

Interview with Sarah Scott Glasgow for the YWCA of Asheville 100 Years
Oral History Project by Stephen McGarity

MCGARITY: My name is Stephen McGarity. I'm from the University of North Carolina at Asheville. And we're interviewing Sarah Scott Glasgow.

GLASGOW: Glasgow.

SM: Glasgow, sorry. All the way up here I was going to do that. Yes. And she resides in Weaverille on Sherwood--

SG: Drive.

SM: Drive. Great. All right, Mrs. Glasgow, how did you get involved with the Girl Reserves? What are some of your earlier memories there?

SG: Well, the Girl Reserves were when I was in high school, when they had the Girl Reserve group at the high school, at Asheville High. It was Lee Edwards High School. And, Katherine Tithe who was our French teacher, was the leader, director or whatever you call it, the adult, the advisor. And, I was active in that for, well, all the time. I'd say about two or three years, I guess. And, mainly, my, the one, the part of it that I was more interested in was the part that did the marionette group which we had.

SM: Was that a traveling marionette group?

SG: Yeah. We traveled around and went to all kinds of different places. Like I told her earlier we had, had-- Well, we did one play in French because she was the French teacher. We did that "Three Wishes" in French. And we took it to two or three of the schools where they

taught French, some of the private schools, I guess, St. Genevieve's and some of those schools. And, then we went, took the different--. We had two or three different stories. Now, I told her we did "Little Black Sambo". But it was not, it was "Apamanogous" that we did, the story of Apamanogous. We started to do "Sambo" but we did "Apamanogous". It was about the little colored boy and his granny, too. And we did it and "Hansel and Gretel", and I don't know, several stories like that. And then we had specialty acts, clowns and singers and different ones. And the different girls did different parts. And we made all our marionettes and all our scenery and everything.

SM: Was this an after school program, the Girl Reserves?

SG: Yeah. But it was, of course, at the school but it was after school, after school hours.

SM: Okay. And did you guys ever meet at the Grove Street location?

SG: I don't remember as they having a meeting but we went down there a lot. We used to--. They'd have skating parties and we used to go down there skating. I remember that.

SM: Could you share some stories about the skating parties?

SG: I just don't remember too much about them. Because I went two or three times but I wasn't at that time physically able to do too much violent exercise. At times skating could get right violent.

SM: At that was at 13 Grove Street, correct, where the YWCA was?

SG: Oh yes, the old building.

SM: The old one.

SG: The old recreational building. I saw a write-up about that the other day from the school that was down there. I'd forgotten they had a school in there later, in later years.

SM: What school is that?

SG: I've forgotten what it was called. It was kind of a private school thing. It was in there for a long time.

SM: Was the, the YWCA, they were working a lot like we were talking about eliminating racism in the Asheville area. Do you recall anything at all about their works with that?

SG: I remember--. You know, I just don't remember that part of it at all because at that time when I was in high school we didn't have much, any problem with that then. We hadn't started this civil rights thing when I--. See I graduated in 1936. So, you see, we didn't have any of that then.

SM: Right. Can you remember from later after high school the atmosphere in Asheville as far as racial integration was concerned?

SG: Well, of course, of course, there was very strong against it and for it, too. I mean, it's always been that way, for and against.

SM: Right. As far as the YWCA goes, do you remember them providing any social services or community support for the women or children? Do you remember what kind of programs they had?

SG: I think most of those were started later after I was--. Because I wasn't involved in it after I finished high school.

SM: So you were just involved in the Girl Reserves?

SG: That was back during my high school years, yes. And then in my early years when I was young, real young going there to swim two or three times, took swimming lessons.

SM: How old were you when you took swimming lesson?

SG: About nine.

SM: Okay. And--

SG: No. My father died when I was nine so I just have been ten, eleven, somewhere in there.

SM: Okay. And were there a lot of people there taking lessons as well?

SG: Um-hmm.

SM: Adults and children or--?

SG: Well, mostly children at that time, because when we were just learning, you know, it was a learning class. And I think it was--. What was her name, Carrie or somebody Carrie or--. I've forgotten who else was down there. I mean they were the teachers, you know. But I said the only thing, the main thing I remember about, I was always concerned about the colored children and the colored women. And I remember when we had streetcars. You know, everybody--. I think--. When did the buses start, '34?

SM: I'm not sure.

SG: Thirty-four, thirty-five, something like that. Because I know when we were in, out, over in high school we had to walk all the way from McDowell Street to Biltmore Avenue to get the bus. It didn't go to the high school. But anyway, when we'd ride the streetcar when I was just little going back and forth to West Asheville where we lived, I used to worry so because you know they'd have white and colored on the bus and at had certain sections. The colored were always at the back. And that always worried me to death because I'd see these poor women that had worked so hard all day, some of them like grandmothers, like my own grandmother, you know, that had worked so hard all day. And they'd get on the bus and it was move to the back, move to the back. And that always worried me to death as a child because I thought, well, there's seats in front. Why can't they sit

up there? But that, that's the main thing that I remember basically.

And that would have been in the twenties.

SM: Right. Do you recall any picket lines, I guess, later on in the sixties?

SG: There must have been.

SM: Tell me some more about the marionettes and the Girl Reserves, if you don't mind. Do you have any stories you can share?

SG: I shared the one with about going up here to the CCC camp.

SM: Where was the CCC camp? Was that--?

SG: Must have been in the Barnardsville area, somewhere up in that area. I'm not positive just where it was.

SM: That's not camp Lata.

SG: No, Camp Lata, Camp Lata was--. Well, you don't know [unclear] mountain? Well, see then, Camp Sequoia was the boys camp. It was up above Beech, way on up there.

