



Interview with Lola Haynes Hendricks

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Birmingham (Ala.)

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Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University

Behind the Veil: Documenting African American Life
in the Jim Crow South

Interview
with
LOLA HENDRICKS
[DOB 12/19/32]

Birmingham, AL
June 22, 1994
Tywana Whorley,
Interviewer

Whorley: Can you please tell me your name.

Hendricks: My name is Lola H. Hendricks.

Whorley: What does the H stand for?

Hendricks: Haynes, my maiden name.

Whorley: When were you born?

Hendricks: December 19, 1932.

Whorley: Here in Birmingham?

Hendricks: Here in Birmingham.

Whorley: Do you remember where you were born?

Hendricks: Yes, on 4th Avenue and 15th Street South on the south side of Birmingham.

Whorley: The hospital that you were born in, was that--

Hendricks: Born at home.

Whorley: Born at home?

Hendricks: Yes. The doctor came out and delivered me at the house.

Whorley: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

Hendricks: I have one sister, and she too was born at the house. She's four years younger than I am.

Whorley: Do you know why? Did your parents ever tell you why you were born at home instead of in a hospital?

Hendricks: I'm assuming it's because of the days of segregation, and either my parents did not want the condition that they had to go in the hospital or the doctor just refused to carry them to the hospital. They made blacks have the babies at home, possibly. I never discussed that, but we both were born at home.

Whorley: Do you remember if it was a black doctor?

Hendricks: It was a white doctor.

Whorley: Do you remember the name?

Hendricks: I don't remember his name right now. I have known it, but I can't remember it right now.

Whorley: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents.

Hendricks: My parents were both from the area of--my father was

born in La Grange, Georgia, and my mother was born in Standing Rock, Alabama. They moved to Birmingham after they were married, and my father worked as a laborer at a coal yard and my mother was a cook. She worked private duty in homes for a while and then she later got a job in a drug store, King's Drug Store on the south side, which was white. She cooked there.

Whorley: Did she ever talk about working over there in that area?

Hendricks: About the prejudice and things like that? Never. I have never heard my parents bitter about differences shown between the races. I looked at them as being the blacks that were submissive to white. They felt like they had to stay in their place. I've never heard them say anything about any problems, any encounter they had with whites in all their work history. Never.

Whorley: Do you remember your grandparents?

Hendricks: Yes, I remember my grandparents. I remember very little about my grandfather on my daddy's side. I know my

grandmother on my daddy's side. She was born in Georgia and lived there all her life, and they were sharecroppers. The same is true with my mother's father and mother. They were sharecroppers, and they lived in Georgia all their life.

Whorley: Just for the record, do you remember their names?

Hendricks: My mother's parents were Maggie Strong and Barney Strong. My father's mother was named Clara Haynes. I do not know my grandfather's name on my daddy's side. I've never heard anybody discuss him.

Whorley: Where did you go to school?

Hendricks: I went to school here in Birmingham at Cameron Elementary School and I graduated from there and went to Ullman High School for two years. Then in '49, I went to Parker High School for two years, and I graduated from Parker High School in January '51.

Whorley: The second school you went to, how do you spell that?

Hendricks: Ullman? U-L-L-M-A-N, Ullman.

Whorley: That was the second time I someone mention Ullman.

How was that in terms of going to school?

Hendricks: Elementary and high school? You want about both?

Whorley: Yes.

Hendricks: Elementary school, we went to a little wooden building. Everything was segregated then. We were poor. We laugh about it now. We had to get grown to know we were poor. We all were on the same level pretty much. There were a few students that stood out whose parents were teachers and maybe worked for the railroad, a few doctors during that era.

We had very little to work with, very bad books and things that would be torn that were provided for us to read. We had excellent teachers. We have to really give praises to the black teachers that we had during that era. They were committed to our being better students, or equal students on the part of the same level with the whites, with less accommodation for us. They taught us more than what was in them books. They taught us

how to prepare ourselves, to the best that we could be with whatever talent that we had.

We did not have access to a lot of cultural things during my high school era. Elementary school was just basic reading, writing, and arithmetic, and when we got to high school, we had very little cultural thing, other than the choirs. At Parker, we did have a drama club and we did have a speech club, but as far as going in the community to do things, we did not have as much exposure as the white student. It was very, very segregated separate but equal. We were really treated badly as far as our exposure compared to the whites that grew up when we did.

Whorley: In terms of you going to elementary school, where was that in relation to your home? I mean, did you have to walk?

Hendricks: Yeah, we had to walk. There was no public transportation, no specials to take us. We had to walk to school. The only time we had specials was when we got to high school. They would bus us to high school, and that was only because they had us segregated to Parker or Ullman. Those were the only two high schools in the city of Birmingham that you

could graduate from. Ullman was a two-year high school; Parker was a four-year. So those people who lived on the north side went to Parker the whole four years, but we lived over on the south side, so we had to go to Ullman two years and the other two years at Parker.

Whorley: Did you ever find out why two years at Ullman?

Hendricks: Ullman was not suited for a four-year school. They set it up as a junior high and not a four-year school, and that's what happened.

Whorley: I've heard that people who went to Parker had to use the trolley or the bus.

Hendricks: Yeah, had to ride the bus.

Whorley: And that they had the tokens.

Hendricks: Yeah, that's true.

Whorley: Were you able to afford that, because some people said

that they weren't able to?

Hendricks: No, we were not able to afford it. We were very poor. Like I said, my mother at that time, when I started high school, if I remember correctly, she was still working in the home, cooking for a family, and my father working as a laborer at the coal yard did not provide much money for us to live on. And not only that, there were the problem with my mother and father. My father was one who liked to drink and gamble. That didn't help us have any more. So we were very, very poor.

Whorley: So how did you get to school?

Hendricks: We had to walk. When I started going to Ullman, we would walk. See, we were on the south side and Ullman was on the south side, so we just had to walk. We walked to our elementary school; we walked to Ullman. When we got to Parker, we did get to ride a special, because we had to come from--no, I take that back. When I went to Parker, I did ride a special, but I happened to be living on the north side at that time when I went to Parker. My mother and father had moved to the north side.

Whorley: Where on the north side?

Hendricks: I think it was 1128 13th Court South. Over there at that time it was referred to as an alley where black people lived. The white people lived on the streets and we lived in the alley. It was an alley we lived in.

