

JACKSON STATE COLLEGE
Jackson, Mississippi

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWER AGREEMENT

I, Cora Mason, in view of the
(Interviewer, please print)

historical and scholarly value of the information contained in the
interview with Willie B. Jones, knowingly and
(Interviewee, please print)

voluntarily permit Jackson State College, Jackson the full use of this
information, and hereby grant and assign to Jackson State College,
Jackson all rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information,
whether or not such rights are now known, recognized or contemplated.

Ms. Cora Mason
Interviewer (signature)

Interview Number

7-19-80
Date

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW AGREEMENT

You have been asked for information to be used in connection with the Oral History Program at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. The purpose of this program is to gather and preserve information for historical and scholarly use.

A tape recording of your interview will be made by the interviewer, and a typescript of the tape will be made and submitted to you for editing. The final retyped and edited transcript, together with the tape of the interview will then be placed in the oral history collection at Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi. Other institutions or persons may obtain a copy. These materials may be used for purposes of research, for instructional use, for publication, or for other related purposes.

I, Mrs. L. B. Jones have read the above and, in view of the historical and scholarly value of this information, and in return for a final typed copy of the transcript, I knowingly and voluntarily permit Jackson State University, Jackson, the full use of this information. I hereby grant and assign all my rights of every kind whatever pertaining to this information, whether or not such rights are now known, recognized, or contemplated, to Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi.

Mrs. L. B. Jones
Interviewee (Signature)

7-19-80
Date

FARISH STREET PROJECT
Oral History Program
Jackson State University
Jackson, Mississippi

INTERVIEWEE: Lillie B. Jones
INTERVIEWER: Cora Mason
DATE OF INTERVIEW DATE: July 19, 1980 (Date of Interview)
SUBJ: ~~YWCA IN Jackson~~
OH 80.08

I am Cora Mason interviewing Mrs. Lillie B. Jones at the
Y. W. C. A., on Farish Street on the history of her life.
Time is 3:00 P.M., the date is July 7, 1980.

Mason Mrs. Jones, would you give me somewhat of a background of yourself
at this time?

Jones ~~Yes Mrs. Mason. This is quite an occasion, because I didn't expect~~
~~this today, but giving you a background of myself. . . I am a Methodist~~
~~minister's daughter. My father pastored in the State of Mississippi.~~
I was the youngest child of Rev. W. R. Walker and Mrs. Mary Sanders
Walker. My life has been in the Christian service along with working
with people. I ~~worked in my church~~ ^{was} at the first chairwoman of ~~the~~
administration of the United Methodist Church, which is ^{now} Prep United
Methodist Church. ~~Then~~ ^{now} I worked as a Trustee of Pratt United Methodist
Church. ~~Now~~ ^{now} I'm working in Christian work here at the Y. W. C. A.,
which consists of working with older people in the community. ~~With~~
my background I guess you have to ask me some questions about some of
the other things, because I look back over the many years of experiences
that I have had in working here in the school system, and at the YWCA.
Would you ~~pen point~~ ^{well you} some of the things that you would like for me to
tell you about?

Mason Okay, first of all you can start by telling me where ~~you~~ were born?

Jones I am a native Mississippian and I have been claiming Hinds County, but
really I was born in Covington County, Mississippi. ~~As coming from~~
~~my uncle, Dr. I. S. Sanders, who was my mother's brother and so I am~~
~~a native Mississippian born in Covington County, Mississippi.~~ I think

