

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE

Interviewee: **Carrie L. Jackson**

Interview Date: 08/25/2016

Interviewer: Jane Goodsill

Transcriber: Olga Barr

Location: At her home in Richmond, Texas

13 Pages



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Transcript

GOODSILL: Carrie had signed a disclaimer saying that she understands the terms of this interview. But we would also like to add that what she is saying is this data is to the best of her knowledge. Any errors she may make are not due to willing misrepresentation but are due to being unaware of the true facts. The other thing is that we will give her a copy of the whole thing to review. After she reviews it, then we put it on the website. If she decides after the interview she doesn't want to put it on the website, that's fine too.

Ms Jackson, will you start by telling me your full name?

JACKSON: My name is Carrie Lee Greer Jackson.

GOODSILL: So Greer was your maiden name?

JACKSON: Yes ma'am.

GOODSILL: What was your date of birth?

JACKSON: 02/14/1934.

GOODSILL: Valentine baby. That is kind of special.

JACKSON: I was born at home in Richmond, Texas, behind Schultz's store. To my knowledge, the midwife was a black lady named Mrs. Smark. I don't know whether I'm saying it right or not because 82 is a long time (laughs).

GOODSILL: Tell us where Schultz's store was.

JACKSON: It still is, but not what it was. It is on FM 359 down the highway from the Swinging Door which you pass as you go to Schultz's store in Richmond.

GOODSILL: Tell me how your people got to Fort Bend County.

JACKSON: All I can say is that when I got in the world they were out there in the country. I don't know if they are originally from Fort Bend County or not. My grandmother's mother was named Sara. Her husband was named John Griffin. My grandmother, their daughter, was named Julia. My grandfather was named Louis Linsey. Julia and Louis had my mother, Ivory.

GOODSILL: What a pretty name. Did she have brothers and sisters?

JACKSON: Yes. The oldest sibling was named Roberta. The next was a boy named Eddie Lee, then Patty. The next one was named Johnny. My mom was the baby, Ivory.

GOODSILL: Where did your momma grow up?

JACKSON: In the country. It was Route 2, Richmond, Texas. That is the way they got their mail. The mail would come to Schultz's store. Shultz didn't own it at that time. He owned it when I was growing up. We would go to the store and ask for it. "Anything for Ivory Linsey?"

GOODSILL: Let's go back to your grandmother Julia and Louis. Tell me what their lives were like.

JACKSON: They were farmers. They farmed cotton and corn, had gardens and animals: chickens, cows, and horses.

GOODSILL: Did they rent the land or sharecrop?

JACKSON: No, they owned it.

GOODSILL: They owned it. How do you suppose that happened?

JACKSON: I don't know. Each one of my grandmother's sisters had land. So I guess they inherited from their families.

GOODSILL: From John Griffin? Might it have been unusual back then for a black man to own land?

JACKSON: Each one of my grandmother's three siblings had land.

GOODSILL: So they farmed and they got to keep what they made? I mean they didn't have to share with the landlord or anything like that?

JACKSON: No, there wasn't no landlord, they were the owners.

GOODSILL: So tell me what your grandmother was like, Julia.

JACKSON: She was tall and big boned. To my understanding, my grandmother and her siblings and their parents had some Indian blood in them. I can't say I know it for sure, but when I was growing up several people have looked at me and my siblings and said, "Ooh, y'all got Indian in you." My grandmother's sister looked just like an Indian. They had that Indian hair, and they was big boned. I mean big boned!

GOODSILL: Do you remember her husband, Lewis?

JACKSON: Yes, I do. Beautiful (laughs).

GOODSILL: He was. Beautiful looking or beautiful personality?

JACKSON: Beautiful personality. (Shows photo) This is my grandfather, Julia's husband, with his mules.



Carrie Jackson's grandfather, Louis Linsey

GOODSILL: Tell me about him.

JACKSON: All I know is that he was my grandfather. I can tell you he was a good grandfather. He was an amazing man, kind, sweet, gentle. We lived with them until we moved to Richmond when I started first grade.

GOODSILL: Tell me about your mother, Ivory.

JACKSON: When we moved to Richmond she had some small babies. We came to Richmond and lived on Fannin Street out there in Freedman Town. That is where I grew up at on the other side.

GOODSILL: What was your father's and sibling's name?

