

WORLD WAR II ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS SPENCER RESEARCH LIBRARY, KANSAS COLLECTION

Interviewees: Barbara and Merrill Ross
Date: 14 June 2011
Location: Ross residence, Topeka, Kansas
Interviewer: Deborah Dandridge, Field Archivist

ROSS INTERVIEW NO. 1
Tape 1, side 1 begins.

DEBORAH DANDRIDGE: How are you Mrs. Ross?

BARBARA ROSS: I'm fine, thank you.

DANDRIDGE: Okay, and how are you Mr. Ross?

Pause in recording.

DANDRIDGE: Okay, this is an interview with Mr. Merrill Ross and Mrs. Barbara Ross and its June 14, 2011. It's taking place in their home in Topeka, Kansas. Thank you both for being here and we appreciate your taking your time. So we're going to kind of explore some memories about Mr. Ross's military service. Do you want to share what memories you have of what he said, Mrs. Ross? And Mr. Ross can always fill in.

BARBARA ROSS: Yes, I'd be glad to. Well I'll begin with when I first met Merrill. He was out of the service, he was a former Tuskegee airman in one of the last classes, so he wasn't—he didn't go overseas, which was a blessing. The war ended before, just before he went over to fight. And when I met Merrill I had just finished college and was visiting my sister and brother-in-law in Columbus, Ohio at Lockbourne Air Base. I had just been accepted at Ohio State so that I could work on my master's and Merrill was there recruiting teachers from Topeka, Kansas because there was a shortage here at the time. I filled out some papers and of course I needed a job because the war was over and I was anxious to get into something in my field, which was elementary education, and that's what they were looking for, teachers in that area. However, Merrill told me of so many things about—He loved to fly and as a youngster he used to see airplanes every now and then fly over the mountains of Kentucky, where he lived, and he said he would like to fly someday, which he did. He went to Kentucky State for a couple of years and left there and attended Pittsburg State Teacher's College and that was during the war and they had a program of civilian pilot trainees there. So he was one of the students and, of course, he had his pilot's license and everything when he was called to the service. The people in Leavenworth, and I think that's where he went to to be inducted, he wanted to go to Tuskegee right then, but the man said, "Have you had any basic training?" And Merrill said, "No, but I have my pilot's license." And he said, "Well you'll have to have basic training first." And—Am I telling that right, Merrill?

MERRILL ROSS: Yes.

BARBARA ROSS: So he was in the service in Fort Bragg for a while and came across a young lieutenant from New York, and they became good friends. He helped Merrill a lot. Of course he was over Merrill and Merrill told him how he wanted to be Tuskegee airman. He said, "Well if you can get some of your friends together, we'll see what we can do." So that's what Merrill did and they took a battery of tests,

physical and academic and so forth and so on and finally he made it to Tuskegee. There were ninety in his class to begin with, because some came from other places. Of course during that time they had to—they knew that they were under pressure because this program, really, was not supposed to succeed. So they were told that so many would be washed out at different periods, which was very unfortunate. Merrill finally made it, they ended up, there were eight in his—nine in his class of ninety that made it, and he was one of the nine. Well, during that time, like I said he was in one of the last classes so he didn't make it overseas to fight, but those who were over there made such a name, such a good record that some of it is just beginning to come out, they used to call them the Red Tails because their airplane tails were painted red and when they would go on these missions to protect the bombers whose pilots and crew were Caucasian because there was no integration at that time, during World War II, they would always ask for the Red Tails because they never lost a bomber and that was quite a record, to be a part of something like that. But, Merrill came back and—to teach school after the war was over, which he was teaching before he left and, I think that was just one of his goals because he loved teaching and he loved the children and, seemingly, they loved him.

DANDRIDGE: Do you remember any stories he would tell about his training at Tuskegee or the friends he met or any sort of his experiences while during training at Tuskegee?

BARBARA ROSS: Yes. He has a dear friend from—now that we hear from all the time that lives in Washington, D.C., he just lost his wife, Billy Pontroy(??), and they were classmates. Billy was quite young because most of the fellows there at Tuskegee had finished college, and Billy had just finished high school, but he happened to be in Merrill's class and they flew together a couple of times during training. We still hear from him and he's a wonderful man. Merrill also told us that a lot of times when he would go home or different places on leave that if there were other soldiers on the sidewalk, approaching him, they would cross the street to keep from saluting, because he was an officer and they did not want to do that, the Caucasian youngsters.

DANDRIDGE: Now was he off—off the base in the Tuskegee? Was that when he was off the base in Tuskegee?

BARBARA ROSS: Yes. And even when he came home in Kentucky and others would be on furlough or what have you that were not commissioned officers, they'd cross the street to—Because whenever you saw or were in the presence of an officer, you saluted, regardless of your race or whatever or wherever you were. But he had some experiences like that. And then one reason why he came back to teaching, he did want to be a commercial pilot, but when he went to—and some others went to apply, they said, Don't waste your time, they threw their applications in the wastebasket because they weren't hiring any blacks. But when he came back and some of his students that he taught became commercial pilots and he was so proud of them. He just thought that was wonderful. And every time they'd come back, they'd come to see him. But—And then, um, Merrill was an only child. Well the only sibling that survived in his family. His parents, his father was such a strong man, and his mother too, but she was sickly a lot and she worried about him being the service and being an only child. That was one of his reasons for coming home when he did because he would have stayed in longer he said.

DANDRIDGE: What were some of the other training experiences did he have? What kind of other things—Do you remember what he said he had to do or had to learn? Do you remember any of that?

BARBARA ROSS: Oh, oh yes. He—they had quite a rigorous program and they also had—they had black and white instructors at Tuskegee. Of course, like I said, the program was really not to succeed but because

they were determined and the officer that was over them, the commanding officer at the time, he was determined that they were going to succeed and the program would go over.

DANDRIDGE: Was that commanding officer Af—black or white?

BARBARA ROSS: He was white. But that was while Ben Davis was overseas because, at one time, Ben Davis, who was black, he's deceased now, but quite an officer. He was a West Point graduate. And he was overseas when this other man was over them at Tuskegee and, um—

DANDRIDGE: So he never encountered any white officers who were not as supportive?

BARBARA ROSS: Well, one instructor was quite difficult. In fact, I think they called it—they called it another name. He had given him a red check or something and that was on the verge of him being washed out. But in the meantime the other instructors who had him before gave him such high rating that they said well let's just try this again. And they said, Well, I couldn't or I couldn't have landed it any better, and so he was able to pass through. But this other man was on his neck and he was not sure that he was going to make it.