Whorley: Can you talk about the neighborhood.

Hendricks: The neighborhood was all black. Our house that we rented happened to be in the back of the house where my mother was cooking for these white people. It was just row houses, just rows of houses, and everybody in there were black. Pretty much they were probably little houses that whites who owned them were built there and they used that for extra income. But that's how we lived, in the alley at that time. In fact, both of our living arrangements in the city when I was growing up was in alleys, on the south side, as well as over there.

Whorley: Do you remember, I guess if your parents ever talked about it, you said that you were, in terms of poor. But growing

up during the Depression times, do you remember that?

Hendricks: I was born in Depression times. I know nothing about it. I was born in '32, and that was the year of the Depression, and I was too little to know about the Depression and about how bad it was. I heard my mother talk about how bad it was.

Whorley: What did they tell you about it?

Hendricks: They'd talk about how bad people were starving, hungry, and they couldn't get anything, that they were just living off of whatever they could raise. They would have little gardens or do whatever they could to survive. But I did not know anything about the Depression. I was born during that time.

Whorley: When you finished Parker, what did you do?

Hendricks: When I finished Parker High School, I got a job working at the University Hospital. It was called Hillman Hospital then. It's now University Hospital, part of the

university complex, but it was Hillman Hospital. I got a job driving the elevator. I finished in '51. I worked there maybe a year. Then I finally saved up enough money to convince my mother to let me go--I thought I wanted to be in beauty culture.

I went to Ruth Porter's School of Beauty Culture and finished there. I got out there and found out I didn't like that.

Later, I got married in '53, I think in February '53, and after I got married I convinced my husband to send me to Booker T. Washington Business College. I finished Booker T. Washington Business College, and I got a job working for a black insurance company, Alexander Insurance Company, owned by John J. Drew [phonetic] and his wife, Deanie [phonetic], and I worked with them there until '63. This is coming into the civil rights era then, when the doors started opening for blacks in the federal government. I took a federal examination and passed it and was hired in July of '63 with the federal government.

Whorley: When you got your first job, how did you go about getting the job?

Hendricks: The first job at the hospital?

Whorley: Yes.

Hendricks: The white people that my mother worked for, somebody there, the lady was influential in getting someone there at the hospital to hire me. She referred me to some white man at that hospital. I can't remember his name now. He hired me to drive those elevators over there. But I was referred by the lady that my mother was cooking for.

Whorley: Do you remember how much you got paid?

Hendricks: No. It was very little, I can tell you that. You ask me how much I remember I got paid at the Social Security Administration, I don't know whether I could tell you that. It was very low. But I don't remember what I was paid. I'm sure it was very little bit of money. I don't remember. The wage an hour were so low back then. That was '51. I finished January '51. I got a job the same year.

Whorley: A question I wanted to ask you about that is, do you remember the hours that you worked?

Hendricks: Yes. I worked eight hours, eight hours a day. I think I went in like seven and worked till three or three-thirty or four, something like that, depending on how time we had for lunch. I don't remember. But I worked eight hours.

Whorley: Were you still living at home?

Hendricks: Yeah, I was still living at home. I stayed at home until '53, when I got married. I never had any money to move out, never.

Whorley: Can you talk about your family in terms of how close you were.

Hendricks: Then? We were very close, a very close family. My sister and I and our children are still close. We're a very close family.

Whorley: Did you frequent 4th Avenue a lot when you were growing up?

Hendricks: Yes. Not too often, because our parents were kind

of strict on us, but every chance I had to go to 4th Avenue, I did go.

Whorley: Where would you go?

Hendricks: We went to the Sanza Bar Cafe [phonetic]. We went to Brock's Drug Store [phonetic]. We went to Bob Savoy [phonetic]. We went to the Masonic Temple, upstairs for dances. Anything we could slip out and go to, we did.

Whorley: Did you go out as a group?

Hendricks: Sometimes we went out as a group, but most times is with your boyfriend, with your date.

Whorley: You said your parents were strict.

Hendricks: Yes, very strict. They were very strict. They were strict to the point that they didn't want us to go to parties and we could not have boys hanging around the house if they were not there. Everywhere we'd go, we had to be screened. And at that time, the boys didn't have any cars. They'd come to your

house and sit and date you, and we had certain hours for them to leave. If they didn't leave, they'd come in and invite them to leave. Then the other things they did not allow, they had curfews. If you went to the movies with a guy, you had to be back at ten o'clock or else she was standing at the door to embarrass you.

My mother, not my daddy, but my mother was the strict one, and I thought if I ever, ever get grown, I'm going to leave this place. But I really appreciate that now. I learned to appreciate it after I was older. There's no telling what I would have developed to be if I had not had those curfews and strict things on me. She had to make sure--she screened all the guys that we dated. You didn't just come there and date you. They'd ask about his parents and what his potentials were and things like that. They were very strict.

Whorley: You said your parents didn't talk about segregation. When did you first become aware that there was separate?

Hendricks: I think primarily when I started working in '51 and had to ride the public buses in Birmingham and you had to sit behind that "Colored" board. You could be seated behind that

"Colored" board, and the whites were in the front, and if more whites got on that bus, you had to get up out of that seat and he'll move that board back. If there were no more seats, you had to stand. That's when I began to realize the difference in how we were treated, only because of the color of our skin, which didn't make any sense, but they would do that. They would make us get up and the white people sit down.

Whorley: Do you think your parents isolated you when you were little, especially when you were going to the schools?

Hendricks: No, I don't think they isolated us from that. We lived in a segregated neighborhood. The whites were on the streets; we were in the alley. That in itself said something to me. We went to segregated school. We rode the bus, we were segregated. We went to a segregated church. That was a way of life, and they accepted that way of life. They were submissive blacks.

Whorley: What about yourself?

Hendricks: I am not submissive, not at all. No. I'll holler

about discrimination in a minute. No.

Whorley: When you experienced that on the bus--

Hendricks: It did something to me.

Whorley: What did it do?

Hendricks: I said if I ever had the opportunity to do something about this, I will. I just cannot stand that we are mistreated because we are black. We deserve to sit down here. If I got on this bus first and had this seat, I shouldn't have to get up. And I shouldn't have had a board to separate us. That board sat in those little holes and it moved all over the bus, depending on the crowd. You'd never see them move it up when blacks got on. But when whites got on, it would move back to get us up.