JACKSON: My dad was named Louis Greer. My oldest sister was named Etta B. I'm Carrie. I had a brother named Willie C. and twin sisters, Thelma and Zelma. Out of those three, Etta B., Willie C., and Thelma are deceased. Zelma works at the school. Then I had twin sisters, Linda and Brenda. So there are four of us still living.



Carrie, center, surrounded by her sisters.

My mother remarried Booker T. Banks, who was our step dad. He worked for the city of Bellaire. What he did I really don't know. My mom wanted to live in Richmond so we moved here. We've been here ever since.

GOODSILL: Did your mom inherit any of the land?

JACKSON: Yes. When my grandparents passed away 5 of them inherited that land. It is not still in the family. They sold it.

GOODSILL: And now it's developed?

JACKSON: They have built up out there so much if you don't know where you are going, to get lost. Schultz's store is still there, and I think there is an antique place now. But other than that, I'm lost. I'm definitely lost.

GOODSILL: Tell me something about your life. You moved to Richmond when you were little.

JACKSON: Yes, and I went to school. There used to be a wooden school right here behind the church here. The church was wood, too. When they built the new school, which was on the north side of town, I went there. Then I left there and went to Jackson. I didn't finish, but I went (chuckles).

GOODSILL: Were these all black schools?

JACKSON: Yes, yes, all black schools.

GOODSILL: Did you feel like you got a pretty good education?

JACKSON: Yes!

GOODSILL: What happened that you left school?

JACKSON: Well, I wanted to work so I left school, but I ended up getting my GED later.

GOODSILL: Good for you.

JACKSON: I sure did. I got married at the age of 21.

GOODSILL: Which wasn't that young in those days, was it?

JACKSON: No. I've got five kids. The oldest is named Irma. The next one is named Douglas. And I've got a set of twins (laughs).

GOODSILL: You do! They run in the family. Boys or girls?

JACKSON: A boy and a girl, Diane Lynn and David Wayne and Rhonda.

GOODSILL: The last child is named Rhonda?

JACKSON: Is named Rhonda. Their daddy, Garner Pines, got killed right behind Love's store. The train hit him.

GOODSILL: Nooooo. Walking or in a vehicle?

JACKSON: In a vehicle. That was in '68. He lived from April to June. I was a widow at an early age with five kids.

GOODSILL: That must have been awful.

JACKSON: That's the reason I can tell these ladies, these young women that are younger than me, you can make it if you try. When he got killed the insurance company paid me money for the accident. I was living on the south side of town. I bought a house from Lee Rich on the north side with the insurance money. I've been over here ever since.

GOODSILL: What did you do for work?

JACKSON: Oh, I was a babysitter. I'd leave to go to one job and get off of that and come home and check my house and my kids and go to another one. Sometimes I was working three jobs. But I supported my children. I didn't take one of them out of school to work. They all finished school. Then I started working at the nursing home, Autumn Hills. Then I went to Polly Ryon and started working. I was in housekeeping and then I got a little study in and I started working where they deliver babies.

GOODSILL: I bet you liked that. But that is not easy work.

JACKSON: I did. I sure did. No! It is not.

GOODSILL: On your feet all the time?

JACKSON: Yes, ma'am.

GOODSILL: And a lot of hurry up and wait?

JACKSON: Yes. [chuckles] Yep, but I worked. I let my children know that is the way you survive, you work.

GOODSILL: That's right. Go back to when you were babysitting. What kind of families were you babysitting?

JACKSON: I worked for a white family called the Plummers. They had the nursery across the river, Plummer's Nursery. Then I worked for Martha Roberts on Newton Drive over here taking care of her children. I worked everywhere. The Wendts. I worked for them.

GOODSILL: Do you know the mayor then, Evelyn Moore?

JACKSON: Oh, yeah. She and I are friends. She was in school. I was young when I was working for her. I go see Mrs. Wendt now! Then I used to work for the Griffins.

Yes, yes. I just stopped working not too long ago. I was working down in private duty for a little lady who was bedridden.

GOODSILL: When did you marry your current husband?

JACKSON: Yes, James Jackson. We've been together about 25 years. He's the best!
(laughs)

GOODSILL: I am very impressed with the amount of civic service you've done. You have been a part of a lot of different organizations.

