

Lucy Mae Harrison

Side 1:

[7] She is a native of Asheville. Her sister died young, but her two brothers became successful.

As a girl she had to do chores inside the house and washed and ironed all the barber bibs and towels her father brought home from his barber shop every night. She served her father dinner on a tray as he returned home too late to eat with the family. Howard was valedictorian when he graduated from 9th grade (9 grades for blacks). Edgar idolized him and missed being valedictorian because of a disagreement with a teacher. He became the first black superintendent in Dayton, Ohio before integration and a city councilman, but never got over the disappointment. Every other Sunday, her family ate with two of her mother's sisters across town. Her father took all of the children hiking up Beaucatcher Mountain - he continued to do this even when the children were in college. [Howard Harrison, William Edgar Harrison, referred to as Edgar]

[52] Her mother went to Mr. Zion Baptist Church. Her father went to Hopkins Chapel where he was superintendent of the Sunday School and all offices. She went to both. (photos enclosed)

[78] Her friend commented on her father's interest in having the church steps renewed. [Julia Hall]

[84] Howard went to boarding school when he was 15. Edgar did not stay for his graduation, even though two teachers decided to give good citizenship awards - the first to go to Edgar (compensation) and took a summer job with the Southern-Pacific Railroad. [Howard Harrison, Edgar Harrison]

[124] A plan for the integration of schools that Edgar suggested at Morehouse in Atlanta was accepted. [Edgar Harrison]

[147] When she finished college, she owed \$80.00 and couldn't get her transcript until it was paid. Her aunts took her to the bank. Evidently, neither her aunts nor her father could get the money, but she did, got the transcript and started her teaching career at Hill Street School. She then taught at Ashland Jr. High (no longer there). She went on to Stephens-Lee and later to Morgan State in Baltimore. She retired from there because of her health. [Mr. Michael Hill, Mrs. Rita Hendrick Lee, Frank Toliver]

[173] She had extra teaching responsibilities with the Social Security Administration. The administration paid to have their employees taught English - whites were taught by teachers from Thompson State, blacks from Morgan State.

[193] Stephens-Lee, under principal Mr. Toliver, had a program whereby top professors from Columbia came to Asheville every other week to teach the entire faculty. Teachers were given 4 summers to get their masters or look for jobs elsewhere - so the school had a faculty of people with masters degrees. [Albert Manley, Mrs. Rita Lee, Frank Toliver, Dr. Radin]

[233] The Depression was a pathetic time for everybody. Her father got up early in the morning and worked in the garden - as did all their neighbors. They raised vegetables and chickens.

[249] Her brother wanted her to build a house (she has a beautiful aerial view of ranch-type home he built) but she decided to keep the house on 46 Ridge Street. She rents it but keeps one room. Her father had 3 houses but sold one to keep children in college. After the parents died, the brothers gave her the old homestead. [Edgar Harrison]

[283] She tells about canning soup on the stove all winter long and eating a lot of Swiss chard!

[305] She describes the grocery stores and ice cream store. [Mr. John Pearson, Franklyn Pearson (daughter) Mr. Frank Chisolm,]

[355] The first Phyllis Wheatley YWCA was on Eagle Street across from the YMI [Enclosed Xerox, 1938, Woodfin and College]. Asheville was deprived until Ruffin came. She helped girls find employment in Biltmore Forest. Lucy was active in the girl reserves. Many outstanding people put on programs in the Y. [Thelma Caldwell, Miss Adella Ruffin, Maya Angelou]

[396] People went to the YMI on Sundays, but the YWCA was active all week. Twice a week a current events forum was held. There were clubs and dances.

[465] Mr. Trent, later president of Livingston College, was secretary. Mable Martin's father was executive secretary. Lucy played the piano for Mable when she was sick. Mrs. Walker taught music. Her husband was a doctor and committed suicide—some believe it was due to the death of a young patient named Annabelle. [Mr. William J. Trent, Mable Martin, Mrs. Hester Lee, Mrs. Eleanor Walker]

[525] The original secretary of the YWCA was Mrs. Blanchard and the girl's worker, a cousin of Mrs. Ruffin, was Miss Norris. [Mrs. Blanchard, Miss Norris]

[532] Lucy went to the YWCA camp. Only 3 girls attended the first year, but teachers from various schools encouraged students to attend even though it was an additional expense for parents. The last 3 girls were from the Allen school. [Students and teachers: Amanda Lee Walker, Ruth Evans, Berry Chandler, Norma Mitchell, Mamie Howe, Vivian Howe, Gladys Porter, Annabelle Tomlin, Maude Shepard, Miss Belle Jones]

[574] The Catholic Hill School went up to the 9th grade. In 1923 the name was changed to Stephens-Lee. [Catholic Hill School burned in 1917. A 1921 bond election authorized a new 19-room building which opened in 1922 as Stephens-Lee.] An additional year was added each year until the school became a high school. [The name came from Stephens (first principal of the black elementary school) and Lee [first wife of Walter S. Lee, former principal of Catholic Hill], [Rev. Robert Parker Rumley, Rev. Jake Nelson, Rev. J. W. Hairston, Rev. John White, Rev. John Grant]

Side 2:

The first pastor of Mt. Zion (before Lucy was born- see enclosure 3-21-54) was Rumley, Nelson, followed then by Horston, White, and Grant. Money was raised to assist students and to help the needy during the Depression when people were eating in soup lines.