Whorley: Did you ever talk about it with your friends?

Hendricks: All of us talked about it. In fact, my high school class reunion, we organized and we talk about it all the time about how bad things were when we grew up.

Whorley: Did you think things would get better?

Hendricks: Think they will get better?

Whorley: During the forties and fifties, did you think things would get better?

Hendricks: No. I had no idea we would make any impact as much as we did with Dr. [Martin Luther] King [Jr.]. I couldn't even dream of what really happened. I never would have believed that would have happened.

Whorley: I guess I can't imagine knowing that things might not change, but you knowing you can't live with this. What did you and your friends talk about in terms of trying to do something at that time, immediately?

Hendricks: Back then?

Whorley: Yes.

Hendricks: Nobody talked about anything. I didn't talk about anything. But I would voice it to my parents, and I can remember telling my mother how I could not stand those boards and the fact that they moved. I was always just so arrogant about that. She said something to me like, "Well, you know you have to stay in your place," and that didn't jive with me at all. I didn't want to get in no confrontation with her, so I just let it be. That's why I knew that they were submissive.

Whorley: What did they teach you at Parker about it?

Hendricks: At Parker High School, our teachers told us about the importance of becoming a voter when we reach the age of eighteen. I can remember vividly Mr. Henry Williams used to talk to us very candidly, the history teacher, and he'd take part of his history lesson and tell us about he wanted to make sure that, when we became eighteen, he wanted us to become a voter so we could make a difference in this country.

Also, Mr.--oh, I can't think of his name now. There was another man who was very instrumental in telling us all the time about being the best that we could. We did not have to hang our heads because we were in a segregated setting, that they had

given their best knowledge and their experience and they were hoping the future would be better for us, and they wanted to make sure that we were ready to accept this challenge. He was very--I can't remember his name right now. But Henry Williams stood out because he never let a week go before he did not drill in our head about becoming a registered voter once we attained the age of eighteen.

Whorley: Did you once you turned eighteen?

Hendricks: I sure did. I went there and endured--I don't think i had any problems. As much as I can remember, I think I was able to pass whatever questions they asked, because they made it very difficult for us to register, asking us all kind of silly questions. But I didn't have any problem. I was able to register. I was registered when I did go and apply.

Whorley: What was the first election that you voted in?

Hendricks: I can't remember. Whatever year I turned eighteen, because I registered immediately. Let's see, that must have been in 1950, because I turned eighteen. '32. Yeah, it had to

be 1950. So it was the first election I voted in, 1950.

Whorley: A presidential election year.

Hendricks: Yes.

Whorley: I also know that Parker had a dress code.

Hendricks: It was great. We thought it was bad then, but now, as I look back, it was the best thing for us, poor as we were. It did not have us involved in the have and the have-nots because, since we all were poor, those people who did have a little bit more income from their parents being professionals would have outdressed all of us poor children. So in order for them to keep it on that level, I think it was great, because we all had to wear those blue uniforms and the guys the khaki pants, and then when you got to be a senior, you could wear white. We just hated it, but when we look back now, we realize that it was the best thing for us, being poor.

Whorley: As a little kid, why did you hate it?

Hendricks: We just got tired of wearing the same thing all the time. That's what us hot. We wanted to change. We wanted to wear some red or some green or whatever, and we had to wear that Indian head blue, and then when we got to be seniors, we could wear white and the guys could change into black pants.

Whorley: Do you remember a lot about the community in Birmingham between whites and blacks?

Hendricks: Yes.

Whorley: Was there any racial incidents or people talked to you about [unclear]?

Hendricks: In Birmingham?

Whorley: Yes.

Hendricks: The first racial incident that I was aware of, that really was a turning point in my getting involved from the Shuttleworth side of the Alabama Christian Movement, the first racial incident that really got me in Birmingham was an incident

in 19--I can't remember what year now. It was in the fifties. A guy named Judge Aaron [phonetic]--from all indications now, he probably had a little mental illness of some kind. He was walking the streets in Tarrant City, Alabama. I think it was three white Ku Klux Klans picked him out, stopped him, and took him in the woods and castrated him, that poor man. It hurt me so bad. Only because he was a black man. They picked him out. They just wanted to do something to a black man.

I was just furious. I thought, "This is so cruel." The color of our skin makes them hate us. They don't know nothing about what's on your heart. They don't know what kind of person you are or what you may become. They just took advantage of that man and messed him up for life. That was the first incident that was a turning point for me to know that I'm ready to get into any organization or anything that's going to help us change this condition in Birmingham.

Whorley: Was there like outrage in the community?

Hendricks: Oh, yes. Ministers. Whites, too. But very few whites, because, see, that was during the era if you spoke out, then you was a nigger lover. So most of them may have felt bad,

but they were afraid to say anything.

Whorley: So nothing came about?

Hendricks: No. I don't even remember if the men even got sentenced or if they even caught them or whatever. But I do know it happened, and Judge Aaron was castrated.

Whorley: Do you remember Bull Connor?

Hendricks: Well do I remember Bull, yes. I had the pleasure to ask Bull Connor for a permit to parade downtown when Dr. King was here, and he told me he would march me to the city jail.

Whorley: I guess that was in the sixties?

Hendricks: Yes, in '63.

Whorley: Do you remember when he was in here in the fifties?

Hendricks: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. They had Bull Connor and he got caught and all that stuff.

Whorley: What do you remember about him?

Hendricks: I remember he was real tough on black folks. He hated blacks, and he did everything he could to prohibit blacks from even meeting together, even at church or anywhere else. He just fought everything that had to do with mixing. There were some laws made, and he got caught. I think he was instrumental in getting the law passed, and he got caught in the same law that had been passed. He had some trouble at a hotel, an incident with a female, and, boy, that broke his back. It made public news and TVs and sort of started the beginning of his downfall. I remember Mr. Bull Connor.

Whorley: When the elections came, I guess city elections, was there a black voter turnout for elections?

Hendricks: When we talk about changing the form of government?

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah, great black turnout. That was because we knew the only way that we could make any changes in Birmingham, we were going to have to get out this three-man commission. It was only three people presiding, and one in the city, at that

time when Bull Connor was in. So with only three people in position and Bull Connor there being the bully, then we knew that the only way for the city to progress is we must get a mixture, blacks and white, only nine members of the council. So it was a great voter turnout then, yes.