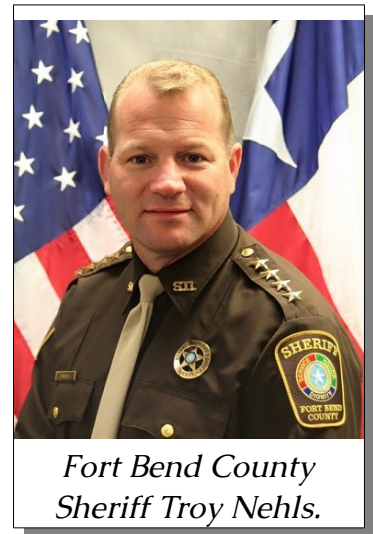
JACKSON: Oh, yes. I got involved with the police academy. Then I was made block captain.

GOODSILL: Tell me what the police academy was like.

JACKSON: We had to go to class. You passed the class and then you could ride with them.

GOODSILL: REALLY! With the police officers? Did you do that?

JACKSON: Yes. We went around the communities. If they had to go where a disturbance was, we couldn't get out. But we were there. When they go into a disturbance, they would quieten it down. It was nice to see how the police treated people. If they could talk it down, they did. I'm still friendly with some of the policemen. The one that I went to class under is the high sheriff now, Troy Nehls.



*Fort Bend County
Sheriff Troy Nehls.*

GOODSILL: How about that? That's a good feeling. It's nice to know your public officials.

JACKSON: Oh, yes, it is. Yes it is. Yes it is. I could call one right now and have them for a cup of coffee. If he is not busy, they'll come. It is not that I'd need them for protection; it's friendship.

GOODSILL: Oh, that is so nice. What a good story.

JACKSON: Friendship. And the Fire Department, we went to class for that. We had an opportunity to go up the ladders and what have you. That was an experience, too. It really was.

Then they made us block captains and we had meetings at different houses. It was just good. If we see a disturbance we can report it but mainly we'd look out for our street.

There is a park that I was involved in. We've got a little children's park at the end of this street. I asked about the city mowing it because it's grown up, but we found out that somebody owns the land and we don't know who. So the city won't mow it.

GOODSILL: Children are not going to like a park that is not mowed.

JACKSON: In fact, when they could go down there before, they didn't want to play in it, they wanted to play in the streets. They had basketball goals in the yard coming out in the streets. When you come down the streets you had to park almost before they would let you by. (smiling) I don't know who owns the land where the park is.

GOODSILL: When your husband died and you bought the house?

JACKSON: Yes, we moved over here in September 1968. I had been renting from Joe Clyde Wessendorff. When I got the opportunity to get a house I did it. I needed a decent place because the rental house didn't have inside bathrooms, it was a flush toilet but it was outside. We had to warm the water and bathe in a tub.

GOODSILL: (chuckles) With five babies and no husband! How about when you moved here?

JACKSON: Oh, I had everything, gas, electric, everything.

GOODSILL: Was the community different on this side of the tracks as opposed to that side of the highway?

JACKSON: Well, the majority of the people on this side own their own homes. Just about everybody owned their home. Some had extra houses they rented.

GOODSILL: And people in Freedman Town rented?

JACKSON: Yeah, they rented. Some owned their own homes, but there wasn't that many.

GOODSILL: Was it segregated? Was it mainly black on this side?

JACKSON: When I came over here this street was more black than it was Hispanic.

GOODSILL: Was there a church right here in this community? What is the name of the community?

JACKSON: Baptist Hill.

GOODSILL: What is the name of the church?

JACKSON: Mount Carmel. I lived over here, but I went back to Pilgrim Journey Baptist Church on Williams Way. I still go there; its been over 60 years.

GOODSILL: Was the black community in Richmond at that time close knit, people knew each other, people took care of each other, or not so much?

JACKSON: Well, we were friendly. If you met a friend, you had a friend. That is the way it was. I have always been the person that if you need me, I'm coming.

GOODSILL: How did people help you?

JACKSON: You know working like we was working with a salary you just make that much money. If the next door neighbor had too many can goods, they would give it to you. That's the way communities was. I'm the oldest one on the street.

GOODSILL: What inspired you to do all these fire academy and police academy classes? Why did you do that?

JACKSON: I wanted to get involved. I wanted to know more about what's going on with the police stuff. By the way, I even went to the Sheriff's Academy.

GOODSILL: Is that how you got to know Troy?

JACKSON: No, I met him at the police academy. But I went to the Sheriff's Academy. They had classes and you could go shoot the gun.

GOODSILL: Can you tell me something about the origins of Freedman Town? How it got that name, when it was established?

