

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

SUPPLEMENTAL INTERVIEWEE AGREEMENT

I, Rahman Saleem, hereby request
that Jackson State University place restrictions on the information
which I have given in connection with the Oral History Program
of the University, with respect to the:

_____ Tape of the interview
_____ Verbatim original typescript
_____ Final retyped and edited transcript
✓ _____ Other

Explanation and nature of restriction:

Do not use interviewee's given name
on transcribed process

Rahman Saleem
Interviewee (signature)

OH 81-70
Interview number

Date 4-1-82

ORAL HISTORY AGREEMENT
FARISH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT PROJECT

I agree that this magnetic tape recording of my voice made during an interview with Alfred Harrison / (interviewer) and a transcript made there-

from, may be catalogued and deposited in the Jackson State University library (and some designated place in the Farish Street Historical District) with the records of the Farish Street Historic District Humanities project. The tape recording and transcript may be made available for research use in the preparation of the final products of the NEH Humanities Project in 1983 and after 1983 for research by scholars. Any title or literary rights to this material are hereby relinquished to Jackson State University.

Rehman Saleem
Oral Author (interviewee) Signature

4-1-82
date

Oral Recorder (interviewer) Signature

date

OH 81.70
Tape number

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY
Jackson, Mississippi

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWER AGREEMENT

I, ALFRED TEEN HARRISON, in view
(Interviewer, please print)
of the historical and scholarly value of the information
contained in the interview with Rahman Saleem,
(interviewee, please print)
knowingly and voluntarily permit Jackson State University,
Jackson, MS the full use of this information, and hereby
grant and assign to Jackson State University, Jackson, MS
all rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this in-
formation, whether or not such rights are now known,
recognized or contemplated.

Rahman Saleem
Interviewer (signature).

OH 81. 70
Interview Number

4-1-82
Date

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Farish Street District

Jackson, Mississippi 39217

INTERVIEWEE: Rahman Saleem
INTERVIEWER: Alferdteen Harrison
SUBJ: Recollections of Smith Robertson School (Farish Street District)
DATE: April 1, 1982 (Date of Interview)
OH 81.70

This interview took place in Dr. Alferdteen Harrison's office at Jackson State University, Blackburn Language Arts Building, on April 1, 1982.

H: Today is April 1, 1982. This is Alferdteen Harrison. I'm in my office and I have with me Rahman Hassan Saleem. I understand that you grew up in the Farish Street Historic District right across the street from Smith Robertson School. So, Mr. Saleem, would you tell me about your very earliest recollections in the Smith Robertson community?

S: My first experience at Smith Robertson School was in the year of 1956. At that time I was five years old. During that time if you had a birthday coming in that year you could go on to school. ~~So, they let me start at the age of five.~~ During that first year at Smith Robertson School, I wasn't living exactly in that vicinity, but I was still going to that school. We had to walk, say for instance, six or seven blocks to school.

H: Where were you living then?

S: I was living on Lamar, ~~behind . . . at that time it was Jitney Fairway,~~ ^{what is now} but now it is Stop and Go. ~~So, It was about six or seven blocks or a little bit more.~~ My first experience at Smith Robertson School was sort of tragic and then it was sort of like a blessing. In that year I accumulated a sickness and I couldn't hold anything ~~too much~~ on my stomach. ~~That whole school term~~ ^{of the school term} I spent mostly on my sick bed. Because of that incident I had to do the grade over again. ~~The next year, which was very good I made up for that grade.~~ One of the things that I really enjoyed about the first grade at Smith Robertson was that the teachers were so involved with their students. ~~There was no such thing as you wasn't going to get it.~~ You had to get it or get the strap, board of whatever

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

S: involved with their students. ~~There was no such thing as you wasn't going to get it. You had to get it or get the strap, board or whatever they had. You were going to get your lesson. They didn't paly none of that.~~ My first teacher was Mrs. Cassel. I guess I am pronouncing her name right. She was a short lady kinda stout built and had a gold tooth in her mouth.

H: Right in front?

S: Right, I think it was the style at that time to wear gold in your mouth.

H: Gold crown or something?

