

Thelma Caldwell

Side 1:

[10] Introduction.

She was born in Rockingham, N.C. Met her husband (Ernest) who was Director of CCC camp and moved to Portland Maine. This was her first real contact with whites and she was warmly accepted.

[27] She joined the YWCA and took classes in art and was asked to participate in the Public Affairs group.

[31] When Lewis was coming to town she was asked to bring a few Blacks to attend. (There was a small Black population at the time). [Joe Lewis]

[42] She was asked to become a professional in the Y and run a teen-age program. She applied to 3 YWCA groups and was accepted in Philadelphia, New Jersey and Wilmington, Delaware.

[54] She became branch Executive Director in Dayton, Ohio in the Phyllis Wheatley (black) Y and stayed there until her husband retired.

[70] [Digression skipping 12 years in Asheville]

[104] Loves Y work because she is working directly with people rather than subject matter.

[119] When she and her husband came to Asheville they built the house she is in now. [He entered the Fletcher Home Health Center two months ago] [Mrs. Slaughter, Mr. Dailey, Mr. Robinson]

[160] After resigning from Dayton [she said Portland] she and two friends traveled through Europe.

[169] In 1960 she was called to the Branch (Black) Y in Asheville. Her job was to break down segregation and establish a new Y. The new Y was dedicated in 1962. [Mrs. Charles Bryant]

[190] She describes the two Ys before desegregation. The Central was for whites (on 23 Grove Street) and the Branch was responsible to this. It was too expensive to repair the pool in Central and people thought Blacks wouldn't use a pool because of their hair. [Mrs. Hill (white) exec. director over both)]

[245] Because of her experience in working in Portland she felt that, if people went out of their way, the races could mix. She had seen it work.

[261] The Booster Club got started when she was overseas. [This was made up of about 25 elderly Blacks who, according to Mary Ann Richards, the present white director, wanted

something of their own. They met monthly and contributed to the Y] [Joan Dunton, Mrs. Harriet Haith]

[298] The whole city worked together to establish a balance - the Board is made up of 1/3 white, 1/3 Black, 1/3 people with skills. Everything they did was intentional and people took a "calculated risk." [Florence Stradley, Florence Ryan, Betty Johnston, Joan Dunton]

[308] Once a month school children came to the Y for the whole day to work together and become exposed to desegregation.

[323] Churches are the last place to desegregate. She discusses her church expansion plan. [Miss McCoy]

[400] In Dayton she helped organize the restaurant sit-ins.

[420] When Eleanor Roosevelt was in Asheville, she and Florence Ryan arranged her talk to be held at the Y. The TVA was "another lift" to integration. [Eleanor Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, Florence Ryan, Marion Anderson (see Florence Ryan tape)]

[461] She, as part of her job at the Y, was on a number of boards and attended many meetings.

[470] The YMI Goombay festival is discussed.

[485] Days dedicated to integration and peace are discussed - Church Women United, World Days of Prayer etc.

[520] Habitat, a group established to build houses for families in need is run at cost and the work done by volunteers. [Jimmy Carter, Rosalyn Carter] [Habitat for Humanity, 9 Biltmore Ave, Ph 251-5702]

[571] Montford area is briefly discussed. [Richard Mathews]

Side 2:

[2/14] She discusses her art work. Her house is full of paintings and handwork. She started at the Y and also takes group lessons once a month. Her work is hanging in the office of the Council on Aging. [Jane McWavers, Rosa Davis]

[2/21] The Ray Funeral Home was once a Black Hospital. [Julia Ray, Wilma Ray, Jessie Ray]

[2/29] The Asheville Y was the first Y in the South to hire a black executive director and the second in the US. She discusses the programs. She quotes "Fly like a butterfly and sting like a bee."

[2/94] Pregnant girls used to be expelled from school. She was able to get teachers to give programs for 5 girls or more to come to the Y.

[2/105] Programs were held at the Y every Monday night called "Challenge of Integration". She planted questions and the turn out and discussions were lively.

[2/158] The Humanities Council emphasizes literacy. Volunteers are recruited.

[2/185] An alternative school, next to the Y, was established to help girls continue their education. This was funded by the school system.

[2/205] The Rape Crisis was started at the Y and is on its own. (see tape by Troutner and Balogh regarding the Women's Center)

[2/233] The Y works in conjunction with the YMI and NAACP.

[2/262] Renovation and expansion of her church is discussed. [Rosa Davis]

[2/333] Council on Aging, under Parks and Recreation, serves lunch at 85 cents a meal. She goes to the one in Shiloh. Harvest House, started by the Junior League, is one of these. [Joan Dunton]

[2/384] She is involved with the Creative Retirement at UNCA and has attended classes. While she was well received and a few Blacks are on campus she feels that the Blacks were not encouraged to attend and the University didn't get off on the right foot. [Cissy Stevens, John Stevens, Johnny Baxter, Dr. and Mrs. Highsmith]

[2/518] The Community Relations Council works with schools with integration problems. [Bob Smith]

[2/552] She just received a notice of a meeting from the NAACP. [Joe Webster]

[2/560] PRIDE is a new organization and meets in the Housing Authority building