JACKSON: No, I can't because when we come over from across the river, it was Freedman Town. When I was a little girl there were no streetlights. A black man owned a store, his name was Walter Hill. When I first started school up there we had to walk from Freedman Town to come to school over here. That's a fairly long way. The two black communities were Baptist Hill on the north side and Freedman Town on the south side.

GOODSILL: Is this area integrated now, black and white people live here together now?

JACKSON: Yeah. There's a couple of white guys that live next door to me.

GOODSILL: But it was very segregated, things were separated?

JACKSON: Oh, yeah.

GOODSILL: You think things are better now?

JACKSON: I do.

GOODSILL: (laughing) Me, too!

JACKSON: Lord have mercy! Because if it weren't, you wouldn't be able to make it.

GOODSILL: Because if you were a black person or Hispanic you wouldn't get the same wages for example.

JACKSON: Right.

GOODSILL: And if a white woman did babysitting, like you did, she might get paid differently than you?

JACKSON: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

GOODSILL: So unfair! But you've seen that change.

JACKSON: Yes, ma'am, I sure have. Because people can make \$15.00 an hour now. Back then you'd work from 8:00 to 5:00 every day and might go home with \$15.00 a week. But if you know how to survive, you survive.

GOODSILL: Did your kids grow up during the time when schools were beginning to be integrated?

JACKSON: Yeah. My oldest children never went to Jackson; they went to Lamar or Jane Long. That's the way it was when they were in school. I went to all black schools.

GOODSILL: You went to all black schools, but your children were integrated? How different their lives are than your grandparent's lives.

JACKSON: Oh, Lord, my grandmother and them they didn't have any type of education. They really didn't.

GOODSILL: But they were free people.

JACKSON: Yes, they was.

GOODSILL: Anything you want to tell me about your children? Have they done anything that has made you proud?

JACKSON: My oldest daughter, Irma, is a retired principal. She goes sometimes to help out in the school district. She is a wedding coordinator. She's VERY smart. She has two kids, a boy and a girl. Her son is a basketball coach. Her daughter works at a hospital. She goes to different hospitals teaching stuff. I just have one granddaughter.

My oldest son, Douglas, likes to cook, so he cooks at Cracker Barrel. He has two boys who live in California. My next one, Diana, has one child. He is the sweetest thing (chuckles). He works for the railroad. David doesn't have any children. Rhonda is the baby. She works for H-E-B and she doesn't have any children. All tolled I have five grand kids and five children and one great-grandson and one granddaughter out of all the five.

GOODSILL: Did your children all get educated?

JACKSON: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. Irma, the oldest, finished Prairie View. Rhonda went to Wharton Junior College. The other three finished high school.

GOODSILL: Well, as you think back on your life are there any other memories you want to tell us? Anything you are looking forward to in the future?

JACKSON: Happiness. I love that! And I am happy.

GOODSILL: You are going to make me cry now.

JACKSON: (laughs) Twenty-five years ago my husband and I worked together at Polly Ryon, and we was friends. When we met, you know how you just be talking to somebody and you never had an idea that you would be husband and wife. He went one way and I went mine. We met again and here we are.

GOODSILL: What kind of work did he do?

JACKSON: He was very educated. He worked on anything that broke down for the babies or for surgery; he'd know how to repair.

GOODSILL: And you were right there in that department helping with the babies.

JACKSON: More or less.

GOODSILL: Were you surprised when you fell in love with a white man?

JACKSON: Not really.

GOODSILL: The color had nothing to do with it?

JACKSON: No, it did. I was worried about my family though.

GOODSILL: What did they say?

JACKSON: Well, you know, they never said anything, but you could tell...but that didn't stop me because you live your life and I live mine. I'm grown and you are grown.

GOODSILL: You were in your fifties by this time.

JACKSON: Oh, yeah, I was! I really was. I didn't pay it no attention. But they never said anything, but you know their expression. But afterward they fell in love with him. My kids call him daddy-o. He don't ever say stepchildren. He says, "My children." That's the way my step daddy was. We weren't his step-children. We were his children.

GOODSILL: So you found a nice man.

JACKSON: I did.

GOODSILL: Happiness.

JACKSON: I did. He joined my church too, got baptized. He's a deacon.

GOODSILL: Oh, nice. I'm so happy for you. That's a nice story. I am happy to hear that part of the story.

Interview ends