SM: Do you recall anything about Camp Kenjocketee?

SG: Kenjocketee,?

SM: Right.

SG: We went up there a lot. I remember going up there. And I remember, my older brother, he was eleven years older than I was. So, by the time I was old enough to--oh, like I say, eight or nine--so he was in his teens, you know. And he was a counselor at one of the other, either Kenjocketee or--. What was the boys' camp?

SM: I'm not, I'm not familiar with the boys' camp as much as I am the girls'.

SG: I'll think of it directly. Anyway, it was one or the other. I don't remember which it was. But, I remember we had aunts here visiting, my father's sisters. And so they wanted to go out to the camp and see

the camp where the boy, either George or I had been, one or the other of us. And so, they took them out there. And so that day they said, well now, you must all stay for lunch. We're going to have lunch and we can all have lunch. And they said, now, we're going to have chicken or we're going to have turtle soup, chicken soup or turtle soup. Now which--? You can have either one. They had plenty of big turtles in the lake at that time. So they said, well, they thought they'd take chicken. Of course, you know what it all was. It all ended up that everybody got turtle.

SM: Turtle soup.

SG: Turtle soup. And they didn't know the difference. They didn't know the difference. But he laughed about that a lot because--. It was at one of the, one of the Y camps whether it was the boys' or the girl's, I don't remember which it was. But that was so funny. But that's one of the main things I remember about being up there, you know. And I went to that Camp Lata which was the one down in Charlotte. Now that's where that was.

SM: That was an all girls' camp, correct?

SG: That was the girls' YW camp. And it was some kind of a conference. I gave girls a lot of stuff from that, the pictures and so on from that. And, I think there were three of us from Asheville High School that went as delegates to that down there.

SM: Do you remember, other than the marionettes and the plays you guys put on with the Girl Reserves, do you remember some of the, I guess, the core values that they were trying to teach you guys. What they were trying to promote within the Girl Reserves? Do you remember kind of what the Y's, the YWCA's agenda was with the Girl Reserves?

SG: They had one special one and I can't think of what it was. After all these years I should remember. But I know they did. Well, it was so similar, of course, to the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts and so on, you know, very similar to what their, their goals were, you know, being good honest citizens as much as anything, you know.

SM: Helen may have gone over this with you already. Do you know of any other names or contacts, people we can contact to interview, maybe anyone who's involved with the Girl Reserves?

SG: Well, the trouble, my trouble right now is there's nobody of my age group that's left. The last one that was with the marionettes with me just died this last summer. And, really and truly, I don't know, I can't think of anybody that might be still living that was in the group at the time I was.

SM: Okay. Is there any other last story or--

SG: Well, I do have a story about the, during the Roosevelt years.

SM: Oh, by all means, please.

SG: He had--. Like I told her

SG: He had--. I told her. He had these workshops. And he had one over at the old Orange Street School. Now Orange Street now runs between Central and Merriman.

SM: Okay. I know where that's at.

SG: And where the--. Does the city have, still have their work thing over there on that--do you remember--on Orange Street? They did for a while. But, anyway, that's where the school was, was on that. It was the old school where my mother and all of them went to school. But, anyway, they weren't having school there at the time so they had this workshop. And they did all sorts of crafts. And people--. In fact, my

mother had made a--. My grandfather made her a loom and they wove lots of tablemats and stuff like that. But then they did copper work. And I've got to show you that.

SM: Oh, you have something here.

SG: Because at the time the sheriff's department would go out and raid all these stills, mountaineer stills. They'd bring these copper stills in, clean them up a little bit, cut them up and give them to this group to work with. And we made all kinds of things. And I've got to show you some of these things.

SM: Let's go look at this.

[Tape is paused.]

[Remainder of tape is garbled-warped sound.]

[end of tape 1, side A]

[Tape 2 overlaps tape 1 beginning with page 6--" . . . either George or I had been . . .--turtle soup story]

SM: So these are copper metal, copper candleholders made out of old moonshine stills.

SG: All these made out of copper. And see it was all cut and shaped. And then they hammered it and they hammered that down in to make it shaped like that. And, then they cut out these and put them on. They cut out the plywood stuff, you know, and made the background and cut that and put on that. But, this set I've always had it on my wall because one time when it had first been made it was lying on the kitchen table. And a couple of my girlfriends or three of us, we decided we wanted to have a tea party. So, I said, well, grandfather's just brought in some cucumbers and my aunt had just made me mayonnaise so I'll make the sandwiches, which I did. And they went

and made, got cookies and something to drink. So I fixed my sandwiches and that tray was lying on the table. It looks, you know--. And I put all my sandwiches on it and I covered them up very carefully and took them out to eat. So they brought their stuff and we put everything out. And I thought, oh, now my cucumber sandwiches are so good. And I took the napkin off them and they were as green as gourds.

SM: How long had they been on there?

SG: Not long. But that mayonnaise--. And see, it hadn't--. I didn't know it hadn't had the coat of shellac or whatever it was. It was still raw copper.

SM: That's great.

SG: And it just turned just as green as it could be.

SM: How old would you say these are?

SG: Well, they were made in, let's see--. Mama died in '36, well, during Roosevelt's time, about, maybe '34 or '35. So they're kind of old. Those little pieces now those little ones there see all that's made out of it. At the time some of the ladies had just started smoking and they played bridge. And so these were to be their little individual ashtrays.

SM: That's great.

SG: You know. And see these are all made with it.

SM: That's incredible.

SG: See now that one's beginning to turn. These have just been packed away. But, anyway, that's the story of my copper. Do you want--?

[remainder of tape is garbled-warped]

END OF INTERVIEW