DANDRIDGE: Did he ever talk about some of his flying—they weren't missions, but his flying exercises?

BARBARA ROSS: Oh yes, he loved acrobats, he loved the acrobatic part. In fact he went out here to Combat Air Museum one time, I wasn't with him and that's when his vision was getting bad but he was able to go and he went out with a friend, he wasn't driving then, but he went out with a friend and this pilot became—They started talking and everything so the pilot wanted to take him up, and he said, "Oh yes, let's go up." So he went up with the pilot and the pilot said, "Now what would you like for me to do?" And Merrill said, "How about some slow rolls and some snap rolls and—." He said, "Barbara, I'm just so sorry you weren't there." I said, "I'm so glad I wasn't." (laughs) But he loved that, he loved the acrobatic part. And then one time he was on a—I don't know whether it was a mission, but they had them do so many hours soloing, he was soloing at the time. And he said, "I got so carried away being up there, I looked down and I was lost." And he said, "I didn't know where I was." And he said, "I pulled my map," or whatever it was that they do and he checked some railroad tracks and he found his way back by doing that. Cause otherwise he would have—because one of his friends flew and got lost on _____(??) and the instructor had to go and get him, but he didn't make it.

DANDRIDGE: Do you know what kind of airplane he was flying?

BARBARA ROSS: It was called—it was an AT-6, that's what they, the training—the advanced training plane was. But the other plane that they flew when they went overseas was a 51, right Merrill?

ROSS: Um-hm.

BARBARA ROSS: All right. Merrill didn't have a chance to fly that one; oh he wanted to so badly. But when we heard, and he heard from some of his friends and some of the people that were over there and they had—I want to get this right, get it right now, um—when the mechanics would have to work on their planes after they'd, maybe, been on a mission or had a little problem, it was always junkyard material. There was never enough—there wasn't anything new, they had to put things together for those fellows to be able to fly over there and do what they did.

DANDRIDGE: Now, is that because the military was generally low on those kind of resources or was that just an allocation for the Tuskegee Airmen?

BARBARA ROSS: I think it was an allocation for the Tuskegee Airmen. Because I don't think they were that low, you know, at that particular time.

DANDRIDGE: So those mechanics were crucial to their survival?

BARBARA ROSS: Oh yes and they were something else. They were just—those fellows were something else.

DANDRIDGE: So I'm really stupid about war, so help me with this; so did these mechanics go overseas with them?

BARBARA ROSS: They went overseas with them, yes they did. And Ben Davis, like I had said before who was over the group, he was the one that had to come back—Because they had written about the Tuskegee Airmen in some of the newspapers saying they weren't doing anything and things like that, and Ben Davis went to Washington before a group and told what they actually did. He stood up for his men; he was very outstanding. Like I said, he was a West Point graduate and while he was at West Point, can you imagine?, no one talked to him unless they were giving him an order to do something. But no one talked to him, he'd go to classes, no one talked to him. Can you imagine going to school and not having anybody talking to you? And he finished and became very outstanding. And I had the opportunity to meet him when I was visiting my sister and brother-in-law.

DANDRIDGE: When Mr. Ross said he entered the military, was he drafted?

BARBARA ROSS: Yes, he was drafted and—

DANDRIDGE: (interjecting) Did you describe that and I just didn't hear that?

BARBARA ROSS: No, I didn't—

DANDRIDGE: Did you know about his drafting, what the circumstances were?

BARBARA ROSS: No, he just told me some things. The reason—He went in late; he was working on his master's and he was able to stay in school because of that. But, then, it came to the point where he had to go and, um, when he did go he was teaching sixth grade, I think it was, cause he hadn't been there very long, he hadn't been in Topeka very long. And Mr. Slaughter was in his class of—Sally Slaughter's brother?

DANDRIDGE: John or—

BARBARA ROSS: John. John Slaughter was in his class; Owen Shinn was another one that was in his class, and several others. But John said that they all cried when Mr. Ross had to leave, when he had to go to the service.

DANDRIDGE: What did his parents think about his going to war? Do you remember, did he ever talk about it?

BARBARA ROSS: Well, it worried his mother because, like I said, he was an only child. They even, when he was growing up, Merrill was very adventuresome, adventurous or adventuresome, and he learned to swim and his parents didn't know it. He could swim across the Cumberland River, which was in front of his house, and he could swim across underneath the water until he got to the other side. They didn't want him to play football, and he played sandlot football all the time. There was a young high school boy that was killed when he was tackled and he—his neck was broken and they didn't want Merrill to play football. So Merrill said, Well if ever he had a boy he was going to have him exposed to all of those things and decide which one he would like. And, of course, when Brian was born, he was exposed to all of those things.

DANDRIDGE: In terms of the war, where were you when war broke out? Do you remember?

BARBARA ROSS: When the war broke out I was in high school, I'd say. And I was attending Garnet High School, which was in Charleston, West Virginia, black high school. And I was a majorette in the school band and two years before, when the war hadn't really gotten started, we had the opportunity to go to New York, Chicago, and Atlantic City, and we played at the World's Fair and we paraded down the streets of New York, which was quite—for a youngster in high school, you can imagine how that made us feel. And we were to go to California but the war had broken out then and I missed the opportunity of going as their leader, as the head majorette. And—But that was something that I really enjoyed; I still have my baton, it's down in the basement. (laughs) And after I came here, when they had the Carver Y, I had a group of young girls and I taught them to twirl, and when they went to middle school as they call it now, each one of 'em made the drill team. And that was quite an experience, too.

DANDRIDGE: So, during the war, what did your parents do?

BARBARA ROSS: Oh, during the war? Well, when I graduated from Garnet High School, I went on to West Virginia State, which is University now. And I finished there and that's when I was visiting my sister and brother-in-law at Lockbourne Air Base, because he was a Tuskegee airman also, my brother-in-law was, my sister's husband who's deceased. And—but while I was in college, of course, you know, there were very few men on campus, so I just tried to get out as soon as I could so I could get a job. And, while I was down there, though, my brother-in-law and some of his friends, at that time, they had transferred from the fighter plane to the bomber plane, the Billy Mitchell as they called—the B-25 as they called it. And he would fly down and buzz the campus, which was really against the law, but he would—because he attended school there, but I guess he wanted to let people know who it was coming to see 'em. Because sometimes I would see them buzzing, they would fly down so low that you could see who was in the plane. And they had to be careful of that because that was ooh, that was really a no no, but you know how men are.

