TAPE INDEX-INTERVIEW SUMMARY

INTERVIEWER: Rosa Tigner
DATE: February 6, 1981
LOCATION: Boise, Idaho
INTERVIEWER: Mateo Osa

OH 560

TAPE MINUTE	MANUSCRIPT PAGE	SUMMARY
0-2:00		Introduction.
2:01-5:40		From Giddings, Texas; Pocatello was heaven, wages better in Idaho, OS&L Railroad, first Christmas tree.
5:41-9:55		June 19 holiday, parents came in 1922 to Pocatello; her grandfather had a car, house; train ride from Texas.
9:56-13:20		Happy childhood, roast peanuts, religious atmosphere; shop whistles, work shifts; eight o'clock curfew.
13:21-15:55		Integrated school, Pocatello "dinner bucket town"; coal cinders blowing around; many Texas, Arkansas and Oklahoma people; early 1950 West Bako plant opened, Alabama people came in.
15:56-20:45		Other Black occupations, farm workers; Depression's affect in Pocatello, many lay offs, rough times, Grandfather was Charlie Washington, Father was Will Montogmery, Uncle Isaiah Washington; Grandfather lost his car.
20:46-22:30		Charlie Swaggert meat packing, Grandfather worked for meat; Buddy Washington prize fighter.
22:31-26:10		Bonneville School, teacher read from Bible, seven grades, no material for home economics, too expensive, needed coal and wood, burning tires, families close, lots of sharing, ties reaches past immediate family.
26:11-end		Black courting custom, Greek courting custom, Blacks married in home or church, Black churches - Methodist AME, Baptist; social activities, tipped hats to "decent folks"; restaurant work.

TAPE MINUTE	MANUSCRIPT PAGE	SUMMARY
Tape 1, Side 2		
0-6:15		"Bluecoat man" policeman, poker games at Pastime; danced alot; discrimination against Blacks, couldn't eat in "nice" cafes, could work in them however, after 40's attitudes changed, took war to bring change.
6:16-12:30		1960 came to Boise, Boise was more reserved, rather live in Pocatello, Blacks closer knit in Pocatello, "atmosphere" in Boise different, coldness of people.
12:31-16:30		Worked in Highlands, $1 per hour - lunch and car fare, made an honest living; Boise discrimination worse than Pocatello, recent changes in Boise's "attitude"; still an "undercurrent" discriminatory housing.
16:31-20:00		Relationship among Boise Blacks; more opportunity in Pocatello; times are changing; well known in Pocatello, "roughed" it in Boise.
20:01-24:55		Janitorial work, 1125 Lee St. until 1969, Gene Phillips, Pat Phillips, Jimmy McKinney, Wilma Hudson, Lee St. Black pioneers; Lee St. rehabilitated houses.

NAME: TIGNER, Rosa
DATE: February 6, 1981 OH560
LOCATION: Boise, Idaho
INTERVIEWER: Mateo Osa

INTERVIEWER: This is an interview with Rosa Tigner conducted by Mateo Osa on February 6, 1981 at 1127 Lee Street, Boise, Idaho.

You mentioned you were born in Texas?

RT: Yes, I was born in Texas -- Giddings, Texas. Don't ask me where it is. It's some little place, I think southeast of Austin.

MO: Giddings?

RT: Uh-huh, Giggings. G-I-D-D-I-N-G-S. Giddings. My parents left Texas -- they were farm workers, they worked on a farm. But they left Texas before I was school age and came west to Pocatello, Idaho where my grandfather had came and settled due to working conditions there on the railroad. It was the OS&L at first.

MO: OS&L Railroad?

RT: Uh-huh - Oregon Shortline.

MO: Oh, the Oregon Shortline.

RT: Ummm -- you should remember that, since you're from Oregon.

MO: Sure. Your grandfather came across before your parents did?

RT: Oh yes, yeah.

MO: Kind of pioneered over?

RT: Over for us, yes. He got all of his children. His wife and children and we all came, all the grandsons -- uh, not the grandsons, the son-in-laws and what-have-you came and settled in Pocatello and worked on the railroad. I had uncles and cousins come up because oh, that was good, the railroad wages to what they had been.

MO: So compared to Texas it was...

RT: Heaven.

MO: It was heaven.

RT: Yeah, it was heaven. See there you worked from sunup to sundown and the wages were cheap.

MO: Do you remember some of the wages?

