

## **Minnie Jones and Mary Williams**

### **Side 1:**

[7] We met at the Unitarian Universalist Church where she was honored with the Free Speech Award (see enclosed).

[9] She came to Asheville as a young woman. She had been married. She became involved in community work after joining the NAACP and working in the church. [Mary E. Dixon, Rev. Dixon's widow]

[20] Pisgah View had been an all-white project and she moved in to start integrating it.

[29] She is very active in her work for civil rights when she is needed. During the 1960's she went on voter registration drives in Louisiana and Mississippi. [Oralene Simmons]

[44] Susan B. Anthony fought for women's right to vote.

[67] She was employed with the Orthopedic Hospital - feeding patients and acting as bus monitor. A boy, who lived in 15-B, died and his mother decided to move away. She had been taking care of the boy and, when the apartment was empty, moved in. A security guard was stationed in 14-A, a second guard in 11 building and a social worker moved into 13-F.[Mr. Moore, Catherine Robinson]

(Minnie leaves to look for a scrapbook. I talk with Mary Williams.)

[130] She (Mary) was born in Asheville 12/24/70 and is a single parent living in 31-B. She came to the project when she was 15 - the first young parent to get an apartment. She graduated from school in 1990. She attended the YWCA 'Mother Love' classes and family planning when she was 16. She has a mother and two sisters in town. Her oldest child (9?) and her 4-year-old go to Hall Fletcher (a year-round school), and her baby boy is 7 months old.

[164] She got to know Minnie, who councils everyone and always has an open door, when she first came to the apartments.

(Minnie Returns)

[174] She said she is known everywhere she goes - Durham - Chapel Hill - everyone says "Here comes Minnie."

[193] She and Beth went to see all the legislators in Raleigh during a "3 day sleep out." They went to a BBQ for the campaign to elect Maggie. [Beth Maczka, Ralph Campbell, Maggie Lauterer]

[209] She is trying to get the legislators to give money for the homeless - she has already gotten \$5 million coming to Buncombe County. Her goal is to see that everyone has an address - shelters are for storms.

[219] She is precinct chairman for #13 Asheville Democratic Party. [Allene Highsmith]

[227] Mary said she is secretary in charge of taking roll and mailing material to the 1,279 registered voters. Minnie said that, when she started there had been 800 registered voters. The West Asheville Presbyterian Church is the voting place.

[245] Johnson (recently died) was at Hillcrest when she came to "do the job" (integrate) at Pisgah View. He told her to get into politics. She was in community leadership for equal rights and didn't know how to go about political procedure. She met a group on Haywood Street who took her under their wing and taught her how to proceed. She was put in touch with a person who had been precinct chairmen in #11. She held meetings in the apartment, got speakers and encouraged people to vote. [Carl Johnson, A.C. Mitchell, Weldon Weir, Claude DeBruhl, Mrs. Miller].

[331] She points to a certificate on the wall [she had to leave to look over proposed project on Virginia Street - see enclosure - and I didn't have a chance to see it] crediting her for getting the money to redo Pisgah apartments which were run down. Jones asked her to help. Some of the money came from HUD - other money came later, and Hillcrest and Deaverview were also remodeled. [David Jones]

[369] I asked her about the redevelopment around the First Baptist Church and Eagle Street. She said she was here at the time and took a stand at the YMI, but that this is a 'sore spot' and 'goes deep' and 'can get nasty.' [Lacy Haith]

[399] The renters strike in Hillcrest was a time they want to forget. The "community (downtown) was taken." That was not good and there are bad wounds. If she "had known then what she knows now this would not have happened." She wasn't worried about houses at the time but children's education. [Robert Brunk, Glenda McDowell, Marjorie Maxwell]

[445] Firing Bean was a "rude and wrong thing to do." The new council threatened his job before sworn in. Watts (black), a leader and a Christian, did the opposite of what he should do for the blacks. He voted against equal rights. She hands me a letter to the editor (enclosed) she was urged to write. Mentions names and the meeting on May 21, 1994 at the Civic Center attended by 1,800 people (enclosure). [Douglas Bean, Herbert Watts, Rev. John Grant of Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Rev. Wendell Runion of Asheville Baptist Tabernacle, Mrs. Brewster]

## **Side 2:**

The new housing code is a good thing. There were 6 to 1 against it but she got it reversed in November 1993. Several people called her up and asked to help. She had the information needed,

you "have to have background and pushiness." She got legal advice and a change was made that should have been made 20 years ago.

She addresses many groups in city hall, auditoriums and on the streets.