[2/21] The Hill Street Baptist Church and Mt. Olive Baptist Church are active in motivating black youth. [Rev. Nilous Avery, Rev. O. T. Tomes]

[2/27] The Episcopal Church was built by whites and donated to the blacks. Her oldest brother graduated from Catholic Hill School. There was an industrial arts department that met in the Episcopal Church- the ministers were teachers. [Howard Harrison]

[2/38] Mt. Zion was built to face Eagle Street but some objected because of the fact it faced the red light district- so it runs parallel to Velvet Street (photos enclosed).

[2/45] Rev. Dusenbury started a school in the Presbyterian Church before the public school system was established. His sister-in-law was the first public school principal of Mountain Street School. This was later named the Lucy Herring School [see interview by Louis Silveri in collection]. Lucy Herring had been a teacher under Mamie Martin. [Rev. Dusenbury, Mamie Martin, Lucy Herring]

[2/60] Rev. Dusenbury died and the school closed. His son, Archie, graduated from the Stephens-Lee School. Lucy worked with Archie who taught French. His brother became principal. Archie had a son who finished law school. There are no Dusenbury's left in town. (enclosure) [Archie Dusenbury, Paul Dusenbury]

[2/79] Schools, clubs, and families have all been directed by the churches. They have been the foundation of the black community.

[2/91] Churches influenced politics in education. She thinks she was hired because she was a member of Hopkins Chapel. Dr. Walker, a leading physician, was influential. Each principal hired people out of his church. [Dr. John Walker, Walter S. Lee, Frank Toliver]

[2/127] Today the churches work together, but they did not in the past. The Mud Creek Baptist Church is affiliated with churches here.

[2/146] Lucy was in Maryland during integration. The barrier was broken in Hicks Department Store. [Peron Mitchell]

[2/161] She taught in a school that was still black and was invited to a dinner where there was an interracial couple. This was the subject of conversation.

[2/180] During her tenure in Baltimore, she had two encounters with white teachers who took advantage of her. She felt helpless and talked to her supervisor. [Miss Franklin]

[2/225] In the past there were more black teachers than there are now. Not only are fewer blacks being hired, but the better ones are being eliminated. They never anticipated what integration would mean.

[2/264] Today the children are not working up to their capacity. Every teacher was a counselor in the past and inspired the students. "We didn't know what we had. Everyone says children realize there is something they aren't getting."

[2/302] She feels there is a problem in communication. White teachers may go out of their way and are not trying to hurt us, but they don't understand the "hurt within us".

[2/331] She has a white friend who let her know that her father does not share her opinions.

[2/363] A black friend from Africa was helped by a white but not told that in order to be a secretary she would have to learn to type.

[[2/411] Lucy's father told her to set up credit, otherwise she would be dependent on a white man. White males hold the power. Women and blacks say, "No more of that."

[2/455] We discuss the uprisings on campuses across the country in the 70's. She saw a group of students making a commotion on the street - one looked up and said, "next place, this building." She left. I told her of my experience in Santa Barbara where the students burned the Bank of America.

Tape 2, Side 1:

At least nine members of the St. James AME Church became organized - one a player of a wind instrument - and one is playing today - Franklyn Owens. (Her list of names is enclosed.) [Berry Chandler, Franklyn Owens (woman), Mrs. Eleanor Walker (doctor's wife), Mrs. Willie J. Bowman (wife of barber, John W. Bowman), Mrs. Jenny Jones (Rev. Jones of Episcopal Church), Charlie Howe (wind instrument), Madison Lennon (Stephens-Lee music teacher)]

[II/30] Lucy studied piano and would have majored in music at Fisk but did not have theory and could not afford to stay longer to complete that course. She sang hymns after Sunday dinner for her father. [Mrs. Eleanor Walker, Mrs. Jenny Jones]

[II/44] On the death of a cousin, she was given a Matti violin. She knows a violin maker (Johnson), and it has great value. She gave this to her niece. [Jean Johnson]

[II/59] Pageants are given in the main churches. The wife of Adam Clayton Powell performed here under church sponsorship during Negro History Month.