RT: No, I just heard that they didn't make anything. Sometimes if they got material -- horseshoes, you know, they didn't have any money coming, you know, you broke even.

MO: They took that out of the wages?

RT: Oh yeah.

MO: Did your mom and dad in Texas, did they rent a place or work for a land owner, or...

RT: Well as a rule, on the farm places where -- if you worked for a man, he'd have a place for you to live and they lived on the farm where they worked at -- so I was told. Come west and working on the railroad, oh boy.

I will never forget seeing my first Christmas tree. OS&L, or Union Pacific, later got to be that, every Christmas for all of their workers they would have a Christmas tree. They'd have this huge, oh, it'd reach the top of the ceiling.

MO: Where would they have it at?

RT: In the shop there, at one of their shop places there, where they worked there. But they would clean it up for Christmas and all of the workers could bring all of their children and they would get a bag of candy would have Christmas hard candy and that was the good old kind, and an apple and orange. That, oh, to us that was everything.

MO: You saw your first Christmas tree in Pocatello?

RT: Yeah, in Pocatello.

MO: How did you celebrate Christmas in Texas?

RT: I don't remember anything about Texas. I'm sorry about that -- I'd have to just tell what my mother said or my grandmother or grandfather said, 'cause I don't know anything about... I can remember them talking about Texas -- the 19th of June was a great day among the Blacks in Texas -- that was Emancipation Proclamation Day. That day they didn't have to work, even their bosses or employer or whatever you want to say, didn't require them to work. But they would have -- everybody would get together, all the whole Black community and they'd have barbeque. Barbeque beef, barbeque beef, barbeque goat, and just celebrate that day. Lemonade, watermelon, the whole works. That was a big day.

MO: It was June--

RT: The 19th.

MO: The 19th?

RT: Uh-huh. It was a common thing among us, among the Blacks - Juneteenth Day. That was a great day.

MO: What did you call it?

RT: Juneteenth Day.

MO: Juneteenth?

RT: Yes, Juneteenth Day was a great day for us.

MO: When did your parents -- you and your family move to Pocatello?

RT: Oh we must have moved to Pocatello, it must have been about June 19, 21 or 22. I was born in 1918.

MO: How did it compare to Texas?

RT: Oh, well, there really wasn't any comparison because in Texas we lived on somebody else's land, but in Pocatello they were able to buy their own home, buy a car. Did I tell you -- I can remember it's funny being as young as I was, but I can remember that car, to me it was the longest car. It was the longest car, I don't know if I'd ever seen a car before, that folded it was between the front seat and the back seat, oh, I loved that. That was -- all of the grandkids, there were five of us, we would all scramble to and we would always be fighting over who was going to sit in the little seat.

MO: And whose car was that?

RT: My grandfather's.

MO: You mentioned -- when did you first see that car?

RT: That was somewhere '22 or '23 when we first came to Pocatello.

MO: Did he drive up to the

RT: Yes, he came up to the, pick my mother and my brother and me up, and my dad.

MO: You came in on the train from Texas?

RT: Yes, on the train. Oh, that was a long ride. It seemed like we just rode and rode -- I guess we did; and rode and rode and rode. See, my grandfather, making those wages and what-have-you, he could afford to pay for it.

MO: He paid for your way out there?

RT: Oh yeah, sure. From the way my mother talked, they would have never made it out there -- at that time, you know, times change like they are now. Now I don't think that kind of stuff can be pulled anymore.

MO: What was it like growing up in Pocatello, Idaho?

RT: Oh, I really enjoyed it. I can look back on my childhood days and it's a lot of pleasure and a lot of fun. We had more of a family life. Even my grandfather would get in on it and we would go to the grocery store and buy, say a dime's worth of ginger snaps, and you'd get a number eight bag his hands were large like -- he would hide so many cookies, them ginger snaps in his hands. If you could guess how many he had in his hand, then you could have, you know, the amount that he had in his hand. That was a lot of fun to us. And he would buy raw peanuts and they would roast them. We used to sit around and even sweet potatoes, they would take and bake them -- sit around and tell tales. And then sometimes, most of the times, 'cause my grandmother was the Church Mother -- mother of the Bethel Baptist Church. They would have services, you know, sing and pray and all like that. We grew up in that kind of atmosphere. The atmosphere of you can sit up in a chair and sleep all night but you didn't dare go to bed until family prayer was done. They had everybody's meals and pray and that was always when you were free to go to bed; but until that you sit down in a chair, lay on the floor, anywhere and go to sleep, until prayer time. We never ate a meal but where grace wasn't said.