Good out the name of Interviewer & Interviewee

Start all pages with this heading on line 7 then space 3 times

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Jones that will bring us up to date. We lived all over Mississippi ^{have} somewhat because my father ^{was} being a United Methodist Minister, we lived in several places. ~~Then~~ I lived with my uncle from Alcorn, who practically reared me. We stayed on the campus of Alcorn College for sometime before moving to Jackson where I attended Jackson ^{State} College ~~at that time~~. It is now Jackson State University. I am a graduate of Jackson State University. ^{from} ~~From there I went to the University of Chicago.~~ ^{there I went to Univ. of Chicago} It was such an honor to ~~be able to~~ ^I pass ^{ed} my entrance examination in about five or ten minutes at the University of Chicago ^{because of the} based on the great material ^{and} from historical facts that I had gained from attending Alcorn College, ^{Alcorn} which is one of our biggest, ^{and} earliest colleges. So those things helped out so much. From the University of Chicago I went to the University of Cincinnati. ^{where} I did some graduate work in health and physical education. I taught in Jackson Public Schools, ~~Jackson, Mississippi~~. The last place I taught was ~~considered as~~ Jim Hill Junior Hill School. ~~At that time~~, Professor Marshall was the Principal. ^{Jim Hill I} ~~Then from there we~~ came to the YWCA. I did my YWCA work at Phillip Hall in Lake Forest, Illinois.

We ~~started the~~ YWCA ~~here~~ at Marino Branch as the National YWCA in 1945. We have had a program going ever since we started at 406½ North Farish Street. Then we moved over to the old Negro YWCA at 501 North Farish Street. ^{and} From there to our present sight. We helped to design and build this quarter of a million dollar building where we are now. We moved in here in 1965. ^{and} We have been here every since then. ~~Interesting programs have been going on with a lot of participation.~~ We had a very good program for working mothers, The P. M. camp, ~~we called it~~. We have camps in Edwards, CMI College and ~~we camped down at~~ Sophia Sutton. ^{now} ~~Now~~ we have a YWCA camp for the Jackson YWCA down at Terry, Mississippi.

~~We have encountered several openings from here to the Marino Branch and the Albermarle Center.~~ I help supervise the Albermarle Center.

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J: We have 108-120 children at the Albermarle Center along with those here at our branch. We have two branches of the YWCA, the Marino Branch and North State Street branch and Albermarle Center. We are a United Way Agency. ~~We have Mrs. Barbara Barnes as a~~ ^{is on the} general director of the whole Jackson YWCA. ~~So we have been very busy with a lot of children and as you can now see it is quite a busy place everywhere.~~ We have from 65-70 young people enrolled in our day camp and the P.M. camp, which is a service to working mothers where the young people come in the afternoon after school and during the summer.

We work with them along with the city as in mini-park. We serve the children lunches each day at this branch and the Albermarle Center through the federal food program. The kids come in and they play games and other activities, ~~swimming~~. We have our small summer pool for serving ~~the community so we believe in~~ serving the community. We even visit some of ~~our~~ ^{the} homes of elderly persons in the community, write letters, talk with them, do little chores for them and then we work along with any other activities, ~~that we might see to help.~~ ~~We have served about the third or fourth generations.~~ ~~We have received several leadership plaques from the different organizations that religious leaders come under the group.~~ We have received a church member United Plaque for United Women. ~~Some of those things~~ ^{came} through our effort in the public school system. We received a plaque ~~just~~ for services rendered. We enjoy rendering service to the community and to people wherever we find them. There are a great many people who have been developed through ~~the need aspect that we have here.~~ ^{or programs} ~~They~~ ^{man} have gone on to play in bands. One man's name who is ~~here.~~ ^{have} Sanders is now playing in Stevie Wonder's band. ~~He had piano lessons here, tap dancing and he worked in our program and now he is working for Stevie Wonder.~~ ^{not then start at the YWCA that} There are others who are making recordings in New York and playing in bands. ~~Their start was here at the YWCA.~~ All that came from group singing, music groups, dance groups. ^{etc.} One of our young women

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J: who took dance lessons here is Miss Hinds Junior College this year. She is competing for the Miss America Contest in Vicksburg this month. She got her start from the YWCA. So the YWCA has been where you can get a push and then you can keep going from that push.

Ask me some more questions because I could talk just about the YWCA. I am a little off the track because I don't like talking about myself as much as I do others, because that's what I believe in, Lord minus myself plus others..

M: ~~Okay. You mentioned the fact that you taught in the Jackson Public Schools.~~
 How many years did you teach in the Jackson Public Schools?

J: I taught eight years in the Jackson Public School System at Jim Hill.

M: ~~At Jim Hill,~~ after you finished teaching at Jim Hill you came to the YWCA?