S: ~~Right.~~ She was very strict. In the second grade, I know for sure that my next teacher. . . I'm just going to name the teacher then I will go back and give a briefing of some of the things and experiences that we went through. My second grade teacher was Mrs. Heudsbee. She was a good teacher. Then my third grade teacher was Mrs.

H: Do you know any of their first names?

S: No, ~~We~~ always just used their last names. My fourth grade teacher was Mrs. Harris. She was fasinating. ~~I have to stop here a minute and talk about Mrs. Harris. Really.~~ She didn't do that much teaching. What she did was every morning or everyday. . . then your whole class went all the way through. I think they still do that in elementary. Is that right?

H: Yes.

S: Where the kids go to the one room all day? ~~Well~~ the first beginning of the day we would always have a talent show. The kids would get up and put on a show, Sing or something like that. In the fifth grade ~~I had~~ Mr. Marshall ^{was my teacher} He later became principal of the school.

H: Back to Mrs. Harris. Why did you think that you had good experiences with her?

S: One reason is because I liked entertainment.

H: Oh, I see.

S: That's one of the things she made us do each and every morning, put on a talent show.

H: What are some of the things that you did?

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

S: A majority of the times that I got up, I mostly sang. I use to sing one of my old Boy Scout songs. It was very boring but I use to spice it up. It was a song called "I Found a Peanut." Have you ever heard of it?

H: "I Found a Peanut." What is it?

S: (Singing) I found a peanut, I found a peanut, found a peanut just now. I use to clown around with it because it is so boring. Then it goes on to say it was rotten, but I ate it anyway and I died and I went to heaven.

H: I have heard it.

S: Well, it's an old Boy Scout song we use to sing. I use to clown around with that. I use to sing some of the latest songs at that time. Like, it was very wild. The man started off hollering on the song, "Woa, Woa, Woa, Woa, I need your loving everyday." I use to sing that sometimes. There was another one I use to sing, "The Name Game." The Name Game, you know, Fannie, Fannie, Fannie, Mo-lannie. You know, everybody had their own thing to do. Some would dance.

H: How long did this talent show go on?

S: Until lunch time.

H: Every morning?

S: Every morning. You had to come in with something new and if you did something old you had to put a little more to it. I really enjoyed that.

H: So what would you do in the afternoon?

S: Okay, we'd have class, then. You know, she'd teach us math or ~~then~~ my fifth grade teacher, which was Mrs. White was first, ~~I had some~~ *I had some* bad experiences with ~~her~~ *Mrs. White, my fifth grade teacher.* I don't know if it was a rival or something. ~~See,~~ Mrs. Harris liked me very much. I was what you might say a bright student. I enjoyed learning and she knew that. She put me in what you might say the upper class or the upper notch students. When I was there, the teacher that was over the upper notch students, ~~she~~ immediately took a disliking to me, even the first day. I noticed that she looked at me very hard but I didn't mind. The first day that she gave us an assignment, all of my questions were right. She just didn't like the way my hand-

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

S: writing, ~~was~~ and she made me go stand out in the hall. That was a continuous process until she eventually discouraged me from even wanting to pick up a book. She went back to Mrs. Harris and said, "I told you he wasn't smart." I was beginning to get ridiculed by the other students. Everything I did was wrong in her eyesight. I couldn't do anything right. It came to a point where I began to shoot hooky because I didn't want to face all that ridicule. ~~But I loved school. I guess the students. . . then~~ I would always remember Mrs. Harris and I would just put on my own show when the students would go to the lunchroom, and maybe just one was in the room I would always put on my own show. ~~Like for instance, when they got through eating they would come back to the room. So,~~ I'd just be waiting until some of them came back from the lunchroom and I would entertain them.

H: Why didn't you eat?

S: ~~Well,~~ sometimes I didn't have lunch money. So, when I didn't have lunch money I just stayed in the calssroom, because I didn't want to be down there gazing in everybody's mouth while they were eating, ~~right?~~ So, I just ~~stayed in class.~~ So, when they came back I just entertained them the little bit that were in there. I enjoyed that. One day she came in and caught me and everybody singing songs and dancing. She made me go back in the hall again. Eventually she flunked me.