Whorley: I'm curious as to how you get people to come out and vote. First of all to register, but then to vote.

Hendricks: During that time, people were conscious that there needed to be a change, and they knew as long as we had the three-man commission, with those three white men running this city, there was never going to be any growth for the blacks in this city. So every organization, every church started putting out literature, pamphlets, knocking on doors, telephone committees to get people out to vote, even if you had to pick them up and carry them. Churches used to have vans to take them to the polls to vote. That's how it was done, mass involvement.

Whorley: What church did you belong to?

Hendricks: New Pilgrim Baptist Church.

Whorley: Where is that located?

Hendricks: About six or eight blocks up, over on Southwest
G___.

Whorley: Were you a helper?

Hendricks: Yes, yes. Anything to do with bringing about a
change in the city of Birmingham that was most needed, I was
there. A member of the NAACP, working with them, worked with
the Alabama Christian Movement, worked with SCLC.

Whorley: Can you tell me about working with the NAACP.

Hendricks: Work with the NAACP, that was during the time when
we were doing the voter registration campaign. We worked with
getting people registered. I helped people to register. I
helped people to fill out the application to go down to register
to vote. We went over and drilled them at the church. We had
all of our church members, anybody in the neighborhood to come.
We had sessions set up at the church where we would orientate

them in what was going to be asked of them so they could pass those tests.

Whorley: How did you get the questions?

Hendricks: We had somebody slip that way. We did have a few white friends that trusted us and knew that we wouldn't tell and got them to get us a copy of it. We Xeroxed them and passed it around everywhere.

Whorley: Did anyone ever find--

Hendricks: No, nobody never found. No, they never knew.

Whorley: I'm sure they were probably shocked to have all these people just come in.

Hendricks: They were. They were, right. And then they got to the point where it was much easier to register to vote, and we didn't have to encounter those things anymore. Those questions were obsolete, and they would start registering people. You've got people now, an ordinary citizen now who can bring the papers

out to the church and register at a church meeting. It's great now. You don't even have to go up to the courthouse to register.

Whorley: Did you ever come across someone that you really had to actually sit down and talk to and try to convince that this was in their best interest?

Hendricks: Not really. I don't think I had to do that, because what we did was, we worked primarily through churches, and black people as a whole back then followed their ministers. If the minister said this was right for them to do, they would do it. They trusted their pastor, and they felt like the pastor knew what they needed. This was an era of people who maybe did not have much education, so they thought he was going to lead them in the right direction.

So if he stood in the pulpit and said, "If you're not a registered voter, you ought to be ashamed. You need to do something" and challenged them to come, they came out. So we didn't have to coerce them. He had already laid the groundwork.

So they came willing to learn how to pass the test to get to be registered voters.

Whorley: Were there any who were illiterate?

Hendricks: Oh, yes. That's the reason why I said there were some we had to sit and just show them how to write their names. We had to go take them to school. We had to do that. Yeah, I worked with several people in the church who couldn't write their name, and we would show them how to do the alphabet and got them on their way, and they were as happy as they could be.

Whorley: What about with the questions? I know they had to actually go down to the registrar's office and fill out the questions.

Hendricks: Well, you see, what they do, if they go in there and they could not read, then they would read it to them. The registrars would read it to them and tell them what the question was, and then they would have to give them the appropriate answer. So that's why we drilled them with it. We learned that technique and we worked.

Whorley: When did you join the NAACP?

Hendricks: I guess in about '54, '55. Early on.

Whorley: Were there a lot of women who were part of the organization?

Hendricks: Oh, yeah. They had the women's group of NAACP.

Whorley: Oh, really!

Hendricks: Yes. They had a women's group of NAACP, yeah.

Whorley: Back then?

Hendricks: Yeah, they had a women's group. Women have always been active in the NAACP. The men were the leaders, but that's a women's group.

Whorley: When did you join the women's group?

Hendricks: I mean, I didn't work with the women's group per se. I just worked with the NAACP in the local area working to get

the voter registration and things like that. Any campaign they had, I was there soliciting, calling, or doing whatever we needed to do. We called people up to get them to vote, see if they need rides. Anything that they needed to do, I was there doing that.

Whorley: Where was their office located?

Hendricks: They had several offices. Mainly, their office is downtown in the Scientific Building [phonetic].

Whorley: Was it there in the fifties, also?

Hendricks: Yeah, in the Scientific Building, the headquarters for most black organizations.

Whorley: Was that [unclear]?

Hendricks: Right. All the 4th Avenue area pretty much has most things for blacks.

Whorley: How was it working with--I'm sure you worked with Mr.

Patton and them.

Hendricks: Yeah, W. C. Patton well. Mr. Patton is nice, a great man. He's paid his dues to this city, yes, he has. He's been a loyal man. I say that's why the Lord's keeping him here, to see some of his works, because he has been a hard worker all into the little area, little towns. Now, he didn't work just here. He worked all over the state. Yes, he's a great man. I also worked with his son, Jarvis.

Whorley: Was there any opposition to the NAACP?

Hendricks: Oh, yeah. Oh, plenty of opposition to NAACP. The one striking opposition that outlawed NAACP was in 1956, when the state of Alabama outlawed the NAACP for not turning over their membership list to them. When that came about, then that started the--Mr. Patton, I'm told, he says he called Reverend Shuttleworth when they outlawed them and told him that "You all need to get together and start another organization." And that's what Reverend Shuttleworth did. He started the Alabama Christian Movement of Human Rights, and we went from there.

Whorley: When they decided they were going to take the NAACP, did you think that they're coming after us now?

Hendricks: Well, I didn't have any fear about them coming after anybody. I was proud of NAACP for not turning over their list.

They had as much right to maintain the privacy of their membership as any Ku Klux Klan or White Citizens Council or anybody else, so I was very proud that they took that stand. And then when I read in the paper the next week, or the same week that this happened, when Reverend Shuttleworth organized the Alabama Christian Movement of Human Rights, I missed that first meeting because I didn't know about it. But I was at that second meeting. So, hey, we picked up and went on. They just outlawed the NAACP, that's all, because we're going to go on.