DANDRIDGE: (overlapping) And that was using the United States Army Air Force plane—

BARBARA ROSS: Um-hm. Yes.

DANDRIDGE: So, what did your parents think about the war? Did they express any view or—

BARBARA ROSS: Oh, yes, they tried to encourage the youngsters to—You know it was an unfortunate thing cause I know my mother was on the bus one day because we had moved from Charleston to Institute so that the rest of my family—we could all finish school and it was closer. And my mother was riding the

bus one day to town and when she got on the bus and sat beside this woman, they(??) was very pleasant and everything, and the bus driver knew just about everybody, you know it was his route, and he was—he stopped the bus to wait for this black fellow.

DANDRIDGE: (interjecting) The bus driver's white?

BARBARA ROSS: The bus driver's white. And he saw him coming and he just stopped. And the woman beside my mother said, "Why is he stopping for that n---?" and my mother said, "And why not?" And she stood up and said, "Our boys are over there fighting protecting you" and the woman looked at mother and said, "I believe you are one of 'em." She said, "I certainly am." (laughs) And the woman moved and mother sat down with her seat and the bus driver waited for the fellow and he came. But a lot of the people like that, and, like I said, the bus driver—One of the bus driver's used to come up to our house all the time.

DANDRIDGE: How would you describe at the time of the war, or during the war, how would you describe race relations? (??), in your community.

BARBARA ROSS: (clears throat) Well, in my community it wasn't as bad as in some of the other areas. We knew we were segregated. We never saw any signs, we just knew we were not supposed to be at a certain—in a certain area; but we had a lot of own social—the sororities and the fraternities and our churches and our school system. Some of our teachers were very outstanding, in fact the lady that directed the band had spent time overseas; she had had her doctorate in music, and that was way back, and she—when it was time for us to be in a parade she would tell 'em up front, "You do not put us in the back or we will not parade." So they would not put us in the back. She had respect from a lot of the Caucasian people. In fact the man that was over the music in the school district would come and visit her often because they, he knew what she was doing; she had it together. And the rest of the community, when they did have something they always tried to find someone who would be outstanding and would represent the race in a good way instead of not just anybody just cause they wanted who was saying a whole lot of stuff. But they, (chuckles) they—and, you know we—there was a time, I'm sure way back, maybe before I was born, but during that period when I was coming up, it had improved quite a bit. And I know when my dad was working some of the lawyers would come by and want to take him to lunch. He'd say, "you know I can't go down there." And they would be so upset; they would forget, they forgot when they were in certain or I'll say in certain people's company of our race, they'd forget who they were because so many of 'em were as intelligent or more so than—you know.

DANDRIDGE: What memories do you have of Mr. Ross talking about the place where he grew up and race relations there?

BARBARA ROSS: His mother and father were very, very well respected people. It was a small community. In fact where he was born, was even smaller, but it's on the map, Flat Lick, Kentucky, that's where he was born and that's where his grandparents lived. And two of his cousins, who were only children, they were all—well, they were different ages, but each one was born at the grandmother's house in that special bed. Yes.

DANDRIDGE: (overlapping) You were born at home?

BARBARA ROSS: (overlapping) In the same—Yes he was born at home. In fact, my sisters were born at home; I was the only one born in a hospital and it was a black hospital when I was born. But Merrill was born in his grandparent's home. And his father was a brick mason that went to New York to work, he went all over. And many times the men that were called, oh there'd be about three or four of 'em, I believe, little more than that, when they'd see—at first they couldn't tell what his daddy was. Cause his mother was Indian, she was the full bloodied Indian, that was where he gets that from. And his father would be with these fellows and—of course he was tall and been out in the sun and had these high cheekbones and was strong, he could handle anything, and they would say, We can take you, but we can't take him. And they said, Well, if you can't take him, you can't take us; we can't go with you. So they'd end up taking Poppa Ross. And like I said, he—for a long time they didn't have a telephone because they moved to Pineville, Kentucky, which was a little larger community, city, and they got a telephone, I think, when Merrill went to—Was it when you went to college or went to war? Well, anyway, he said, "If they want me, they come to the hose and see me." And, sure enough, people would come to the house to engage him to put up a brick home or to whatever, but he always had employment, always. And everybody knew him. And, like I said, they were very well respected. His mother was a Sunday School superintendent for years and his father—

DANDRIDGE: (interjecting) What denomination?

BARBARA ROSS: Baptist—she was Baptist and he was Methodist, but they didn't meet every Sunday, so when the Sundays she met at her church, Poppa would be at the Baptist; when the Baptist church didn't meet, she would be at the Methodist church with Poppa. And then we would also, when our children were born and we'd go and visit them, they would always wait for us to come to Flat Lick to have service. And, so when the Rosses came, the service would start. And we went to see that little church not too long ago and it is just beautiful. They kept it up, kept it in condition—it looked like a little story book place. But—Merrill he did run into more things than I did growing up because he used to take up tickets at the theatre and, of course, he had to go up the back way, that's where the blacks had to go, the back way, they went in the back way, and he'd take tickets up at the black side. Then there was a white girl who took it up for the other side. And, you know, young people don't—a lot of 'em don't think about things; she and Merrill became very good friends and sometimes they'd just walk home together. But one boy told him, one boy told him that he just wanted to warn him that there was some fellows getting together and they were going to beat Merrill up. And Merrill just, you know, and of course after that Merrill just tried to stay away from—he said, "I can take 'em one at a time, but not all of em beating on me." But he had experiences like that, oh-huh, yeah.

DANDRIDGE: In terms of your life after the war—what was my question?

BARBARA ROSS: I wanted to tell you something else about him.

DANDRIDGE: Oh, go right ahead.

BARBARA ROSS: When he would, he and a group of his friends cleared out an area for them to go swimming, and of course it was a different area than where the whites were, naturally. And they would go swimming. One time they went swimming and this man came out with his rifle and started shooting and they were able to leave, to get away. And I don't know what happened after that, Merrill told me, but I didn't remember too much—He didn't hurt anybody, but—Then it got so that they would all just kind of swimming together, you know. I don't think he could do too much about that, cause if he'd start shooting then he'd be shooting some of his own. But they had experiences, you know, where they just—

DANDRIDGE: What was life like after the war, for both you and Mr. Ross?

BARBARA ROSS: Okay. After the war, it was—Things started opening up, it was a lot different.