Playing -- we had a curfew. I don't care if we were playing just next door. At eight o'clock we had a whistle, shop whistle blowing, there was a whistle for eight o'clock in the morning, there was a whistle for twelve o'clock, there was a whistle for one o'clock, a whistle for four, a whistle for five, and a whistle for eight o'clock. When that whistle blew, you had to be on the

front porch.

MO: Who was blowing the whistle?

RT: Oh, the shop whistle, see. Because they had a shift that worked from eight to five and then from - no, eight to four, no it was five o'clock when they got off, that was five o'clock they would blow that, the men would . Then you would work from five until one, and then from one until eight and then like that. They had around-the-clock shifts. But eight o'clock was our curfew. I don't care, as I say, if we were right next door, you had to be on the front porch.

School -- it was a lot of fun. We had a good mixture -- which I was blessed at that time. We had whites, we had Blacks, we had Indians, which they later -- I will never forget Nancy and Elaine Bigie -- I forget what their brother's name was. They'd taken them out of public schools because they were Indians, but then we had Italians and we had Greeks -- in our community. That's--

MO: Is that from the railroad community, part of it -- or...

RT: Yeah.

MO: Did most of the railroad people live together?

RT: Yeah, we all. From First Street, north First Street, up by the flour mill, or Pocatello Avenue and Compton , on over to, oh, Seventh Street, we had a mixed community there. Italians and Mexicans and Whites and Blacks.

MO: Is that right near where you worked also -- the men worked?

RT: Yeah, it was close. Everybody -- they walked to work. I have heard they didn't want Boise a "dinner bucket" town, but Pocatello was strictly a "dinner bucket" town.

MO: A dinner bucket town -- what do you mean?

RT: Yeah, you see them going -- you've seen lunch pails, haven't you? They take their lunch pails to work with them, and their overalls. I guess Boise would have a fit if they would have such a stream of men like that. But I grew up with that and cinders and...

MO: Cinders?

RT: Yeah, from the coal, you know, blowing all over. Over your washing when you'd hang it out, but then no one seemed to mind. That was our living. That was the life we lived at that time.

MO: Did a lot of your friends from Texas come up?

RT: Yeah, there were quite a few. One while there, most of the people there were Texans. I don't know of any -- Texas and Arkansas, Oklahoma.

MO: What time do you remember a lot of them coming up -- was it about the time you were going up there? Did the population seem to peak or was it before then?

RT: Oh, it was in our growing -- in my growing up, it seemed as though it kind of leveled off and stayed pretty well put. Up until in the 50's, later part of the 40's and early 50's, they had Westvaco Plant open up there. We had a great number of Alabamans to come in. That was good too. Of course, there were so many -- they kind of showed up some of the people that had been in Idaho for a long time, or around Pocatello a long time, because when Alabamans came in, they bought homes, they started attending the PTA, oh, they just got real citizen-minded then.

MO: Why do you think they were like that?

RT: Oh, I know why, don't you? Know why anybody would understand why they had an opportunity, you know, and they took advantage of it.

MO: So you think it was because they were from Alabama that they had the opportunity or because they came at that particular time, when things were opening up more for Blacks.

RT: Well, combination of both because they were from Alabama, possibly from the communities where they didn't have the advantages that were being offered and since the advantages were being extended to them, they took advantage of it and proved what they could do. As the kids say nowadays, they really got some crazy people there. I don't mean mentally so, but I mean

MO: Pretty active.

RT: Yeah, upright citizens. Some that I'm rather proud of.

MO: Did Black people in Pocatello do any other things besides railroad work that you can remember?

RT: Oh, there was some that worked in the private homes and some -- no, mostly some worked at the Hotel Bannock, but it was mostly the railroad. That was the center of it. Then there was an influx of farm workers before the machinery took over. They used to come in from San Joaquin Valley, you know, to do the beet thinning and the potato picking and the onion topping and bucking spuds and all of this. He had that.

MO: Was that seasonal type work?

RT: Yes.

MO: But a lot of Black people came in...

RT: Came in from San Joaquin, California.

MO: How about the effect of the Depression in Pocatello. What do you remember about that?

RT: That was rough; really rough. I remember, my grandfather didn't

have that long car anymore. The work wasn't as plentiful. Our family, we were made closer, in the way of being made closer, I mean we were -- whatever we had we would take to a central point, which was my grandfather's house, the big pot was cooked there. There was always something there.