Whorley: I know this gets in the sixties, but when the NAACP came back and reorganized in the state of Alabama, did the people who joined Mr. Shuttleworth's organization--

Hendricks: Still maintained loyalty to the NAACP, too. Worked for both organizations. Really, pretty much after the sixties, the Alabama Christian Movement of Human Rights lost a lot of

momentum, lost a lot of people, so therefore people started going back to the NAACP to help, because right now the Alabama Christian Movement is just a meeting organization. They are not functioning to do anything, direct action or anything like that. Most people felt better about doing things for the NAACP.

Whorley: During I guess the mid-fifties, what else, if you remember, the NAACP was doing besides voting?

Hendricks: They also were taking litigation cases. People who were being brutally attacked or any kind of legal case that was brought to them, they were regularly filing lawsuits all that same time. That was forwarding them up to New York and they handled it from that level, but they were also involved in that. They were just busy and has always been what they are today. They have really been the backbone for the blacks, because they were there when no other organization was.

Whorley: Did you ever hold any office?

Hendricks: No, just a member.

Whorley: Did you go downtown that much during the fifties?

Hendricks: Oh, yeah. Sure. That's where all the shopping was. We didn't have any malls and things, so downtown was the shopping area.

Whorley: How was that going down there, knowing that everything was segregated?

Hendricks: Well, we shopped and did like everybody else until '56, when the Alabama Christian Movement was organized. We followed all the rules. We rode the segregated elevators and we ate at the downtown part of Newbury's, if that's what you wanted to eat down there, in the segregated setting. So everybody, up until Reverend Shuttleworth organized the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, we did everything we'd been doing all along.

Whorley: Did you ever leave Birmingham, like go up North or anything?

Hendricks: I left Birmingham and went to New York in '51 after

I graduated from high school. I went to see my aunt and uncle.

I thought I may want to stay there, but, no, New York was not my town.

Whorley: Why do you say that?

Hendricks: I was disappointed in New York itself. I expected it to be something--I don't know what I thought it was going to look like. I was really surprised at the living conditions in Harlem and the Bronx and that area. I was really shocked. I did not like living over those stores and things, and I said, "Oh, my God. We're living bad enough down here," and I didn't like that at all. The people there, I was used to the Southern hospitality. You pass by people in your apartment, you speak to them, and don't even look around at you. I said, "This is too cold up here for me. I'm going back to the South." So I didn't stay.

Whorley: How did you travel up there?

Hendricks: I think I went by train. I knew it wasn't no plane.

I think I went by train.

Whorley: I'm sure it was segregated.

Hendricks: Oh, yes. You were segregated from anywhere until you got past the Mason-Dixon line. When you got on up in the other areas, they may not segregate you, but you were segregated from here to you got in the northern area.

Whorley: You don't remember how much you paid for your ticket?

Hendricks: No. I can't remember that. That's too far back. That was forty years. I can't remember that.

Whorley: How was that different from--you talk about Southern hospitality, but in terms of whites. How long did you stay ?

Hendricks: I didn't stay long. I stayed there about three weeks. I didn't have any encounters with the whites. I didn't really notice anything different. You know, whites and blacks were talking and going on around up there, but that never bothered me and I didn't pay it that much attention.

Whorley: What about the neighborhood that you lived in here in Birmingham compared to where your relatives lived up there?

Hendricks: Well, the structure of the buildings were better, because we just had these wooden houses in those alleys where we were living. But in New York, those were those brick buildings, all congregated together, three and four levels, but it was in better shape than what we had here.

Whorley: What did you do when you went up to New York?

Hendricks: I looked around, went down, toured Radio City and that area and looked in the papers and looked at jobs to see if I wanted to work there. But I told my mother I decided that was not the city for me, so I came back home.

Whorley: Do you remember your house? Can you describe the house you lived in in Birmingham?

Hendricks: You mean the one on the south side?

Whorley: Yes.

Hendricks: Let's see. The house had five rooms in it. It was one of those houses straight back. You walk into the living room, then there was a kitchen, and there was a little back porch out there that was enclosed. On this side there were two bedrooms, and that was it.

Then the other house that I lived in, it was just three rooms straight back. That was it. You had the outdoor toilet at that time. You had to go outdoors to the toilet.

Whorley: Did you have running water?

Hendricks: Yeah, we had running water. Never had to use a well. Did have running water.

Whorley: How was the community that you lived in in the black neighborhood here, for instance, if someone needed something?

Hendricks: Oh, we shared. There wasn't no problem going over and borrow a cup of sugar or flour or meal or "Do you have a can of milk?" We shared. If my mother, when she was working at King's Drug Store, if there were food left over, she'd bring it

home and she'd share it with our neighbor, who was Mrs. Marybelle [phonetic]. She had three children and her husband became ill early on and she had to try to work, and my mother would share food with her. It was a sharing thing. Nobody suffered from eating because we shared whatever we had with any neighbor in the neighborhood who needed some help.

Whorley: Did everybody watch everybody--

Hendricks: Everybody watched everybody's children. If Miss Marybelle told my mother that we'd had any boys in that house while she was gone or if we had done anything wrong, she would tell my mother, my mother would tear us up. That's right, sure. And the same with her children. If she saw Junior or Thelma doing something bad, when Miss Marybelle came, Miss Marybelle took care of her children and whipped them. Everybody was watching out for you and looking out. I think they told those people, "Look out over here. I'm going to be gone." But anyway, they kept watch on us, that's true. That's the difference in then and now.

Whorley: Would you classify your upbringing as being happy?

Hendricks: It was happy. Yes, we were happy. We had a very happy family. There's only one bad thing that I can remember. My mother and father stayed together, in spite of his drinking and gambling. Only one bad incident that I can remember, and that's the one where my father came home, I believe it was either a 4th of July or a Labor Day weekend. He came home. My mother saw him. He always would gamble and come home without any money, and if he'd given her some money, he wanted her to give it back to him.

So this particular day he came down the street. My mother went out there, and she saw him coming and she told me, "Listen." His nickname was Pen. His name was Bethabo [phonetic]. She called him Pen. She said, "I see Pen coming home. He's shining like new money. I know he's drunk. If he comes here today clowning, I am not going to take it." She said to me before he got home, she said, "Now, when he comes here, if he starts fussing and want me to give him some money back, I'm not going to give it because I'm going to pay these bills. And if he threatens to get the gun (because one time he threatened to get the gun on her), if he threatens to get that gun, I'm going to knock him down on the floor, and I want you to take the

gun from him."