DANDRIDGE: What do you mean opened up?

BARBARA ROSS: (Overlapping) Well, opened up, like you could go and eat—Well, now, this was in the northern states, cause when we first got married and you couldn't do that here—When we first got married, we were in Minnesota, because he was going to school for the summer, and we could go anyplace and eat; we could go to the show and sit anyplace; we could go to any nightclub that we wanted to go to and we would see mixed couples and, of course, I hadn't see that too much, I knew it happened but—Billie Holliday was appearing at one of the clubs and we went to see her and I looked over and saw this black princess, she was the prettiest girl, had the prettiest skin I'd ever seen, the color of your shirt, and this white fellow was with her and he was about to eat her up. (laughs) And, you know, I couldn't listen to Billie Holliday for watching them because it was—to me it was kinda funny, you know, it was interesting. We had—

DANDRIDGE: (interjecting) Was that your first experience of having that kind of openness in public accommodations?

BARBARA ROSS: Yes and no.

DANDRIDGE: Okay.

BARBARA ROSS: Because, um—Well, I guess it, I'd say it was my first. I'm just trying to think—Like I said, my area, everything—we didn't pay much attention to the other race until we say 'em ____ (??) someplace. There were so many things that we had of our own and that was—And in a way that was a good thing. But when we did go to Minnesota, it was very nice; and we went there two summers and we enjoyed it very much. I had been to Cleveland before as a youngster and it was the same thing, in Cleveland, Ohio it wasn't—you could go anyplace.

DANDRIDGE: What about when you came to Kansas? What made you come to Kansas?

BARBARA ROSS: Well, like I said, I was looking for a job and I was sent some papers to fill out and everything in case the superintendent accepted me, and he did.

DANDRIDGE: And that was—

BARBARA ROSS: McFarland.

DANDRIDGE: That was superintendent of Topeka Public Schools?

BARBARA ROSS: Yes, Topeka Public Schools. And when I came here, it was a lot like my home town, a little different—it wasn't quite as open but it was a lot alike. And, of course, I started at Washington School. But when I was growing up, I lived in a mixed neighborhood; and I lived right beside a white school and the school across the street was white, but we had to walk several blocks to get to our school. And we just thought that was supposed to be, it wasn't—And then when they integrated, though—this is the

thing, when they integrated, they just opened up everything right away. There was no march, no sit-ins, no nothing—

DANDRIDGE: You mean here or—

BARBARA ROSS: No, in Charleston. And here wasn't like those other places either, like Arkansas or Virginia. Now Virginia was right next door to us. But West Virginia—I had to tell people, I'm from West Virginia, not Virginia. West Virginia was not a slave state, that's why they separated.

DANDRIDGE: And when you were talking about—What was Kansas like when you came here, in terms of public accommodations and that sort of thing?

BARBARA ROSS: About the same, like I said. We couldn't go, you know, we had to sit in the—called it the crow's nest and at the Jayhawk and the Grand—

DANDRIDGE: What was your relationship with McFarland? Did you ever see him, talk to him, have a meeting with him, or anything of that sort?

BARBARA ROSS: When I was interviewed. (clears throat) And that was the only time that I—well, I would see him when we would have our meetings and he would come to speak like that, but on a one-to-one basis that was the only time I saw him. McFarland was a very smart man, but McFarland was for McFarland and I think a lot of people knew that. And he had a brilliant mind, he could name all of the teachers that were, had been hired for this particular year, I think there were ninety-something; and he could call their names, tell what school they attended before they got there, and where they would be teaching after they got there, without any paper or anything.

DANDRIDGE: How did you get the assignment to Washington?

BARBARA ROSS: It happened to be an opening, that's why. And it was a second grade. Then after Merrill and I married, there was a shortage, because I couldn't teach and he didn't want me to. We wanted a family and, since the family hadn't started and there was a shortage they asked me to come back to Washington and that's when I had you in the second—I had second and third grade then.

DANDRIDGE: So do you remember at anything, and this is just not anything ____ (??), when they did allow women teachers to marry in the public schools, by the time you came here that was allowed, right?

BARBARA ROSS: Four years after I was here.

DANDRIDGE: Oh, so it was after—

BARBARA ROSS: Right, uh-huh. Because that's when Geraldine Guillam(??), Ethel Barber, somebody else, and I we all married about the same time—oh, Dorothy Bradshell(??). Because they changed that law, I think it must have been in '49 or '50, it was right there, because we married in '51 and—

DANDRIDGE: So that was a recent, very recent?

BARBARA ROSS: Um-hm, and then after that I could not be married and—while he was a principal. I would—he would have had to go back as a teacher and I would teach, that’s how they would hire me. That’s why J.B. went back as a teacher, so Flossie could teach.

DANDRIDGE: But when I was at Washington School, Mr. Ross was there and you were there.

BARBARA ROSS: Right and that was only because there was a shortage. That was just something special that I feel—I wasn’t permanent. I was temporary.

DANDRIDGE: Okay, but he was principal—

BARBARA ROSS: Oh he was principal because he’d come by to see if I was sitting down or standing.

DANDRIDGE: Because you were—

BARBARA ROSS: I wasn’t showing then.

DANDRIDGE: You were pregnant.

BARBARA ROSS: But I was pregnant because I was about to lose Karen and the doctor told me to go home, prop your feet up. And that’s when I’d have the morning sickness, in the evening; thank goodness I didn’t have it in the morning, I probably wouldn’t have been able to go to school. (laughs) But, I was about six weeks pregnant.

DANDRIDGE: And, so, during all this time of—In your view, when you look back on it, what impact do you think World War II has had on your life and Mr. Ross’s life? I mean what kind of things do you relate(??) World War II to your lives or would you?

BARBARA ROSS: Yes, because that’s when they—and we’re talking about opening up things, that’s when they integrated right after that. Of course Truman did it, but the armed forces became integrated and there were other things that happened as far as integration was concerned.

DANDRIDGE: Were you surprised that this occurred?

BARBARA ROSS: No, I really wasn’t. It was a good thing; I said, it was a good thing, in one way. We lost a lot of things, though, but it was good in another way because you got to, you had the opportunity to meet other people. You know, so many people—before I went back to teach kindergarten, I was working at Shawnee Federal Savings and Loan and I had—

Tape 1, side 1 ends; side 2 begins.

BARBARA ROSS: --Karen and Brian were born, but I went back (clears throat)—I had to go back to school to be recertified because I had stayed home so long and that’s when I went back to Shawnee Federal.