Now this is when Mr. Marshall came into the picture. Mr. Marshall, ~~I guess,~~ ^{he} seen something in me. He took a great liking to me. ~~Now this actually occured, what I am fixing to tell you right now.~~ I was in the fifth grade at that time, Mr. Marshall ^{seen} me ~~okay,~~ and I had flunked that year. They sent me over to Mrs. Goodman's class. ~~What it Miss Goodman's? I think it was Miss Goodman, or I can't think of the name right now. Miss Smith! Right!~~ They sent me over to Miss Smith's class and Miss ~~White~~ told her to flunk me too, but she didn't.

H: Now who was the teacher who flunked you?

~~S: Miss White.~~

~~H: Miss White?~~

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

S: Geneva White. Okay, ~~see~~ Miss Smith didn't want to do that so she gave me to Mr. Marshall. At that time he was a sixth grade teacher. ~~So~~ ~~what he did~~, he combined both classes together in one. Sixth and fifth grade together. ~~Now here I am sitting in a class with sixth grade and seventh grade. I mean fifth grade and sixth grade. Okay, I had to help~~ the sixth graders with their lesson. ~~You see~~, I made all A's. Mr. Marshall pumped me a lot because he knew that the lady had done me an injustice. He worked with me and I use to go to ~~this~~ house on the week-ends and wash his car. He had a very good liking for me. ~~Like I was saying~~, he combined both of those classes together just to show her that she had did me a great injustice. I passed over to the next grade, went over to the sixth grade and became a patrol boy. They had patrol boys then. I think they still do. They didn't have the police. I became a patrol boy and then I began having difficulties with the students that went there. I'm gonna make it short and brief.

H: Well this is fine, just go right ahead.

S: ~~Okay~~, I began to have trouble with the students it seems. I don't know what it was. ~~Just like I say~~ I always had a great love for school but it seems like I always had somebody trying to pull me back. Even my mother and my grandmother. I always wanted to excell. ~~Okay~~, when I became a patrol boy, now my grandmother, ~~not my mother, but my grandmother~~, I was living with her for awhile. ~~She had never done this before. She~~ had never told me that before I go to school to do chores. That was always after I got home. After I became a patrol boy and had to get up early and go to my post and everything, she started to give me chores to do and I couldn't do those chores and get to the post on time. ~~So~~ I had to give up the post. ~~Okay, and like I say, seems like it was always someone trying to pull me back at the times I was trying to excell.~~ I graduated from there in the sixth grade, The school year 1962-63. Yes, I graduated from Smith Robertson.

H: What was your graduation exercise like?

S: ~~Okay~~, ~~as~~ the graduation exercise the students mostly got up and made a

DRAFT

-6-

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

- S: speech. I made a speech also.
- H: Everyone in the class made a speech?
- S: No, just the outstanding ones. The ones that you might say were smart. They made a speech and it just so happened that we had it out on the yard. That's where most of it would be.
- H: Out where?
- S: Out on the yard. On the front yard. They'd put a lot of chairs out there. ~~See you know~~ They didn't have an auditorium. Everytime they had a meeting it would always be in the lunchroom. They put charis out front and put lights up that night we graduated.
- H: Were the graduation exercises ususally at night?
- S: ~~Well, it~~ it was then. I don't know later on how it was but mine was at night. We had a little victory party afterwards. We went to Jacks' Hamburgers.
- H: Jacks' Hamburgers?
- S: Jacks' Hamburgers.
- H: Was that the same Jacks' chain that we have now?
- S: Right.
- H: Where was it located?
- S: It use to be one right here at Ellis and Lynch Street. We went to that one. I went there with my godmother. She had a lot of faith in me also.
- H: Who was that?
- S: Miss Collins, Miss Harvey.
- H: Clarie?
- S: Yes. Right, she's my godmother. She had a lot of faith in me. Everybody was trying to put me down when I was going through that class but she ~~said~~ *no. did not.*
- H: How did that relationship develop between you and *Miss Collins?*
- S: ~~Well,~~ how she became my godmother?
- H: Yes.
- S: ~~Well,~~ in a sense you might say I adopted her as my godmother. We use to go to the same church.
- H: Which church?

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

S: The Methodist Church, right there on Farish Street.

H: Central Methodist Church?

S: ~~Right.~~ I had just joined the church and her son and I were in the same room. We were good friends. I had never met his mother. In other words, she had adopted him.