And I did. Afterward I thought about how dangerous it was. He could have killed all of us with me tussling with him with that gun. But I did tussle with him and got that gun out of his hand, but in the meantime I tore one of the ligaments in one of his fingers. He never got over that finger lost any feeling in it.

That's the only bad incident that I could ever know. I never knew about any fighting with my mom and dad. They never did fight. He'd often fuss and what his money back, but never any fighting, no abuse, hitting her or beating her. But that was the only time that she had knocked him down, and she told me, she said, "I'm going to knock him down on the floor, because he's going to be drunk and I can knock him down." She was a strong woman. She said, "I can knock him down." She knocked him down on that floor and I grabbed that--it was a shotgun. I tussled and I tussled and twisted until I finally got that thing, but I broke his finger in the meantime, broke the ligament and he had to go to the hospital.

Whorley: When did your mom pass?

Hendricks: My mother died in 1990. She was eighty-eight.

Whorley: Is there anything else that you remember about that time? Because what we're trying to do is, even though you were growing up not in an isolated environment, but that you were aware of what was going on around you. I guess what I'm trying to ask is, did you and your friends--growing up in that area where kids played together and things like that, did you at any time see white kids playing around there?

Hendricks: No. We never played with white kids, never. We never had any experience with white kids. The only experience you'd have with white kids, if your mother worked in a house where they white people lived and you had to go over sometime and help her. She'd take you with her sometime and you saw those white kids. But they never came out and played with us, no.

Whorley: How did you interact with them once you got older if you had never been around them?

Hendricks: With whites? It came naturally, because they're a

human being like I was. I didn't look at the color of their skin. I treated them however they treat me. If they treated me friendly, I was friendly. If they were snobbish, I'd be snobbish. If I felt like they were genuine, and I could pretty much tell when I was with a white that was sincere about what they were doing and they were not prejudice or phoney. So I treated them however they came across to me.

I had no problem relating to whites, because I didn't have any hate against them because, for the most part, the whites that I was working with and became involved in were not responsible for their upbringing. I knew it was instilled in them from their parents. They were taught to hate blacks and they were taught that we were inferior to them and that we were not as good as they are. It's just like our teaching was not that way. Our parents didn't ever talk to us about mistreating a white or hating--

[Begin Tape 1, Side 2]

Hendricks: So I decided that I would not be prejudiced toward them. I would not mistreat them. I treat them the way they treat me, because I always knew and was always in the church. I

was raised in the church, a very good minister who taught us to love everyone, and I never did see them based on the color of their skin. If they treated me in a way that I know that they were white and they were prejudiced, I wouldn't associate with them.

Whorley: How important was the church in your family's life?

Hendricks: How important was it? It was everything. It really has been the foundation for me and my family. I'm very blessed to have had a mother who made us go to church, even though she had to work on Sundays, but whenever she was off she'd carry us.

But when she worked, we had to go to church, and I brought my children up the same way. I carried them to church, and they are still in the church today. So it was very important, and it has been all that we have need to manage to make it to this point, with God on our side.

Whorley: Do you remember the Montgomery bus boycott?

Hendricks: Yes.

Whorley: What did you think when you heard about it?

Hendricks: I was excited about it. I thought it was the best thing could ever happen to start this civil rights matter in this country. It was time. I glory in Rosa Parks' spunk. I was glad she got angry that day and wouldn't move.

Whorley: Did you think they were going to be successful?

Hendricks: Oh, yes, had no doubt, especially after they got Dr. King to be the leader. It was something about that man had magic. There's been nobody yet who can corral the crowd like he could. Nobody can appeal to the masses like he. I just knew in my heart that he was the man.

Whorley: I don't know if you remember people talking about when they heard that Montgomery was starting this bus boycott.

Hendricks: We were excited. We were all sending money to help them. We were excited, very proud to see them do it. It was time. We just had a feeling it was a beginning.

Whorley: Did you think about starting something here during that time?

Hendricks: No. My daughter's coming. We'll have to shut this off. [Tape recorder turned off.]

Whorley: One question I wanted to ask you is, in terms of the meals that your mom used to cook, do you remember your favorite meal?

Hendricks: You mean at home?

Whorley: Yes.

Hendricks: Yes. Let's see, the chicken and dressing and the greens, the cakes, because she used to love to cook, and she'd cook cakes and pies. That was about the basic thing that we had. Other things were just regular like white meat and cabbage, stuff like that, and cornbread. We didn't have much. Occasionally we'd get the vegetable and the chicken and dressing, but it was rare. We had peas and cornbread and things like that. We had to have that.

Whorley: In terms of managing the money, who did that?

Hendricks: My mother. She had to. I told you about my father.
She had to.

Whorley: Like you said, it wasn't that much, but how did she make it stretch?

Hendricks: By bringing a lot of food home from the other people, from where she worked. [Tape recorder turned off.]

You were asking me about the control of the money, who controlled the money. My mother did.

Whorley: Do you see any significant changes that have happened compared to now and back then before [unclear].

Hendricks: Yes, tremendous changes, tremendous. It is just great. I'm proud to live here now.

Whorley: Really?

Hendricks: Yeah. I'm really impressed with all the things that have occurred, all the changes. Very impressed.

Whorley: Can you tell me some of them?

Hendricks: Okay. The fact that we can sit anywhere we want to sit on the bus. We can go to any movies. We can shop anywhere. We can try on dresses now, where at times, before the integration came, we could buy dresses, but we couldn't even try them on in the department store. We can go to a restaurant and sit down and eat now, any restaurant we want. We can go to a hotel and get a room and stay anywhere. We can travel anywhere we need to travel and use the bathrooms anywhere we go. We can worship at any church we want to, go to any school we want to. It is just great.

Whorley: When you had your kids, what did you try to instill in them?

Hendricks: To get to be the best that they could get, to do the best that they could, do the best they could, be your best. Be your best. So they did. They did well. Both went on to

college, finished high school and went to college.

Whorley: In terms of trying on dresses, I guess when your family did go downtown to buy stuff--

Hendricks: If you see a dress, you like it, you buy it, but some of those stores won't let you try them on.

Whorley: One of the things I found is that a lot of times, especially with women, when you went into these stores they'd call you by your first name.

Hendricks: And others were Mrs. Whites come in the door, "Hey, Mrs. Chandler." I was Lola. Or Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Davis for the whites.