DANDRIDGE: Going back to World War II, some people say that World War II raised the expectations of African Americans and one was raising for—increase in opportunities. Would you agree with that or not? And, if so, why? Or, if not, why?

BARBARA ROSS: Well—

DANDRIDGE: In just your own life experiences, based on your own life.

BARBARA ROSS: Um—I wouldn't say that it did everything. There were opportunities for us after the war that came up and some of the things that happened, like the Tuskegee Airmen and the recognition that they had with the people who really knew what they did—But I wouldn't say World War II was responsible because there were so many things that needed to be changed, even after the war was over. And I know Merrill had some experiences here, in his teaching and being a principal that people felt—In some of his meetings that he would go to, people felt that people on the east side weren't interested in their children and he—you know, as you stand up as one or the whole—he stood up at that meeting, and told me what he told them, and he said, “Barbara,” he said, “I told ‘em, ‘I know better than that because I was over there and taught them and those parents want the same thing that yours on the west side want. Some of ‘em just don't have the money’.” And the schools didn't—they had schools whose parents, both parents were working and had good jobs or maybe one parent was working and had a good job, and if the school needed something, those parents got together and got it for them; a type of machinery or material or books or program or whatever. And he was very, he always, he was very outspoken about that. Every time he'd go to a meeting. And then of course he also was on the book committee, because there for a while people thought that—especially while we were here, now I don't know what happened years back, but years back I do know that the black children went to the white schools, but there were not black teachers, no black teachers. And that's why they built the four black schools.

DANDRIDGE: In talking about your process of this—Have you talked in other interviews about your first teaching experience in non-black schools? Have you talked about that before?

BARBARA ROSS: I think I have because somebody was asking me and I told ‘em, I said, “Well, I had no problem at all.” And they couldn't understand that going into—living where I had lived and attending a black school all my life, even college, the college was black, we had a few Caucasian instructors and I had one of them, but we didn't—I think it was the way I was brought up. Like I said I lived in a mixed neighborhood and my father's job, the position that he had, I was thrown into white situations many times and so it wasn't any big or uncomfortable or what—thing for me. I was just used to that.

DANDRIDGE: What about Mr. Ross's position as principal or leader of a non-black school? What kind of experiences do you recall with that?

BARBARA ROSS: Okay. When he went, Merrill was—Merrill was a very conscientious person. He wanted to do the very best, whatever he was in, and he did. He went to West Avondale, which was an all-white with all-white teachers and pupils, I don't think he had any black children until he was there two or three years or something like that, maybe a little longer. But he—I know he wanted to—he was trying to be very careful, in many ways, and he was and he never called any of his teacher by the first name, they were always Miss or Mister, Missus or Miss or Mister and the Mister one's told him, said, Don't call us that, call us by our first name, which he did because he became close to them and one or two of them he did, later on, but on a whole he would call them—And the one thing, one of ‘em came to me one time and said that she was teaching at the school where I was teaching after Merrill and I had been married and—well it was right up here—and she said, “I'll say this about your husband, he was always a perfect gentleman.” He never got familiar, you know, some of ‘em forget and they get familiar and they

get kinda—but she said, “He never was that way,” and said, “He never did discuss other teachers with other teachers.”

DANDRIDGE: In the stories that some people say that when Mr. Ross and others entered the non-black schools that sometimes the school board would call up parents of the white students to see if they would accept the black teachers and also ____ (??). Is that true?

BARBARA ROSS: The only thing that happened with Merrill was when he first went out there and he got a lot of Forbes, that was the military and they were still in, still active. The commanding officer out there called Merrill and told him if he had any trouble with any of those parents or children, to let him know. Now Merrill he came and told me that, said the officer called and told him said he was supporting him because Merrill had a lot of those military children and, see, some of them—

DANDRIDGE: (interjecting) Did they know Mr. Ross was a veteran and had been in the Army Air Corps?

DANDRIDGE: Oh, I’m sure that, I’m sure they had, but the commanding officer sure called him up and told him. He called him at school and told him that if he had—you know. They probably—some of them didn’t care whether he’d been in the service or not. And then some of them—Then a lot of the board members at times, which I didn’t think—well not just the board members, but the board, if there was something that had to be out into the community they’d say, Don’t send Merrill or Owen(??) or Forrest because they don’t represent the race that well, as far as their complexion.

DANDRIDGE: Okay. I want to have—

BARBARA ROSS: Now that’s the only thing that—

DANDRIDGE: Right, uh-huh.

BARBARA ROSS: But this other didn’t—

DANDRIDGE: I’m going to have Carol Burns, who is a PhD student in Film Studies and is working with us on this project—did you want to begin to ask some of the questions you had formulated?

CAROL BURNS: I had a few questions, let me see if I can—not to double up on some of these things. I had read an article called “Walking the Walk” that Barbara Hollingsworth had written here in the *Capitol-Journal*, and you were talking about, this was your quote Barbara, about “We were taught that everybody was an equal. Nothing had to do with the color of a person’s skin. It was one’s character, and the parents stressed that,” our parents stressed that.”

BARBARA ROSS: Yes, my parents. And Merrill’s too.

BURNS: (overlapping) Your parents and Merrill’s parents. So, with this generational difference, I was talking with Deborah on the way over here and I was wondering and I wrote this down, what has changed in terms of the character of the black community since integration began, racial integration began, regarding that type of upcoming or—What would you call that?

DANDRIDGE: Values that you—

BURNS: Yeah, values system. What do you see has—

BARBARA ROSS: Well, I can't say, I can't speak for all of them because we always hear bad things on the news about the children and things are different now, and they are because they—Now there—and I hate to say this but there are some that, children are having children, more or less, and they don't stress the things like when Deborah's parents—I taught Deborah and they stressed things, there were certain morals and things that were, that you had to go by. And not that they weren't, not that they couldn't have fun, but there's a place and a time for everything and I think now they're forgetting that because they are looking at—Well, there's so much television with so much going on and you do what you want to do as long as you have the money. And they are admiring the movie stars who are living any kind of way and having their families the way they want to have 'em and I think many of our young people are doing the same thing and it's sad.

BURNS: So it's not necessarily a racial thing but a social—

BARBARA ROSS: Right.

BURNS: (continuing) —across the board, whether they be Indian or black or white—

BARBARA ROSS: Right, right.