H: Who is her son?

S: ~~Ted. I forget his last name. . . Ted White, I believe that was his last name. She adopted him and he was in the same class that I was. . . Now~~ *Since I was*
~~that I'm living~~ in the neighborhood, I started attending church there.

H: You lived across from Smith Robertson? Do you know what year you lived there?

S: Let's see, I think I can recollect.

H: You were still going to grade school there?

S: Right. The year I lived over there I was in the fifth and sixth grade. ~~So,~~ that had to be somewhere around 1961. That's when I met Ted. That's when I met Miss Harvey. She would take me everywhere she'd go. She would take me to Louisiana or the Coast. ~~Like I said,~~ she had a lot of faith in me and still does.

H: How did you start going to Central Church? ~~How did that happen?~~

S: Through a friend of mine named Jack Cheater and his grandmother. She still goes there today. She lived in that little green house on that little gravel road on the side of the church. If you look up that alley you'll see a green house sititng right up front, she lives right there. Her name is Miss Lula Johnson, Lula Cheater. ~~She had a grandson named Jack Cheater.~~
~~He and I were very good friends.~~ I didn't go to church that much and I use to come down to his house on Sunday's. She would tell me that he had gone to Sunday School or gone to Church so I'd go back home. ~~So,~~ one day I went down there and she told me that Jack wasn't there that he'd gone to Sunday School. When I came back that evening, after he came back from Church, Jack said, "Man my mama said you can't come around here and play no more." I said, "why not?" Jack said, "she said you got to start going to church." I said, "well okay, I can go for that. I can enjoy

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

- S: ^{the} that." I went and put on ~~my~~ only suit I had. At that time I had a little old blue suit. ~~Then~~ I started going to church and that's how I met Miss Harvey.
- H: What kind of recreational activities did you have when you were living down there?
- S: You talking about in school or what?
- H: ~~Well~~ Let's start with the school.
- S: Some of the activities that they did there, they called it May Day. ~~You know what I'm talking about.~~ Well on May Day, they would wrap a flag pole. They would have the square dancing and some of the music I will never forget that music they use to have. Some of the music was, put your little foot, put your little foot, put your little foot, right there.
- H: Where would you have the flag pole?
- S: ~~Oh this would be out~~ on the front yard.
- H: Where would the flag pole be located?
- S: Most of the time it would be located right out in the center of the yard. Then they would have a group or circle of students dancing. Every class had to do some kind of dance. ~~Okay,~~ they'd have a calss over here doing a dance, a class over there and a class over here. We had ~~another~~ activities also.
- H: Just before you go on, this may pole, was it a pole that was always there or was it a pole that was put ~~there?~~
- S: ~~Right,~~ they had it down in the basement and they would bring it out of the basement on May Day. Have you seen the basement? ~~Okay, they have a basement.~~
- H: Down where the boiler room is?
- S: Right, but you have to go a little further than that. They kept all of that down there and they would bring it out every May Day. ~~It is a big~~ old long. . . ~~they~~ they would place a bunch of 2x4's, making a circle and they'd put beams upon it so it would stand up and they would paint it white and put ribbons around it and they would do a dance around it with the ribbons.

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

- H: So, you use to be in the group marching around the pole?
- S: No, I never did get that close to it. I mostly did the square dance where they bowed to their partner, and _____ to their partners. I never got a chance to get to the pole. Then they had the May Day queen and king. I still remember who it was ~~stood~~ to this day.
- H: Who?
- S: It was Roderick Glover and Elizabeth White. They were the May Day Queen and King at that time.
- H: They would be the May Day Queen for that day or the whole year?
- S: Just that day I guess, I don't know.
- H: How did they select them?
- S: ~~How did they select the?~~ I know, we didn't have any votes, or did we?
- H: *was it for* best dress or the highest academic average. . .
- S: No, they didn't have all that. They just had the May Day King and Queen. They might have voted, but I don't remember how they got to be it. ~~I am just not sure,~~ Another activity they would have was PTA meeting. They had to have that.
- H: Did your parents attend the P.T.A. Meetings?
- S: Not regularly. ~~See~~ my mother was the only parent and she worked most of the time and she would be tired when she got home. She did go when she could if she wasn't too tired.
- H: Where does she work?
- S: She is a cook. She has been a cook at one school for twenty-eight years now.
- H: What school is that?
- S: Chastain Junior High School. She moved from there once because the Board moved her. ~~She is still a cook.~~ She is still working for the same Board. She worked twenty-eight years at Chastain Junior High and moved right across the street to another school in the same vicinity. I told her she should apply to be the manager or owner or something for all those years.