Whorley: Did you think anything of that?

Hendricks: No, it didn't bother me at that time, but later it did. Of course, during the Birmingham civil rights marches and demonstrations, when we had the boycotts, we closed our charge accounts downtown. We closed them, wrote letters and sent them

our charge cards back.

Whorley: Sent them back?

Hendricks: Yes, sure did. We wrote letters and sent them back, told them until they know how to treat us the same as they do to others. And now we're Mrs. down there now. That's right.

Whorley: Those places that used to separate, do you go down there--

Hendricks: Oh, honey, there's nothing to go to. They're all closed. Birmingham downtown is dead. There's not a major department store in Birmingham downtown, not one. They're all gone out to the shopping malls now.

Whorley: What were the names of the movie theaters that you went to on 4th Avenue?

Hendricks: Carver Theater and the Famous.

Whorley: The Famous?

Hendricks: Yes, where there's now the Jazz Hall of Fame. That was the Famous Theater, and there was another one called the Carver. If you went to the Lyric, you'd go upstairs. White folks went downstairs. You had to go downstairs at the Lyric Theater.

Whorley: Where was the Lyric Theater?

Hendricks: It was on 3rd Avenue and 18th Street. Blacks used the side door and go upstairs and the white folks went into the front and sat downstairs. But the two on 4th Avenue was Carver and the Famous and the Frolic. There was a Frolic Theater, too, there. It went out early. There were three.

Whorley: Do you remember how much it cost to go to the movies?

Hendricks: No, I don't remember. We didn't go that much no way that I remember, but I'm sure it was very cheap, because like I said, we were very poor. We didn't have much to eat. The boys you dated didn't have much money. They didn't have all those good Burger King jobs and things they can get now. They didn't

have all of that. It was bad.

Whorley: You talked about some of the significant changes, but do you see anything else that needs to be changed in terms of race relations?

Hendricks: Yeah. I still see a lot of things that need to be changed. We need to see a lot more--and it's gradually getting in there--a lot more integration within the church denominations, blacks and whites, because we have our share of prejudice on our part, too, blacks and white doing more in the line of working together in the churches and the conventions and the congresses and things, where they need to start integrating more and sharing pulpits.

They need to get involved in something like I was in involved locally, something called Bridging the Gap, where we need to start doing things that we're not comfortable with, like we need to start visiting white churches and white church members need to start going to black churches and learning one another. You'll never get to learn them as long as we keep having these churches separated like that. And we learn one another, we get to interact better, and it's going to make a big

difference in the world. That's right. We need to interact together and stop doing everything that's comfortable for us, stay in your black setting. Go in the white setting, somewhere where you're not comfortable. It's a challenge to do that.

Whorley: Back then, I guess this wasn't going on.

Hendricks: No.

Whorley: Communication of the churches.

Hendricks: We hit on them a little bit during the days of segregation. I mean, the direct action that we had in '63, we did hit on some of those churches and we did go in some. Some did open their doors, and some of them are better, but it's still mass black churches and mass white churches, mass white congregations and conventions and things.

Whorley: I wanted to ask you, do you remember the *Brown [v. Board of Education]* decision back then?

Hendricks: Yes. I took that to fore, yes.

Whorley: What did you think when you heard that?

Hendricks: I was proud of that. I was proud of that. I was proud that and really proud of it because so many things has been affected by that decision. So, yes, I was very proud of the *Brown* decision, thought it was timely. I just think everything that has happened for us, it was time. The time has come.

Whorley: Once that decision came out, do you remember what happened here in terms of the schools in the fifties?

Hendricks: Nothing happened at that time. We had to take them to court. We had to file a lawsuit. Alabama Christian Human Rights did that. Had to take them to court to get integration going. James Armstrong, have you interviewed him?

Whorley: No.

Hendricks: You haven't? Well, his sons were the ones who was the lawsuit. James Armstrong. You need to talk to him. The

lawsuit was in his name. So you need to talk with James Armstrong.

Whorley: [Question unclear]

Hendricks: His children went to Graymont [phonetic], I think it was Graymont School, and tried to get in and they refused. And then he came back and Reverend Shuttleworth, with the Alabama Christian Movement, filed a lawsuit against the Board of Education. But the lawsuit was in his name, *Armstrong v. the Board of Education*.

Whorley: How long did it take before a decision came back?

Hendricks: I don't remember. We filed a lot of lawsuits during that time. We had that one, one for the Parks and Recreation board to integrate the parks. We had a lot of lawsuits going back to back. Those things moved so fast. We really did not know it was going to be that impact and we really had no idea what it was going to do to this nation and this city. So to know exactly what went on during the filing of those cases, it's just hard to remember because so many things went down during

that period. It was a period in our life here in Birmingham, from about '56 to '64, it was just back-to-back situations, just one after the other.

Whorley: Do you remember approximately--was it the sixties that you won all those cases that you filed lawsuits against?

Hendricks: Some were won before the sixties. Some were won before the sixties here, because I can remember the one they had to file against Birmingham Terminal Station. The waiting rooms were segregated and the Baldwins set up there, and their lawsuit started that case. So it was just one situation after another, test case, and then they went to court.

Whorley: Do you remember a place called Dynamite Hill in Southville?

Hendricks: Yes, where Father Shoals lived and the congregational church, the Catholic church, First Queens. Sure.

Whorley: Having these houses bombed constantly, what did you all--

Hendricks: Well, I'm going to tell you what my pastor and a lady named Lucinda Robey [phonetic] and I did, and we could have been killed by some of the shrapnel. But when the bombs would go off, we'd call one another and say, "Do you know where it went off?"

We'd say, "No."

My pastor would say, "I'm coming to pick you up. We're going to see," because we wanted to see what damage and who was there. We could see what had happened and see what we could do.

So we would go to every bombing. Yes, we showed up on the same. We think about it now. We could have been killed. But my pastor, Lucinda Robey, whose now dead, and I used to go over there to those bombings.

Whorley: Do you have an image of what you saw?

Hendricks: Yeah. We saw the dust and debris and stuff scattered everywhere and the buildings damaged.

Whorley: Do you remember which houses?

Hendricks: Shoals was primarily the one, because they were after him more than anybody else. Some other people got other damage around there, like the Davises and I think--I can't remember the person who lived in the next house from Shoals. Several of those houses were damaged several times, but they were after him primarily because of his being involved in taking the lawsuits, filing the lawsuits.