BURNS: Okay, um, also in that same line of thinking—Barbara also said, and I'll quote her, she said, "What we didn't realize was knocking down the barriers of Jim Crow, it broke up our communities, not just the black or the white, so it's just—there's nothing that is—"

BARBARA ROSS: Yes, they don't have that community togetherness as they used to have because of integration. And, in fact, there are a lot of other things that have happened—We're blending in with, and there's nothing wrong with understanding each race, I think when you know a person and we all come together as one, that's wonderful, but sometimes we just—well, we just lost some of those, some of those characteristics that were important. You know. I believe, and this is what has happened, I think as long as a woman is doing a man's job—I'm getting on women's lib right now—she should be paid what he's getting, but I still think that man needs to open the door for her and help her in a lot of other ways, like a man should. Just because you can do what a man can doesn't mean that you have given up your feminine ways and you're trying to be a man, it doesn't mean that at all, so I did want to get that over because I think sometimes they get the mistaken idea that, Well he can't do that, I can do that better. Well, yes, you can probably on your job but—but I still think they need to—because sometimes a lot of our men are so lazy they don't want to do it because they know that the girls can do it for them, or the women. You keep doing something for somebody you—Cause I had one or two say to me, Mother your Daddy—Daddy's spoiling you. I said, "He's supposed to." (laughs)

BURNS: That was going to be my next comment.

BARBARA ROSS: Was it?

BURNS: It seems like you and Merrill have maintained a solid community, or sense or integrity or something that has been carried over into the larger Topeka area. I've been reading some really good things about you.

BARBARA ROSS: Well thank you very much. I don't know. One person approached me and said, "Do you feel that you are inferior"—no, I don't know whether it was inferior but it was something like that—"towards Merrill?" I said, "Why would I feel that way?" I said, "He's my husband, he is supposed—I'm supposed to be behind him, but I'm not competing with him at all." I mean, he encouraged me to go back to work, I kept saying, "Merrill I need to go back to work with these children are going to college," we don't have enough money just for him to send em. I said, "I need to go back to work," and that's why I did. And he encouraged and when he—when I would be up at this school and he had retired, he would come up there and help me with my things that I had to do; even when he hadn't retired, he would still come after hours and help me do things. So—I depended on him and he depended on me.

BURNS: That's how you've made it sixty years.

BARBARA ROSS: Yes. (laughs) Honey are you cold? Are you chilly?

DANDRIDGE: Are you a little chilly? Cause he's sitting right next to the—

BARBARA ROSS: Yeah. Let me—

BURNS: I like your Obama shirt.

BARBARA ROSS: Thank you, Brian got that.

BURNS: Did you get your shirt when you met the President?

BARBARA ROSS: Oh, he got it after that. I tell you what—

Pause in recording.

BARBARA ROSS: Washington, DC when he went to the inauguration. Brian took him and it was—of course it was too cold for me to go. But Brian had him all wrapped up and I think it would be nice for Brian to tell what happened because I wasn't with them, if that's all right.

DANDRIDGE: Yes ma'am, uh-huh. When you get through with that—

Pause in recording.

BURNS: I'm going to put this microphone—I'm going to ask you a little bit about when you grew up.

ROSS: When I grew up?

BURNS: Yeah. What do you remember? What's your favorite memory when you were a child? Or how did you get into flying? That's something.

DANDRIDGE: Ask him about Flat Lick.

ROSS: Flat Lick? My grandparents, I spent—(clears throat)

BURNS: Have a sip of water.

BRIAN ROSS: You all right dad?

ROSS: Yes, son.

BURNS: Your grandparents.

ROSS: My grandparents? Oh, that I loved dearly? I called Maw-maw and Papa. I just loved to go and spend time with them.

BURNS: Was your grandma—she make you some special food?

ROSS: Every opportunity. She was a—And she loved children and I guess I loved the fact that she loved children because she loved everyone that came to her home to, you know, associate with me. And, of course my grandfather was crippled because of—I guess you might say age(??) has a thing about crippling certain people and then Papa was one of those. But I loved the two of them dearly.

BRIAN ROSS: Didn't Clay Patton—Didn't your grandfather chase you up a tree?

ROSS: No, I(??) can't find myself—

BRIAN ROSS: You'd done something wrong and he chased you up a tree and you just stayed there, and he stayed under the tree and tried it wait it out with you, to see who was going to give. (ROSS laughs) You did something you shouldn't have been doing.

DANDRIDGE: Brian since you're here—They honored the Tuskegee Airman at the inauguration of President Obama. Do you want to describe what that experience was like, Brian?

BRIAN ROSS: It was—

DANDRIDGE: And how you got invited? Tell the whole details—

BRIAN ROSS: Well, as far as how we got invited, you know dad being one of the Tuskegee Airmen, one of the local chapters, I believe, here in Kansas City had called me and I don't know if he called mom at first and then she gave them my number and—He contacted me and he discussed, basically, what was to take, you know, what was going to take place and what it was about.

DANDRIDGE: And what was it about?

BRIAN ROSS: It was about Obama wanted to honor the Tuskegee Airmen that—I guess he felt that over the years, maybe, that they had been overlooked as far as their contribution, with respect to—you know, the United States military, how they protect our country. As far as the participants that were involved in every World War, per say, that we've been involved in, and he wanted to recognize them before it was too late, because a lot of them had died. However it was, there were quite a few that were still living. So, anyway, I spoke with this gentleman and he gave me all the information I needed and told me about the plans for the program, the criteria, where it was going to be staged initially, and we actually, once the inauguration, the day of the inauguration—Of course, prior to that, we received all the information we needed as far as where we were going to be, which was Andrews Air Force Base.

And they had a breakfast for all the Tuskegee Airmen and, from that point, all the airmen took buses to the grounds, the Capital grounds, as far as where the inauguration was going to take place and they had a section that they had roped off strictly for the Tuskegee Airmen, so it was—They got the red carpet treatment as far as participating and being present, having, you know, a place to sit. It was out on the yard, so it was—there were chairs that were set up on a particular section. And it was a huge turnout and it was almost like being a professional athlete or rock star type treatment where we got escorted in and there were people on either side, as far as their own limitations where they could sit and what have you, but they were, I believe, alerted to the fact that the Tuskegee Airmen were arriving. And as they arrived it was like, it was just like a standing ovation for all of the men who were escorted in, whether they were walking or whether they were coming in in wheelchairs or what have you. And actually dad and I walked in; at that time he was able to walk in. And it was very cold that day so I made sure he had the proper attire on so he wouldn't freeze to death, because there were a lot of elderly men out there so that was very important, it was a real cold day. But I had his insulated clothing on and we sat up there and he knew what was going on and he just kept telling me, he said, "This is amazing that I have lived to witness the inauguration of an African American president." And that was one of the things that you continued to hear from most of the Airmen, you know, that this day had arrived (chuckles) because it's something that they kept saying that they would have never have imagined this to happen.