MO: Sort of the gathering place?

RT: Yeah. My grandfather and my grandmother we -- that was Big Mama and Big Papa, we always called Papa and Mama.

MO: What was his name?

RT: Charlie Washington.

MO: Charlie Washington?

RT: Uh-huh.

MO: And your father's name is...

RT: Will Montgomery.

MO: Will Montgomery. So were a lot of railroad workers laid off during the Depression?

RT: That's true, uh-huh.

MO: Your father was laid off?

RT: Yeah, he left -- you know, I don't know whether they couldn't understand or they couldn't, or what, but anyway, separation took.

MO: How about your grandfather, did he still work?

RT: No, he didn't, but my uncle did. Isaiah, he worked and a cousin of mine.

MO: Isaiah Washington?

RT: Uh-huh. You know, did I mention that before? Isaiah Washington?

MO: You mentioned your uncle but I don't think you mentioned any names.

RT: Yeah, yeah Isaiah Washington. Yeah, that was him. How did you know him?

MO: I just repeated what you said.

RT: I mean how did you know about him? I guess I'm talking so much, I don't remember, but anyway, that was his name. Isaiah Washington. But then I had another cousin, Joe Washington and then another one, cousin Sam Warmley -- he worked on the railroad until he left. Him and Joe worked and he got laid off and then he left and he went back to Oklahoma.

MO: So did a lot of them leave Pocatello when the lay-offs started?

RT: Yes.

MO: They just decided there wasn't...

RT: Well no, they'd go anyplace where they thought there would be -- where they could find something. I guess a lot of them thought about, well, go back to what they know about the farm, you know.

MO: But your Uncle then...

RT: And my grandfather.

MO: They stayed.

RT: They stayed, yes, they stayed.

MO: Did Isaiah work clear through the Depression?

RT: Yeah, he was blessed, he worked all through.

MO: Did your father end up selling his car so he could...

RT: My grandfather.

MO: Excuse me, your grandfather so he could make ends meet.

RT: I don't know whether he sold the car or what happened, anyway, we didn't have the car and we didn't have the -- we had to move from the home where he was at, where he was at. Now whether he lost that or, I'm sure that's how it was. Then we had to move to another place

MO: How about the other Black families around there, how did you pay? What were your resources to get through the tough times, did everybody just kind of do their own thing, or how did you do that?

RT: Oh, everybody more or less did their own thing and then the thing what helped my grandfather, he was a man that got around a lot. He made friends with a German fellow there called Charlie Swaggert, he had a packing house. So, our father would clean up in that store -- the meat market was in the store and he would go and clean up and at that time they didn't keep day-old meat. So my grandfather, he had meat we didn't have at first before my grandfather got acquainted with Mr. Swaggert. After he got acquainted with him, we had meat.

MO: So he'd give him the meat, do you think?

RT: Yeah. For cleaning up and what-have-you. And I know my grandfather he loved money -- my grandfather loved money. Then see, he's the only boy, Buddy Washington was a prize fighter and he was the Intermountain Welter weight champion.

MO: And that was your...?

RT: Mother's brother.

MO: Mother's brother?

RT: Yeah, he was the baby -- Buddy was. My grandmother didn't want him to fight. And, fighting is something that did eventually kill him. Because he was having wisdom teeth trouble and fought up in Seattle and he got hit on the jaw, and people weren't as promoters and what-have-you -- they weren't as particular then as they are now. They still thought it was wisdom tooth trouble, but that jaw was shattered. When they found that out, that had gone up.

MO: Gee, that's too bad.

RT: I don't like fighting today.

MO: What about your schooling in Pocatello, were schools integrated?

RT: Yes. We didn't know anything else. Bonneville School, dear old Bonneville, I learned how to read and write there. My first two teachers I can remember, Mrs. Woods, Helena Woods and Miss Gottier. Miss Herman was the superintendent. I can remember we had to come in the class and put our hands on the desk, "Good morning, teacher." We said our Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag and then we sang "My Country Tis of Thee" and when we were through we could be seated and she would read us a portion from the bible -- no comment or nothing, just read and then that was the end of that. Then we would do our schoolwork.

MO: How many grades was that?

RT: How many grades was -- I went through the seventh grade.

MO: At the Bonneville School?