[II/75] She reads material from her sorority booklet. Delta Sigma Theta, Inc., which is a private, non-profit organization originating in Howard University, 1913. There are chapters in Germany, Haiti, Liberia, Virgin Islands, Korea, and Nassau. The purpose is: 1. Educational Development, 2. Economic Development, 3. Physical Development, 4. Political Awareness, 5. National

Awareness. The local members divide themselves into one of the five areas and pursue these subjects. The Asheville Chapter was given grants from the Reynolds Foundation and the Janirve Foundation. She knew the founder. Jan (Janet) and Irv (Irving) Reuter had a daughter studying in Mars Hill. She died and the parents set up the Foundation in her memory. The money came from Reuter's Co. - he invented the self-starter for the car. [Irving Reuter, Janet Reuter]

[II/107] She names people who set up activities and former presidents of the Asheville chapter. An "Omega Service" is conducted when someone dies.

[II/133] Lucy names other sororities and fraternities: Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Sigma Theta, Sigma Gamma Rose. Invitation is based on academic standing in college. There are also local groups not requiring college standing.

[II/149] The Deltas meet once a month locally and nationally once a year. She has attended 2 or 3 national conventions - White Plains, N. Y., Washington, and Atlanta. The next one will be in St. Louis.

[II/166] When she attended a YWCA conference, she ran into a friend from school. [Dorothy Harrison]

[II/181] Jesse Ray's daughter Wilma, his sister Bertha Lee Reeder, and his daughter-in-law Rita (now divorced) held national offices in Delta. The Ray family members were pillars of support. [Wilma Ray, Bertha Lee Ray Reeder, Rita Ray, Inez Ray Laster]

[II/201] Joint parties given by the sororities and fraternities were tried but were not financially successful.

[II/225] She taught mythology during story hour to expose children to culture.

[II/246] The sororities were a positive force for cultural appreciation. There were Deltas in every school and once a year a "Jabberwock" [fund raiser] was given with children from all grades participating (see enclosure). [Dorothy Harrison]

[II/277] With integration came changes. "We did then what we can't do now." When Valley Street was wiped out and South Charlotte Street created, unity was destroyed. Her father had barber shop and hoped to buy the building to give to a son. It was sold to a Harrison - but a white man. Her brother rented from Dailey [First black man on City Council (1969). He and Barbara Keleher considered themselves "tokens" - she was first woman and a Republican at that! See her tape.] [Reuben Dailey]

[II/320] At one time her brother had a night club in Florida. Her father went to visit and said, "Isn't the money tainted?" He sold it and went to Ohio and did well. Now his son is an aeronautical engineer with two children. [Edgar Harrison, Linda Harrison, William Edgar Harrison]

[II/361] Her older brother was boss and even picked out her boy friends. He got Edgar a job with the Canadian Pacific. Edgar sent for his trunk and went on the Morehouse. [Howard Harrison]

Tape 2, Side 2:

Continuing end of side 1.

[II/2/9] There was a black movie house on Valley Street (now a parking lot) and many businesses on Eagle Street. [Some of these names may be on the list in the folder with Jesse Ray.] [Toles, Chandler (Lucy Herring's brother-in-law. See her tape by Silveri), Abbott (Candy Land), Alice Collette (barbershop), Freda Burton (café), Julia Ray's aunt (eating place), Alf Wilson (Wilson Bldg. Barber Shop), Miss Gowens (Dress Shop - patronized by wealthy whites)]

[II/2/36] There was a black library in the YMI until integration. The librarian married Dr. Hendrick, graduate of medical and dental school at Howard. Her sister was Mrs. Lee and her son's name was Robert. [Irene Hendrick, Dr. Robert M. Hendrick, Mrs. Rita Lee, Robert Hendrick Jr.]

[II/2/52] She believes there was a black hospital on Clingman Avenue [can't find in N. C. Collection, Pack Library] before moving to what is now the Jesse Ray Funeral Home. (see Jesse Ray Sr. tape)

Her brother told her that when he admitted a patient to St. Joseph, after integration, the patient was turned over to a white doctor. He died the oldest surviving black doctor in N. C. two years ago. His office was on Eagle Street next to Dailey whose widow wants to sell the building. [Jesse Ray Sr., Dr. Howard Harrison, Ethel Pearson Dailey]

[II/2/133] She tells an amusing story about "a low down man" who played tricks on other black schools, when they wanted to borrow the only movie projector, and other clubs within his (and Lucy's) school. The high school was divided into clubs which competed. Her's was the Canterbury Club (Literature and Faith). Vernon's was Audio and Visual and Mrs. Toliver's was Dramatics) [Vernon Cowan, Anne P. Toliver]