[2/36] She is a deaconess at the St. Paul Baptist Church. She has a good working relationship with anyone who knows the Lord. [Rev. Roy Young]

[2/48] She was disappointed in the blacks at Civic Center meeting. She knew about the Runion crowd and had attacked them in Alabama, Miss. She said at the meeting, "It looks like it did in Mississippi in 1954 and here it is 1994 and I'm ashamed." Only 3 took a "bad stand" - not that many blacks there. She didn't know whether or not the NAACP Chairperson was going to be there or not. She knew that, if he wasn't, she was going to speak. [Mr. Brewster, Mr. Grant, Mr. Wendell Runion, George Weaver]

[2/100] She knows that what those people did was wrong - they took a stand against civil rights in 1994.

[I (Dorothy Joynes) had to leave (to cook dinner) before the meeting was over. I'm still confused - I believe the issue regarded enumerating classes of people who should be assured in having civil rights - including homosexuals. Many young people wearing white shirts and black pants or skirts and carrying Bibles came from the city and outlying areas. I believe that along with their fear of inclusion of homosexual rights was their concern that Christians would be discriminated against if they carried Bibles to the work place and talked about its teachings. According to Billy Cline (church sermon enclosed in his file), the Bible specifically condemns homosexuality. As I understand it, the council voted to protect employees from discrimination because of race, color, or creed. They also added an amendment which specified types of people to be included (including sexual preference). This was about the amendment to the motion.] [Mr. Watts, Mr. Brewster, Mr. Grant]

[2/116] There have been a lot of changes in society - like housing and more jobs for minorities, driving busses, working on the police force and fire department.

[2/130] In the past, Runion would have had a hood on. The situation is better than it used to be, but "it is still going on in Eastern North Carolina." She saw hooded people on the mountains when she was going to Southern Pines to a workshop two years ago (enclosure). [Rev. Wendell Runion]

[2/143] She is glad to know who he is (Runion). That same crowd is trying to attack Maggie and passed out something about the Democrats taking away people's rights. She wants to get a copy of the paper. [Maggie Lauterer]

[2/170] Bean spoiled the chance for Penny (first black to be Assistant City Manager) to become Manager. The blacks were set back 50 years. Penny went to Rocky Mountain and Bean went to Charlotte. Watts was a policeman for 25 years but she "feels like he just ain't nobody, ain't nobody hiding anything." [Douglas Bean, Charles Penny, Reuben Dailey, Barbara Keleher]

[2/208] I asked about Robinson who writes the religious news for the paper. She said he does a fantastic job. He rallied for Watts. Her church sang at his rally. [Henry Robinson, Herbert Watts]

[2/250] She feels that they won at the Council meeting. They changed one little word (sexual preference) - took that word out, She was there for all people that work for the city. They gained because now they have tools to work with.

[2/267] Problems regarding discrimination go to the Human Relations Council. She knows about the Mediation Center on College Street and takes residents there. This saves money and court time. Barbara is an attorney and started it. [Glenda McDowell, Copper Coggins, Barbara Davis]

[2/313] She has a daughter and 3 foster children in Building #4 (?) and three grandchildren (pictures on wall). Her daughter is "stressed out on drugs." [Mertie Jones, Christopher, Shara, Jasmin]

[2/337] Regarding her vision of the future, she said we are headed on a downward road. People try everything - there are a lot of programs. The main thing is jobs. No young person will work for \$4.25 an hour when they can make \$2,000 a day (selling drugs). There is nothing to offer young people in the area.

[2/368] I mentioned ROTC when she said "nobody is working with young people. They ain't amountin' to nothin' - going to waste." People from churches come to talk to them but they won't attend. Tonight there is a "sleep out" but they won't participate. There is a nationwide sleep out [I never saw it in the paper] where people lock their doors, turn on the lights, and walk the neighborhood - like a community watch. Lyda started the program. The young people won't participate. If something doesn't turn around there won't be a future. [Col. Alfred Thomas, Sheriff Buck Lyda]

[2/435] She was asked to look over land on Virginia Ave where the city wants to build a housing unit. The neighbors are objecting (see enclosure). The city has to build 50 more houses. Houses in East View will be sold (to low income people), and this money will be used to build more units. [David Jones]

[2/479] When she lived on Clingman Ave. she worked for the Irene Wortham Day Care Center for the retarded. She is the first Black person Morrissey met in Asheville. He and his wife came looking for a place for their retarded son in 1964. [she showed me a picture - see Morrissey tape] [Mrs. Heusell, Thomas Morrissey, Bill Morrissey]

[2/533] The school had a bus to pick up children all year round [a big school bus in her photo - not the Xerox enclosed]. The school is now on Chapel Hill Rd. She went to AB Tech to learn how to be a dietitian. This was before she went to Thoms Rehab. The old school was closed, and a new one was to open but she couldn't wait.