RT: Bonneville School -- that was the grade school, and then Franklin Jr. High from the seventh on through the tenth and then you went to senior high for eleventh through twelfth grade, which I didn't do.

MO: Was that normal for kids at that time.

RT: At that time -- yeah, at that time. For instance, like, we had Home Ec and you have six weeks of cooking and oh, I loved that; six weeks of sewing -- I didn't like sewing. I probably would have liked it but my excuse and why "Oh, I just don't like sewing." At that time you had to buy your own material and my folks couldn't afford to pay ten cents a yard for me some material because as I say, dimes were precious, you know. We couldn't buy material, you

couldn't eat material and you couldn't get coal or you couldn't get wood with that. That was what we heated with, was coal and wood. When my grandfather worked for the railroad he could get a load of tires, used tires, and they usually that up. But boy, you get ahold of some of those tires that would and it'd burn up the grates in your stove. So we had to be careful there.

But those were the good old days. You know, I don't think the families are as close now, and that they have too much and they don't appreciate. For instance, I wore a dress, I took care of that dress and when I outgrew it then Helen, she was next to me, she got ahold of it. Someone gave me some cookies or candy, I promptly took home and they would divide it among the grandkids. The first cousins, we grew up like sisters and brothers.

And this was good. There wasn't a thing in the world wrong with that. Since I was the oldest grandchild, I had to take care of the others -- see that they did right and when they did right, "Oh Rosa was good today, she took care of the kids real good." and when something went wrong "Rosa didn't do her job today." you know.

MO: So it seemed like your ties went past just the immediate family? Reached out to cousins and...

RT: Yeah.

MO: Was that pretty normal for...

RT: Yeah, that was normal for us.

MO: Would you say that was more common among the Black people than among the Italians or the Greeks or whatever?

RT: I guess, usually the Greeks and Italians, they had big families, you know, so they didn't have to worry about the -- I imagine though

they worried because the Gates, they were all -- it was several brothers that was Gates. They were all close. I imagine the family ties were... But I used to love to watch when a Greek girl -- they didn't court like American girls or the Black girls would have a boy. I could have -- when I got of age, any boy to come and see me, any boy. Any boy.

MO: One.

RT: One. And when it got around nine, or nine-thirty [clears her throat] that was a cue to go home.

MO: And about Greeks, how were they?

RT: You didn't see them. We were told that whenever a young Greek man would come of age to marry, that when he'd see the girl that he would like to be his wife, he would go and he would talk to the parents and he would have to be prepared to have her a home to take her to. The parents made the arrangements, in other words. Then you could always tell because the Greek women of the community, they would gather to that girls' house and the trousseau that she got -- oh, boy. That handmade pillowcase with embroidery and tablecloths and tea towels - it was something out of this world. She always married in white. The Greek Church was a block from where I lived there at 639 N. . You could see them getting married in these beautiful, white dresses and the veils and all. Then they had a huge silver plater that everybody would give them a silver offering. That was given to the bride and groom. They would see them marching down the street -- he would march her from the church to his home -- his house was

MO: He'd walk her over.

RT: Yeah, that was the wedding procession went there, and the priest, he

went there -- he was and do everything you know. Oh, it would run on for two or three days they would celebrate. But it was nice.

MO: How about the Black social customs like this?

RT: Oh, no, we just got married and then we went in to -- all we did was when one got married you take the couple in a car and tie a bunch of tin cans or, you know, cans on strings and what they call chivaree and all.

MO: Did they used to get married in the church or in a house?

RT: Some did. It depends. You could get married in a house or in the church. Usually, we would take the church, but if you couldn't afford that well then, just in the home.

MO: Which churches did they have there?

RT: We had the Methodist and the Baptist -- AME and Baptist.

MO: Is that YME?

RT: No, it was just AME, but Bethel Baptist Church.

MO: Oh, okay. Did most of the Black people go to one or the other -- or did some of them go to other churches.

RT: At the time when I was a child, Pocatello was predominantly Baptist. They had the Methodist Church at that time going, but most people were Baptist.

MO: What kind of social activities did you have in Pocatello? Was it pretty open society?

RT: Yeah. We had our church-goers and we had those that liked to drink and gamble and dance and all that good stuff. The two didn't mix though.

MO: They didn't?

RT: No, when I come along, no. They would treat you nice and all, they'd tip their hats to you, but they tipped around what they called decent folks. They really respected them.

MO: They respected the church goers?