DANDRIDGE: Did your dad—was he able to meet any friends that he had known while he was in—

BRIAN ROSS: Oh yes, a very dear friend of the family, Clarence Jamison, who is like my uncle, he is from Shaker Heights, Ohio and he was there with his son Clifford. And Uncle Jamie was one of the first Tuskegee Airmen and his picture, actually, is in the Smithsonian Institute up in Washington where I've been able to walk through there, "Hey there's my uncle up there on the wall."

BARBARA ROSS: Still living.

BRIAN ROSS: Still living and—

BARBARA ROSS: (interjecting) Ninety-something(??).

BRIAN ROSS: And interestingly enough, I have to give credit to a good friend of dad's who, really—he was in the same class with dad but he didn't actually, he didn't stay long enough to pass the class. It wasn't that he didn't have the acumen to do so, but he returned to Washington to take care of his mother. But this gentleman's name was William Fauntroy, and he is older brother of the former Congressman and former pastor Walter Fauntroy up in Washington, DC. And he had always—being near, living in Washington, DC there are a lot of times that he had access to certain events that took place that were relative to the Tuskegee Airmen and he would always contact dad and let him know, you know, keep him up to date, current on what was going on. So he was there at the breakfast as well. Course, I mean for me it's, in retrospect now, it's amazing to me because when I was young I didn't pay much attention to the significance to what he was doing when I was a child. Oh okay dad, you're a Tuskegee Airman, great; when are you going to take me to McDonald's? You know, you have that kind of attitude when you're really young. But as time progressed I was like, This is really something, you know, This is a big deal. And when other people ask me, Your dad was a Tuskegee Airman, that's huge. Not only that, when I can tell them—Cause some of 'em don't even know one but I actually had three in my family, if you will, cause Uncle Jamie was considered part of the family and Uncle Hooks who is, he had a chapter named after him in Denver, Hooks Jones, and he was one as well, so—That in itself was a blessing and it's just amazing to me to this day. I've never been one to want to brag about my dad or my mom for

their accomplishments, but as I've gotten older sometimes I find myself doing that and still trying to remain humble in doing it. But—Yeah, so, but to be there and to be allowed to watch the inauguration and the—of our first African American president and dad having the opportunity to be there and all the Tuskegee Airmen, it was just—it was indescribable. It was a feeling, something that I will never forget, and it was just—you know, it was just a part of history and a very important part of history as far as what they contributed to the United States military force.

DANDRIDGE: Did you want to continue your— Carol, did you have some more questions to ask?

BURNS: A lot of mine have been answered in passing, so—Is there anything that we didn't cover that you're interested in talking about?

ROSS: (faint, in background) Did you talk about the Topeka High Ramblers?

BARBARA ROSS: (laughs) No.

BURNS(?): Oh the Ramblers.(??)

BRIAN ROSS: Don't let me get going on that.

DANDRIDGE: Would you, would someone here, who is Mrs. Ross, speak about the Ramblers, please? Who were they?

BARBARA ROSS: The Ramblers were, was—They were the basketball team of Topeka High, the separate that several years—Of course they—I have a pamphlet right in there that I can share with you and—But anyway, Merrill was the last one that was the coach. It was a basketball team. And Jack Alexander and Richard Ridley, and Donald Redman, they were on the team, I think they were one the last team when—Richard wasn't but Jack was cause he's a little younger, he was a little younger than that. But they had that team because they didn't integrate the basketball at Topeka High School so they had several coaches. During the war they would kind of rotate cause Jim Parks was an assistant coach there at one time and then, of course, after the war when Merrill came here he was coach. And, so they—

DANDRIDGE: So did Mr. Ross teach at Topeka High while he was a coach? What was he doing while he— what was his capacity?

BARBARA ROSS: His capacity was elementary—Washington, Buchanan, McKinley, and Monroe. He taught at all four of those schools.

DANDRIDGE: But was he also serving as principal at the time?

BARBARA ROSS: No, no. He was—unh-uh, he was just a teacher, classroom teacher.

DANDRIDGE: So he taught at all the—

BARBARA ROSS: (continuing) Sixth—

DANDRIDGE: Sixth grade?

BRIAN ROSS: Was he the only one that taught at all four?

BARBARA ROSS: At all four of them, um-hm.

BURNS(?): Why did Merrill relocate, what were the circumstances of Merrill coming to Topeka?

BARBARA ROSS: Merrill was at school—Well his aunt thought the schools were very good out here, and so she wanted him to come and finish up at Pittsburg State Teachers College. She was living there at the time, Aunt Valeria(?). And—You probably heard of the name Caldwell, she was married to him. But it was Merrill's aunt that encouraged him to come here, to this section. He went to Kentucky State two years and then he finished up at Pittsburg State Teachers College and that's where he did his civilian pilot training, at Pittsburg.

BRIAN ROSS: (in background) As well as pledging Q(?) Psi at Kentucky State, the Psi Psi chapter.

BARBARA ROSS: He—(laughs)

DANDRIDGE: Mrs. Ross, will you please continue your story and let the Qs go? (chuckle)

BARBARA ROSS: You know he has to be a devil.

DANDRIDGE: I know, I know.

BARBARA ROSS: (continuing) Like father, like son.

DANDRIDGE: Yeah, I know, I know. (BARBARA ROSS laughs) Okay Omega Psi Phi is here in the house, we know that, but can we go on and talk?

BARBARA ROSS: Okay. But—So she encouraged him to come out there and, of course, when he came he taught at Fort Scott when he finished at Pittsburg. And then from Fort Scott he came here, but he was only here a few weeks, that's when they called him to the service. And then he came back here. He wrote and asked them if he still had a job when he got out of the service and they said yes.

DANDRIDGE: So it was from Fort Scott to war—or Fort Scott to Topeka then the war and then back to Topeka?

BARBARA ROSS: Um-hm.

DANDRIDGE: Okay.