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

- H: A manager at least. ~~Well~~, you were telling me about all the activities of May Day. You had dancing, different kind of dancing, what else?
- S: All I can remember is dancing.
- H: Did you have any sack races or anything like that?
- S: No, it wasn't ~~nothing~~ ^{any} like that. All you were doing is mostly dancing.
- H: Each class did a different dance?
- S: Yes. One dude dropped dead from the dancing.
- H: Really!
- S: You know, the sun was so hot. They say that the sun was so hot that year that you couldn't even look up at the sun.
- H: In May?
- S: Right ^{yes}, It was just that hot. People said you had to wear shades and even with shades on you didn't look up at the sun because you would go blind.
- H: Right.
- S: ~~Yes~~. This dude died from a sun stroke. He was out there dancing. I forget his name, but he fell out.
- H: So, you would go to school on this day in May and this would be the only thing you did?
- S: Yes. All that day because each class had to present something. That is mostly all we did that day, was dance. They had balloons, a lot of balloons and different arts and crafts. The school was decorated and stuff like that. It was a galor event. Your parents could come and watch.
- H: Would you have students from other schools there?
- S: No, just our school.
- H: Just your school and your parents? Now on the inside in Smith Robertson there are some paintings and murals on the wall, do you know how they got there?
- S: The paintings?
- H: Yes.
- S: I never did know, but I knew they were there. I know the ones you are

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

S: talking about. Mr. Randolph, our principal. . .do you have enough time?

H: Yes.

S: One time, I think it was the first time I fell in love, I guess you might call it puppy love or whatever. There was this girl I was mad about, crazy about. I would give her my lunch money. All I could think about was her. She was the main thing on my mind. ~~I use to sacrifice~~ She lived on the other side of town across the track. You didn't go over there in that territory period. All the bullies over there would get you. I even sacrificed death to go and see her. I even got whipped everyday.

H: Who is this girl?

S: Her name was Sandra Banks. ~~I'll never forget it.~~ One time Mr. Randolph . . . ~~he~~ did a very good thing and I'll never forget that. ~~Okay, here I~~ ^{was} ~~am~~ love sick and she ^{was} ~~is~~ steadily ignoring me. One day we were getting ready to march in. Her line was next to mine and her line was ~~getting~~ ^{was} ~~to march in.~~ There was a boy behind her named Willie Hodges ~~and he was~~ pulling her pigtails. Everytime he would pull it looked like he was pulling on me too. It's like I could feel it. I said, "don't do that." He said, "what you got to do with it?" I said, "look, don't do that," and he did it again and I went in his jaw. ~~There we were all over the floor and everything.~~ Mr. Randolph was watching the whole incident. He knew what went on. He broke us up. He said, "okay, now what you all want to do?" "Do you all want me to whip you?" he asked. I am going to give you a chance right now. The reason why this was so extraordinary is because anytime that anybody fought and he saw it, you were going to get whipped. It wasn't any if's or but's about getting out of it. This was kind of hard for me because I had to deal with the situation. I knew I was going to get a whipping and then he came on like that. It threw me off balance. He said you all can either shake hands and be friends or get a whipping. I was all for that. I said, "Hey, I am willing to forget it if you are."