RT: Yes, they really did. I can remember the first job I had, a dollar a day waiting table for a man that had seven stools -- James Edward...

MO: Seven stools?

RT: Uh-huh, you know, lunch counters. Just seven stools -- that's all he had. But he said it was kind of rushing him to cook and then have to wait tables and all, so a dollar a day, and that was good wages; and my lunch too. The look-out man in the back -- the lunch counter was up here, like my kitchen, that was a....

END OF SIDE I, CASSETTE

RT: The uniforms they wore was blue, you know -- navy blue, so when they said "Blue Coat Man" they'd clean up whatever they were doing. By the same light token, when a minister would come, "Preacher comin'." I have actually known them to clear their tables and just be sitting around talking, talking, talking, talking. The Reverand Allen especially, he was a Methodist Minister, he'd say "Well I just dropped by to see you boys." They would give him donations and all. He'd say "That's fine, but I'd like to see you in church." He was a wise man, he he just stayed a little while with them and talked with them. Maybe they would talk about the World Series or something like that, you know, and then he'd go on.

MO: Did they have alcohol on the table sometimes or...?

RT: Oh no, no, no, no.

MO: What did they do to the table as far as cleaning it up?

RT: No, what they would do -- they might of been playing poker, poker game to clear off. I could hear the chips rattling. Boy, when the preacher man -- that table would be just as clear and they'd be sitting around like they was sitting around talking (Chuckles). I used to laugh about it.

MO: That was in one of the cafes huh?

RT: Yes. What they called the Pasttime at that time. Pasttime had lunch and food -- good old days.

MO: Were there night clubs over there? Dances, church dances?

RT: No, there were no church dances. But they did have dances. Oh, I used to be bad about that. After I got grown, call myself grown, I would go to a dance. A dance couldn't go on without me. A long time ago, but I've learned

MO: You don't dance anymore?

RT: No, I haven't danced in years -- years. When I was really and truly saved the Lord took dancing away from me. Since he saved me I have never been able to dance like I used to dance. I used to be a whiz at it.

MO: How about services, were there any or services downtown that you'd have any problems in Pocatello as far as getting waited on because you were Black?

RT: Well, we knew the places that didn't serve us and we just didn't go.

MO: There were some then?

RT: Oh yes. They had some where you didn't -- even there was a Chinese place there that you couldn't sit down and eat but you could take it out.

MO: Were very many of the restaurants like that?

RT: Oh, considering at the time, yes, there were quite a few. Of course, I don't know of any really nice cafes or restaurants that you could go in and sit down and eat, other than at the Union Pacific Depot -- you could always go there, of course they would serve you there all the time. But I don't know of any places -- you could work there.

MO: So usually the Black people knew, more or less, where they was going to be admitted?

RT: Uh-huh. And we just didn't go. At that time, but now you take -- after my brother...

MO: That was in what years?

RT: This was in the earlier years, in the 30's and early 40's, but after the mid-40's, times brought about a change.

MO: They opened up more?

RT: Yes, free access. And they begun to hire clerks at the bank and in the stores and what-have-you. It's too bad it took a war to bring 'em to that though.

MO: It took the war you think?

RT: Oh yeah. I heard so many Whites talk about how they were raised -- especially the ones from the south, how they were raised up in prejudice -- over in the fox holes, they drank out of the same canteens and they took a draw off the same cigarette, and they ducked and dodged the same bullet or bomb and they learned how to trust and how to live with one another in a war.

MO: That's interesting. Do you think that war was kind of the binding...

RT: It was, it was. Every now and then you could hear a Black soldier and a White soldier being mustered out at the same time, and they'd

go south and how they'd have to fight together against the other forces, you know, and how the White would stand up and say "We've been through a war together and we fought together." and they'd have to come back to this, you know.

MO: Come back to discrimination?

RT: Yes, yes.

MO: So try it again.

RT: Yes. So, it helped, it educated both sides. You see both sides needed education and they got it the hard way.

MO: So when did you end up coming to Boise?

RT: 1960.

MO: 1960. And what do you remember about Boise as compared to Pocatello, how was it different?

RT: Oh, in Pocatello we are freer, one with another. Boise was rather reserved, I mean both with Blacks and Whites. We more or less, a newcomer or a johnny-come-lately had to prove themselves. But once you got over that, it's okay. But I'd rather live in Pocatello.

MO: Is that right?

RT: Uh-huh, I really would.