Whorley: How was it possible for these people to plant these bombs in that community?

Hendricks: No policemen were there to protect anybody and they was able to do it because, I assume, nobody was out. They planted them at a time nobody was out and could see them. They could go there and pose as a repair person or somebody with a truck. Nobody was expecting them to do anything like that. See, because they owned the jobs. They had all the jobs. So they could easily plant in a tree right at the base of their house and pretend like they were reading the meter or something. They had all the control of everything, and they did everything they could [unclear].

Whorley: Is that why Birmingham got the name "Bombingham"?

Hendricks: Bombingham, yes, that's why, with that bombing there and Reverend Shuttleworth's house was bombed about three times, too.

Whorley: Did anybody find out why they bombed the Davis' house. I can understand why they were after Shoals, but why--

Hendricks: Well, the Davis house was pretty close to Shoals. It was in the same neighborhood as Shoals. They lived in the same neighborhood, that's why, because they were not involved in the movement at all.

Angela wasn't involved. Angela was protected, because I had a chance to see Angela at Brandeis. I went up to Brooklyn in 1952, I believe it was, with Reverend Howard Millis [phonetic] and the Southern Conference Education Fund during that time, and he took me on a tour of that Eastern area up there. Angela was at Brandeis, and I spoke at Brandeis College.

She sat in awe and just was shocked when I told her about all the things that had occurred here. She said, "I was protected from that. I did not know that was going on in

Birmingham. My mama and daddy shielded me from that. I didn't know all that was going on." She was shocked when I told her those things that we endured.

Whorley: This was in '50, early '50?

Hendricks: Yes.

Whorley: You spoke at Brandeis?

Hendricks: Yes. We were in the middle of boycotting and doing things here in Birmingham, and Reverend Shuttleworth was involved with Southern Conference Education Fund and I was on the board at that time, and they wanted someone to come up in that area to talk to the Northern people about what we were doing here.

During the time of that boycott was when--when I went up and spoke, they sent back things for our kids for Christmas because we weren't shopping, and just loads of stuff was sent back for kids here to keep us from shopping. That's what they wanted me to go, and I went on a tour with him to Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut.

Whorley: How interesting.

Hendricks: It was great. It was a great experience. And just about every audience I had was pretty much predominantly white.

That's where the money was, and they were rich, so he wanted me to hit those areas so they would send some money down here for us. They send money, toys, clothing. Our kids didn't want for nothing. We had enough to supply the church that was involved in the movement. They were great.

Whorley: So what did you say to them?

Hendricks: I told them about the things that we were going through here, what was happening here and the lawsuits we had filed and how bad things were, and we planned to continue, we were not going to give up. I spoke at houses, at churches, at schools. Reverend Howard Millis sent me up to do that. He planned the tour for me, and it was most beneficial to us.

Whorley: You didn't know prior that the audience that you were going--

Hendricks: I didn't know who they were going to be, no. And we stayed in the white homes. We stayed in the homes there. He had set up homes for us to stay in, and they were just jewels. They were very sweet, very nice white people. I loved Massachusetts most. I was impressed with the state of Massachusetts.

Whorley: Where in Massachusetts did you go, do you remember?

Hendricks: Several places. I know I went to--Kennedy was there in Brookline. Great. It was pretty. Connecticut was a pretty state, too. I just really had a good time. I enjoyed telling the story. See, I served as corresponding secretary for the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights in '56 till I went to work for the federal government. Reverend Millis thought that I should be the one to come, and he chose me to go on that tour. But they sent a lot of money back. They sent a lot of money back to us.

Whorley: [Question unclear]

Hendricks: To the cause. Very supportive. Yes, they were.

Whorley: Did that change? I mean, I know you said you didn't have any resentment towards whites.

Hendricks: No.

Whorley: But did you think that, I guess, going to these audiences that there might be a chance that we can work together?

Hendricks: Yes. Oh, I knew it right away when I went to Reverend Millis' house. His wife had never met me. I'd met him because we were both on the board together, and his children all were just jewels. So it was really nice. It was a nice tour. I thoroughly enjoyed it and made a lot of friends.

Whorley: That was an interracial group?

Hendricks: Yes. That was an interracial group, right.

Whorley: Who were some of the people who were in it? Were they

from the Birmingham area?

Hendricks: No, they were from across the country, from New Orleans, Kentucky, because Ann and Carl Brayton [phonetic] were in Kentucky. Reverend Millis was in New York. Reverend Shuttleworth at that time I think was in--he was still in Alabama, I believe. I don't think he'd gone to Ohio then. And then Jim Dombrowski [phonetic] was in Louisiana, and Evelyn Forakowski [phonetic] was in Huntsville. So it was just a mixture of people across the country.

Whorley: So you worked with the Braytons.

Hendricks: Yeah. Ann and Carl Brayton, yeah. I know Ann real well, and Carl is dead now. Yeah, I know them. Yes, Ann and Carl Brayton. She's a great soul. She's not too well now, I understand.

Whorley: I got a chance to meet her this past--I went to the Southern Regional Council.

Hendricks: And you got a chance to meet her. Have you talked

to Judy Hann [phonetic] here?

Whorley: No. Judy Hann?

Hendricks: Judy Hann. She works with them on the Southern Poverty. Judy Hann, she works with them. She's a pretty nice white female.

Whorley: Do you see, in terms of what you taught your children and what you experienced yourself, that you see needs to be taught today to children today?

Hendricks: Yes, I sure do. We need it very badly because of the way children are now. We need it very badly. We've lost the moral teaching. There's not enough discipline and not enough involvement in the church, because that's going to be the answer to this problem. They've got to get that love taught to them, and where else but in the church and shown in the family?

In our era, from what I see now, there has been a breakdown in the teaching. During the time we came along, it was the church, the school, and the family together, and you don't have that. The line is broken down. So if that's not available now,

then the kids are going to continue with this violence. Not enough love. Not enough love.

Whorley: Would you say that was the most important thing from that time period that you had?

Hendricks: Yes. Even though we were poor and whatever else, we had love. Yes, we had love. In spite of the condition we were living under, there was love.

Whorley: Anything else you want to say on tape?

Hendricks: No. I think that's about all.

Whorley: Thank you.

[End of Interview]

[transcribed by TechniType]