BURNS: (in background) _____(?) of *Brown v. the Board*, it seems like, _____(?) at that time—

BARBARA ROSS: (overlapping) Yes. He—Well (chuckles) we were—how can I say this? When they were trying to integrate, they realized after the fact that they did have to integrate the teachers, they couldn't just leave them out in the boonies. And when they did that, Merrill had a meeting with one of the superintendents who was acting—he was superintendent at that time, and he told Merrill that he wanted him to go to Parkdale School as an assistant because he felt that the people weren't ready for a black principal over there. Now Parkdale was just a few blocks from Washington School, which was the

black, the white school was Parkdale. So when Merrill came home and told me that that's what the superintendent wanted him to do, he said, "I am leaving town, we are not going to stay because I am not going to be under a certain person that I can't believe in and we'll just—". Well, in the meantime we did go to Milwaukee. He had an interview there with the man and the man wanted to know who, cause(??) Merrill didn't know but Dr. Talman(??)—Giles Talman who was over the curriculum here at the time—he didn't know what Dr. Talman had written or anything. So this fellow who was interviewing him up there, he said, "Good gracious, you are a Jackie Robinson or something," and Merrill didn't know what he was talking about because he hadn't read the letter, he hadn't seen what Dr. Talman had written a beautiful, beautiful recommendation for him, if that's where Merrill wanted to go. But then we came back and the superintendent died, had a heart attack and died, and in the meantime the acting superintendent who knew Merrill very well and had been at East Topeka said, "Buddy, don't give up, there's something out there for you." And that's when they called him, that summer, and asked if he could come down and talk with them at the board. Merrill was out painting, he said, "Well I've got to change my clothes now, as soon as I—I'll come down." And, so, um that's when they sent him to West Avondale, they asked him if he'd like to go there and he said, "I'll certainly do my very best."

DANDRIDGE: But he wasn't going to be an assistant principal at Parkdale?

BARBARA ROSS: He was not going to. But that blew over when the—Witson(??) died.

DANDRIDGE: Did you want to ask any more questions?

BURNS: No.

DANDRIDGE: Okay. Let me just ask some ending questions and if you think of some other things you want to say, you know, you can stop me if you want. In your memory are there any things that Mr. Ross indicated throughout your experiences with him, that he enjoyed the most as a soldier? What things did he enjoy most as a soldier?

BARBARA ROSS: Getting up in the airplane and doing his acrobatics.

DANDRIDGE: Do you remember him talking about his process of being discharged?

BARBARA ROSS: No, because when he, when the war was over he stayed in for a few months and that's when he wrote his letter here and asked if he still had a job and they said yes. And, of course, his mother was worried sick because of him being a fighter pilot, a pilot. I don't think it would have bothered her if he had gone in and was accepted as a commercial pilot, that wouldn't have bothered her, but the fact that he was fighting and his life was in danger, you know. He got out because of that.

DANDRIDGE: But he had an honorable discharge?

BARBARA ROSS: He had an honorable discharge, oh yes.

BRIAN ROSS: I just remember him being a disciplinarian.

DANDRIDGE: And why do you say that, Brian? Is this something you're associating with his military experience?

BRIAN ROSS: Well, from all of the country stories from when he was a youngster and how he had evolved his household, yeah.

DANDRIDGE: So this was very much a part of him(??)?

Brian: Yes.

DANDRIDGE: How do you think Mr.—in your remembering, memories of your talking about the war, how did Mr. Ross his participation in the war?

BARBARA ROSS: Well, he wanted to be in the Air Force, he did not want to be a foot soldier. He started out as being in the artillery and he told me about some of the guns and things that they would shoot in practice and he was quite familiar with them, but that was not what he wanted, he wanted to be the Tuskegee Airman and he wanted to be a fighter pilot. So when he went to, like I had said earlier, when he went to Fort Bragg and came in contact with this young lieutenant who was over them, who was very understanding, he told Merrill to check around and see if any of the others wanted to be and he'd see what he could do. And that's when it started, they had to take a series of tests, quite a few physical, academic, and what have you—

DANDRIDGE: So he enjoyed and he wanted to participate in the war and _____(??)?

BARBARA ROSS: (overlapping) Yes, yes.

DANDRIDGE: Did you all join any veteran's organizations or engage in veteran's activities after the war?

BARBARA ROSS: Other than—he wanted to—He kept in touch with the Tuskegee Airmen, but he always wanted to go to their—they had conventions. He never was able to go because he had to start school that first week and they would not let him go. So one day, when they were meeting in Denver, they were having their convention in Deventer, and it was Merrill's class that was on the bulletin board out there for the convention, after we got there we saw that. They told him he could, he'd be docked, if he went he'd be docked. He said, "Well you just dock me, because I'm going and I never have had the opportunity to go." So he went to Denver, that was the first time he had the chance to see some of his— And he really saw some of his dear friends because one of them, at the time, that was in the service when he was a football player at Michigan and his name was Derricotte—

BRIAN ROSS: (interjecting) Gene Derricotte.

BARBARA ROSS: (continuing) Gene Derricotte, he was outstanding. Well, he ended up being a dental surgeon at the—

DANDRIDGE: Walter Reed?

BARBARA ROSS: No.

BRIAN ROSS: _____(??)?

BARBARA ROSS: No, at the—

BRIAN ROSS: It wasn't Walter Reed?

BARBARA ROSS: Sp—Colorado Springs.

BRIAN ROSS: Oh, I know what you're talking about, the Air Force Academy?

BARBARA ROSS: Yeah, he was at the Air Force Academy. That's where he was a dental surgeon there. And then he saw another friend who was, had gone into—he had his own undertaking business; his name was Lincoln Ragsdale. So he had a chance to see quite a few then, cause they were a little younger then. Then when we went to the one in Kansas City, he had retired then, I think, and we went to that one.

DANDRIDGE: So the Tuskegee Airmen have had this organization for a long time?

BARBARA ROSS: Oh yes. Um-hm.

DANDRIDGE: Is there anything else you would like to add about either your life experiences or military experiences? Or anything else you'd like?

BARBARA ROSS: Well, I'll tell you this, it's gone by so fast. And I a guess when you're having fun, things do go by fast, and it doesn't seem like that all of these things have happened and I've had a good life.

DANDRIDGE: We want to thank you both for your time and effort. We've taken a lot of your time, so we certainly do appreciate it, Mrs. Barbara Ross, Mr. Brian Ross, and most important of all, Mr. Merrill Ross. Thank you so much for your time.

BARBARA ROSS: You're welcome, it was our pleasure. I'm sorry I got choked up at the end.

DANDRIDGE: You made me get choked up.

BARBARA ROSS: But we—

Tape 1, side 2 ends.

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