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

- S: He was reluctant to shake hands, ~~so~~ . . .
- H: . . .the impression on you relative to Mr. Randolph. . .
- S: Right, as far as a man being able to perceive and understand the situation and see the wisdom in it. It really stayed with me all these years. It made me want to be fair to people because before then I didn't give fairness a thought ~~in my mind~~. I mean as a kid it didn't even come to my mind to be fair with anybody. But, when he did that, it instilled in me to be fair with people because I could see the rewards. ~~I was really~~ . . . I thought I was doing the right thing but by him doing that to me it made me want to be fair with people.
- H: Now Miss Banks, how did she react?
- S: ~~Well~~, she was still giving me the cold shoulder. Then what happened was I just got tired of begging. What really made me feel bad was one day I had asked my mother for extra lunch money. I took that along with mine and gave it to her with a note. But, what I did, I didn't go to her myself, I sent a friend of mine and he made things bad. ~~That's when she~~ started. . . ~~she really started~~ . . .
- H: She had been accepting your money before?
- S: No, she never did accept ~~anything~~ ^{anything}.
- H: Okay.
- S: ~~But then~~ this is the funny part about it now, ~~okay~~, after she had all this rejection and everything and never would give me any attention, I said, well I might as well as forget this. As soon as I started to forgetting it then it started.
- H: She was interested?
- S: Right, ~~Then whatever it was~~, they say love never dies. ~~I guess that was just. . . but I don't think so. I don't know what it was, like I say.~~
- H: You were attracted to her?
- S: ~~Right~~, My mom wanted to know why when I come home that she was all I could talk about and my mom wanted to meet her. She said, "boy, who is the girl?"

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

S: I had a cousin who was going to school also and she wanted to meet her too. She was a higher grade than me. We started off with this ~~here~~ in the second grade and it went all the way up to the sixth. ~~See, the whole school knew about it. My cousin wanted to know who the girl was.~~ When she ~~seen~~ ^{saw} her she said, "that ugly girl." Now it never accured to me that she was ugly. I asked her why did she ~~say~~ ^{saw} that. I couldn't see that, because to me she was the most beautiful thing I ever ^{had} seen. ~~But that was what she said that she's ugly to me. Well, she ain't ugly to me.~~ Every-time I saw her she was smiling all the time.

H: Well, tell me about some of your experiences when you moved out there in front of Smith Robertson.

S: When I moved out in front of Smith Robertson I got a paper route. I was throwing papers in the morning time.

H: What paper were you throwing?

S: Clarion Ledger. ~~There would always be some little old. . . I would say that there would always be some boys looking for something to get into.~~ They would see me walking down the street by myself early in the morning when most people had hardly gotten up. So, they just laid a trap and waited on me. Every morning I had to fight these dudes because they would be waiting trying to take my money I had made from collecting. ~~I had to fight them everyday. I just got . . . to tell the truth of the matter, At first I was running from these dudes because it was more of them than of me. They were bigger and older than me so I use to run from them. I just got tired of running. I just sat down. . . one thing I never did was. . . me and mother never did have many conferences, but I just got tired of running.~~ One day I made up in my mind this is it, no more running. So, when they came I said what you all want to do. They said huh! They were getting ready to start splitting. I said, "what you all want to do?" We want to try you. . . we want to ship your head. I said, "I tell you what," see I had been reading Spider Man Books. I saw how he went about certain incidents. I said, "I tell you what, you all come over to the

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

S: porch." You have seen the project?

H: Yes.

S: They have a two-story and there's a rail on them. I said, "I tell you all what, you all come over to my house and we will get on the second story and let me get in the corner and I'll fight everyone of you."

H: So what happened?

S: They did that! We went over to the corner. ~~That's something, ain't it?~~
We are all walking together like we were going to a big. . . All of us are enemies and we are all walking together like that. Nobody passed a lick yet. So, we get to the sight where we are going to fight and I said, "okay, I get up in the corner and you all come on." It was about five of them and they were saying how are we going to get him, how are we going to attack him? They said well, let's all get him at one time. I was hoping they would do that because if they rushed me all at one time it would be too crowded in there for anybody to pass any licks. So, that's what they did. They all rushed me at one time. What I did was just start throwing them over board, right off the balcony. It left one up there and I just beat him. . . ~~yea, it was something.~~

H: After that what did they do?

S: After that they kinda slacked up on me. They said, that "nigger" is crazy. Let's go that nigger is not going to take no more of that stuff. So, they kind of left. I didn't say they gave up all the way. It was one that still was persistent. One day I was over to my friend ~~S~~ Jack's house playing Scramble and he came by and deliberately picked a fight. I just had to go out there. . . this time I took a stick because he had a stick. We were just like war fighting. He was hitting and I was hitting, then I crowned on him and he went down. He was what you might say my childhood rival, the envy of one and the envy of the other. We had that in our neighborhood. We had a lot of rivarly and we had a lot of togetherness. Even though we were what you called enemies, if

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

S: all of us went to another part of the city we would stick together because the first thing they would say in their mind is that's so and so, and all of us we'd be right there.