MO: Well, would you rather raise a family in Pocatello?

RT: Ummm, if Pocatello was like it was when I was there, I'd say yes, but not knowing how it is. Because I have lived there now a goodly number of years -- I don't know how they've changed. Maybe Pocatello may not be better. See, I don't know how it is, not having lived there. But, as far as the location is concerned, and where the Blacks are, I'd rather have my kids there because they're more and they're closer-knit there than what they are here.

MO: The Blacks are closer-knit in Pocatello?

RT: Yes, yeah.

MO: Why do you think that is?

RT: Oh, I don't know. I think it depends upon the people -- where they're from they are more advanced in what we need than we are kind of isolated up here and we're stuck off in our own world and I've got it made, so, I'm not too worried about my brothers. There it's one for all and all for one.

MO: So, you came from Pocatello to Boise and what were your first impressions of Boise as compared to Pocatello?

RT: I was ready to go back. If it hadn't been for my husband, I would have. (Chuckles)

MO: How's that?

RT: Oh, well, I just wasn't used to the particular atmosphere that my husband was -- see, he was blind and he worked at Live.

MO: At where?

RT: At Live. That's a real concern they have here for handicap people, and he was working here and he was satisfied here and so I made my self satisfied here.

MO: What didn't you like about Boise?

RT: Oh, the coldness. Not the weather, but the coldness in the people. I wasn't quite used to it.

MO: Do you think it was because you were Black, or was it even among the Blacks?

RT: Well even among the Blacks there was a certain standoffishness, until, as I say, you proved yourself to see which way you were or what. I more or less, I was blessed to make it. That's when I started to work in Highlands.

MO: You worked in Highlands?

RT: Yes, worked in Highlands.

MO: What did you do?

RT: Day work, worked in private homes. You see I'm not geared to work with any other kind of work other than being a nurses' aid, no. Up until then I worked in private homes. A dollar an hour, my lunch and car fare.

MO: A dollar an hour, your lunch and car fare in what, 19...

RT: '60, no, I didn't go to work in '60, I went to work in '62.

MO: Is that the only job you could find, or was that about what you wanted to do?

RT: Well that's all I was capable of doing. I wasn't and I am not educated to do other things.

MO: How about other Black people in this area, what were they doing -- other Black women?

RT: Oh, more or less the same business.

MO: Did you feel looked down upon because of your job or because you were colored?

RT: No, you know and really, I've never let that bother me because it's an honest living and I'll look you or anybody else in the eye when I'm making an honest living, that's all, that's that as far as I'm concerned.

MO: Did you have any problems in Boise getting services like perhaps in Pocatello, some of those places you mentioned, were there places like that in Boise?

RT: Was there. Boise we was thought -- I don't know about northern Idaho, I've never lived in northern, but Boise is worse than Pocatello.

MO: It was?

RT: Yeah, because Boise had in there Greyhound Bus Station

"We do not cater to colored persons." That was on the Greyhound Bus. Going from Pocatello to Grand Coulee, Washington and I got off -- I used to be crazy about a ham and egg sandwich and it choked me to death when I happened to look up and see -- I couldn't eat another bite because that sign right there -- it was just choking me -- I couldn't eat no more. I went and got back on the bus. But they had service -- they couldn't refuse the service because I was Black.

MO: They'd lose a lot of customers. Was that pretty common around Boise?

RT: It was then I found out. And I found out that not until -- it hadn't been too many years that Boise had kind of changed their attitude and really there's a little undercurrent yet.

MO: Still?

RT: Yeah.

MO: How did that affect, say, your attempts to buy or rent a house in Boise after you moved here -- did you have any problems?

RT: We couldn't rent, at one time, up here on Grant -- right across from Twelfth Street on -- we couldn't rent.

MO: Twelfth Street on...

RT: We couldn't rent. Uh-huh.

MO: On north?

RT: Yes. The house there where you see the deal, at one time I was thinking about renting that and I was going to, and the man said before he would rent it to Black's he would make a warehouse out of it. That's what he did. The others tore our houses down, see, they would not at one time, not. We had some that were here that settled here years before and they were out, like on Bannock

and places like that. But the newcomers -- the johnny-come-latelys, around here in this area -- and now we're being kicked out of here, because of the rent, though. We can rent other places now though.

MO: You can rent other places now.

RT: Yeah, we can now.

MO: Do you still think it would be hard to buy some places now?

