, that was the Home dining room, it was a historical place that Mr. Robinson Alexander and Mr. Mosley, he's the shoe man down there, M. E. Mosley, he was there for years. He was there when we ^{were} ~~was~~ small kids right there in that same place right there. Course they've torn all that area down right there, right there on the corner of Hamilton and Farish. Well, anyway she left out there and was going on home round Bloom Street and about five or six boys got her and raped her, killed her. Well, the lady say she heard all this noise out there and she didn't even go and see. So, that's why I always go and see about it, you know. When she goes out there, this woman was on her back steps, dead. I always try to get up. . .we always get up here in this house. I have one room and it's been here with me now, it was here with my mother when I came back home after my husband and I separated, I came back home, it was here. My mother's mother and my daddy was with his mother and father more or less cause his mother died when he was fifteen years old. He went to Jackson College, then he went in the Army and so he stayed here after momma died. He asked me could he stay here and I was so happy to have a man in the house cause my husband and I were separated at the time. My husband was dead then because we ^v have been separated. I also had to have a man in the house for the boys then, you know, for my boys. My boys were living here too. So after he asked to stay, he was

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LW: just like a brother to me. Well, I'm glad he stayed. So, he, myself and my daughter, we're the only three in the house now. But I sometimes would like several of us to be here. The boys are all gone. We would always kind of get up and find out what's going on.. If we can help you know, we always called, "is that the man," well usually if you say something like that they know that you gonna call the Police on them, they'd leave them alone for awhile. My son came home. . .my son got shot at Jackson College (incident by basketball). He came home from the Post Office, he worked in the Post Office. There was a robbery out there and he knew the man, one of our family's very close friends. He'd always carry a pistol too because he comes in like 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning after getting off from the Post Office. He would always sit out there and take the bullets out of his gun. He said some of them tried to catch this man and got him right long there. . .they finally got him. He put his pistol on him and made him turn him loose. He tells my son everytime he sees him, "man I know how glad I am,"

This is my daughter.

WW: How you doing?

Daughter: Hi, how you all doing?

LW: Don't know if I was suppose to introduce you on the interview, we'll have to. . .

WW: Okay, well we're gonna be finished. I want to thank you for allowing me to come in and take the interview and hopefully it will be beneficial to the Oral History Department at Jackson State. I want to thank you again for being patient with me and giving me the opportunity to come into your home and talk with you.

LW: Well, thank you for coming. I wish I could have been more help to you.

WW: Okay, Mrs. Weakley. Do you mind if this tape be used for scholarly purposes at the Jackson State University's Oral History Department?

LW: No, I don't.

WW: Okay, thank you.

Weakley: a great influence in the neighborhood. ~~No~~, she's from Meridian. She grew up from a young girl, I think she told us she was fifteen years old when they first came to Jackson. I don't know whether she attended Smith Robertson but I know she's done a lot of things for Smith Robertson cause I remember when I was PTA's President over there . . . there wasn't a time that we needed anything that she couldn't help us with it. I remember we took on a project ~~like~~ a Whitfield project, ~~like~~ they would go over and give parties for the patients. Whenever we were ready to have a party, she would always give \$25 or \$30 to the effort. She would always say if you needed anything else, just let me know. ~~She was always~~ her mother and father were both the same way. So, I think, as I can remember, the Collins have always been helping. If anybody needed anything you know, they were the first ones to go out and help them with it.

In this area you will always have welfare. ~~The~~ Collins would always help the children ^{over} if it meant taking them in the house with them. I've known quite a few ~~to~~ take several kids in ~~and~~, you know, in the house with them. I don't mean at one time. You know maybe one child at a particular time and then they would grow up working around the funeral home and going to school ^{for} cause the family couldn't see after them, or the mother was drunk ~~and the~~ father was drunk and nobody to see after them. So, she would take them. ~~She~~ Come to the PTA meetings and follow them up in school until they decided, well, I'm not going any more. One of those young ladies is working with her now. She started working with her when she was in high school. This was a family she knew and she sent her through college. She is now working in her office. She did send her to her part of the world. The girl didn't want to stay up there in the country so she came back and went to Jackson College. ~~So, she finished at Jackson College and she's down there in the office now.~~ So, it's been so many people ^{so many people} she has helped in this community. ~~She's always speaking out against anything that's . . . well she always had influence with the mayor and governors, mothers, and fathers.~~

Washington: You also mentioned Mrs. Marino.

Weakley: Yes.

Washington: The YWCA is the ^{named after her?}