H: What did they call the neighborhood when you lived down there?

S: They didn't have a name for it?

~~H: They didn't have a name for it?~~

S: ~~Nothing but~~ . . . I don't know any name for it.

H: Were there any rivalry between kids who lived down in the Farish Street area?

S: Yes, all the time. Certain parts of Farish Street, for instance all of Farish, they called that the downtown area. The guys that lived under the hill. . .

H: Where is that?

S: Under the hill is down near the Clipseum. They use to have people that lived down there. The people who lived under the hill couldn't come down in the downtown area unless they got permission by somebody.

H: Who gave them permission?

S: ~~From~~ the big guys in the downtown area.

H: Were you one of the big guys?

S: I was sorta of in between big and little. I wasn't quite big but I was in that bunch. They had to get permission from us to come into our turf or vicinity. We had to get permission to go into their turf or vicinity. They had this over here called across the track.

H: ~~Over by Jackson State?~~
Over by Jackson State?

S: No. You know over there by Mills and Monument where the bridge is, where the tracks are, that little vicinity right over there. It is some houses right over there they use to call that across the tracks. We couldn't go over there unless we had permission. We were going mighty fast when we went there.

H: If you went into one of those area with your parents *what would happen?*

S: They wouldn't bother you then. ~~Back then~~ they had a lot of respect for grown ups.

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

- H: ~~So~~, tell me about some of the activities and what happened ~~and all~~.
- S: ~~Okay~~. They had a swimming hole too. ~~This is where, well right by~~
Smith Robertson. It was a little creek. Our parents didn't want us
swimming there because there was embalment fluid in that creek, because
they said the embalment fluid was from the funeral home. We played in
it anyway because the water was so clear. ~~It really was~~. It's a big
funeral home on the hill on High Street (Ferguson Funeral Home), and when
they embalm somebody they would let the water out and it come down through
a tunnel all the way down to Smith Robertson. We use to swim in that.
~~That use to be the swimming hole~~. It wasn't deep. ~~The point is that it~~
was real clear. We use to put on goggles and be under the water like sea
hawks. It was real cool under it.
- H: And the tunnel goes where?
- S: All the way back to the funeral home. It's a big old tunnel, the big old
tunnel that goes all the under High Street.
- H: Did you all go through there?
- S: Yes. We would go all through that tunnel, all the way down.
- H: That's interesting.
- S: Yes. That is where we use to swim. That was just one of them. We had one
across the track. We called it the big hole. ~~It was muddy~~. It was so
muddy you could not see. I was about tweleve years old and the water would
come over my head.
- H: So, you were about four feet?
- S: Yes, somewhere in there.
- H: So, where was this big hole?
- S: They use to call it Seal Brook. You know where the Sea Brook Paint Company
is on Monument. . .there is a big creek behind there called the Sea Brook.
~~That is what we called it~~. That was everybody's swimming hole. ~~That is~~
~~where we went~~. ~~It was muddy too~~. Water was real muddy in there. That is
where I learned to swim at, in that little old creek. I use to go with my

DRAFT

-17-

SALEEM, Rahman
April 1, 1982
OH 81.70

S: big cousin. He was in high school and I was in elementary school. He use to let me hold on to his neck and he would go under the water. Then I started dogpaddling and that is where I learned how to swim.

H: Well, I don't want you to miss your meeting so let's close this out. First of all I would like to thank you for stopping by because you have given us new information, we didn't have before. Now Mr. Saleem, we are doing this for scholarly purposes. So I have to ask you if you mind us transcribing this and making this available for other people to read and use in their research.

S: That fine. I don't want my slave name on there.

H: Okay, but you don't mind us using this in other words?

S: Right.

H: Okay. I appreciate your time.

S: It's nice meeting you. I've been trying to meet you. I've been coming in this office every other day asking when can I meet Mrs. Harrison.

H: I'm sorry I've been so unavailable.

END OF INTERVIEW

/wmm