RT: If I had the money, but you see that's where the problem is. If they don't want us -- they have a cute way of jumping their price up, and that's the same as saying "no." And we know that too, we've caught on to that.

MO: Did the comradery or the relationship among the Black people here seem to be as strong as it was in Pocatello?

RT: There is some new ones in among the older people, in there -- but we have some new ones come in and they're a little different -- they're a little different. For instance, we have had people come in that were stationed at Mountain Home and they're from the east and they're in their culture which they don't look but anymore it's getting so it's not just among us with one another, but even, take the younger, young people -- among the whites, they don't go for this prejudice deal. They don't go for that. Looking at somebody because of their color -- they don't go for it.

MO: Do you see some positive changes?

RT: Oh, very definitely. If we are changing -- we're going backwards.

MO: Did there seem to be more opportunity for finding a good job then there was in Pocatello, or more in Pocatello than here?

RT: I don't know too much about Pocatello -- as I say, I haven't lived there in years. But there's a better chance...

MO: When you first...

RT: Oh, when I first... Chances were better in Pocatello.

MO: Why?

RT: Well, they had more industry there -- they had Westvaco, they had the cheese plant there and construction and all was just more...

MO: Railroad?

RT: Yeah, the railroad too. Not as plentiful, but there was more to draw from there than what there would be here.

MO: Did it seem like the men there had more of a chance for a career than the men here?

RT: Yeah. The only time that you really are recognized here is if you're going to BSU [Boise State University]. But if you come from within here, you have to have it, you have to have all the credentials and all this good stuff or --

She was telling me about a friend of a -- well, I wouldn't say a friend, but an acquaintance, we worked together -- she's going to Saudi Arabia? Is that what she said?

MO: Oh, is that right? Thirty-five thousand a year.

RT: Uh-huh, that's good.

MO: That's good for anybody.

RT: Twenty years ago that wasn't...

MO: Was the situation in Boise when you came here, was a little bit thicker than the air was over in Pocatello, maybe

RT: Oh, yeah. There, where I might be a bit biased and prejudiced

is Pocatello -- I know Pocatello and I didn't know Boise. And it makes a difference if you go to some of the older timers there, people who were established in business. "Who were your folks?" "Oh, the Washingtons." "Charlie Washington?" "Yeah, I'm his oldest grandchild." "Oh, okay that's..." You know, it made it a little easier for you. Here, I didn't know anybody.

MO: You were known there and had a family reputation and

RT: Yeah, I had to get out and rough it. I'm like I am now -- I don't know too much about, just this one spot. When I first moved to Lee, I was doing janitorial work. I worked nights. So I worked all night and I slept all day.

MO: That's when you lived at which place on Lee Street?

RT: 1125. And I even did janitorial work when I lived here, up until '76.

MO: How long did you live in 1125 before you moved here to 1127?

RT: Oh, let's see, from '69, then I didn't stay a year up at 1125 so, then I moved back to 1125 -- I guess I must have stayed there, what, five or six years, whole total.

MO: And so from 1969 you moved into 11--

RT: 25, yes.

MO: Was there other black people on Lee Street then?

RT: Oh, if I remember correctly Mary Browning.

MO:

RT: Uh-huh, But they weren't...

MO: Was that 1122?

RT: Yeah, I guess they lived about 1122?

MO: How about Jean Phillips?

RT: Well she was here before me. I wasn't here.

MO: She was before you then?

RT: Uh-huh, Jean Phillips and her sister, Pat, they were before me and this husband, Jimmy...

RT: Was she? Jimmy McKinney.

MO: About the same time as Wilma Hudson?

RT: McKinney was here first.

MO: So McKinney, you think he was the first Black man on Lee Street, pretty close?

MO: When did he live here?

RT: That was before my time. That would have been in the 50's, and early 60's.

MO: About 1960?

Yeah,

MO: Okay, so that was Wilma McKinney?

RT: No, Jimmy.

MO: Jimmy McKinney. Then Wilma Hudson moved into his house?

Yes.

MO: Which house was that?

MO: Oh, is that right, 1114? So, you mentioned that this house here and 1127 were rehabilitated?

RT: Yes, 1974.

MO: It was rehabilitated in 1974?

RT: Yes.

MO: Who did that?

RT: The city rehab.

MO: City rehab. How about the one on , next door?

RT: Well her's was rehab too. The city did it.

END OF TAPE

Transcribed 2-17-81
Rough Draft
Karmen Harrison