J: ~~That's right I came to the YWCA.~~ *yes, that's right*

M: Do you have any children Mrs. Jones?

J: No, no ~~children~~ of my own, but I consider all of these other children that I work with throughout the years as my children, ~~which would be just hundreds and hundreds of children.~~ So, ~~I feel very close to a lot of people as my children.~~ They call me on Father's Day and even wish me a happy Father's Day because I have been a father and mother for a lot of children.

M: ~~Would you tell me what type of clubs you belong to or organizations?~~ *or organization do you belong to?*

J: I am a member of the League of Women Voters, ~~I mentioned my church,~~ the Terry Lee Bridge Club, the AAUW (American Association of University Women), Sigma Gama Rho Sorority ~~and a lot of other organizations,~~ ^{and} the State Federation of Colored Women's Club ~~and a lot of other things that we worked on.~~ I am also a member of the NAACP, ~~the~~ the National Council of Negro Women, and the Heroine of Jericho.

M: What are your earliest recollections of ~~the City~~ of Jackson when you came here?

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J: ~~Well~~, it was really something. I worked with young people even before I started working at the YWCA. ~~We were trying to find something for the young people even though we were teaching.~~ We would carry a bus load of young people down on the coast for summer camp where our church has a place at Waveland.

My grandfather had one of the first black businesses on State Street. He had a horse-n-buggy. ~~It has really grown from those _____, even Farish Street.~~ A lot of the businesses are gone and a lot of them are trying to get back on foot if they can. A lot of the people that we ^{were} ~~met~~ here have moved away or died out, ~~but that is not a historical fact that we have gathered just from hearing people talk.~~

The barber shop that was near the YWCA, the old one that was near the YWCA when we were at 510 North Farish Street first and before we came to this present sight at 517 North Farish. . .A lot of changes have occurred because people have found different places to go rather than the areas that we once had to go to, ~~places~~ like the Hill Hall, ~~Hodges Hall and the Crystal Palace,~~ and places like that.

Mrs. Hodges, who died, willed some carpet to the YWCA to help young people in this area. There has been a lot of growth in this area since that time and there has been a lot of destruction because they had to tear down a lot of buildings. ~~There has been a lot of changes in this area.~~

M: ~~Okay~~, could you give me some kind of recollection of your earliest school days when you were coming up?

J: ~~Well~~, my earliest school days ^{were} ~~started~~ out in Meridian, Mississippi. ~~We started going to Oak Haven in Meridian. Various grades and ages would come, fourth and fifth. We called it boarding school at that time.~~ ^{at O' Haven Boarding school}

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J: We moved back to Alcorn College and then from Alcorn College to Jackson. But those early childhood days--really my life has always been, as I mentioned, trying to help others and even in those early days we would get children on lodges as my father was pastor, and then try to teach them. I had a brother who started in the ministry in school and we supported him in school. He was a little older, ^{he was} ~~no~~ a little younger than me. He would do the preaching and we would help do the teaching from the lodges with those little people. He doesn't remember when he wasn't a minister and I hardly remember when I wasn't helping somebody.

M: ~~Could you tell me~~ how many brothers and sisters that you have?

J: I am from a family of ten.

M: Do you recall any of the events that had a great impact on your life?

J: Well, the first thing I wanted to do some of the things that my uncle, Dr. Sanders, who was the Trustee for Lanier, wanted me to do. I wanted to teach here in the public schools. I wanted to finish college and go to the University of Chicago and a lot of those things that he did I wanted to do and I did them, most of them. I traveled to most of the States in the United States. That was a hobby plus being in the YWCA and going to conventions. Another important thing I think was when the First National Bank sent me to California ^{Fresno, Caselt Air Force Base} ~~last year to represent the First National Bank~~ ^{to represent the First National Bank} along with some of the same bankers. The trip was to check modular housing projects. ^{big opens} ~~I represented the bank to go to Fresno, California and to Caselt Air Force Base in California to do that.~~ Those are some of the things that were a great impact in my life ^{had a great impact on me} and helping others and helping my family through difficult times up to the point. We had a sister who was blind and had a terminal disease. I asked the doctors to let me take care of her and bring her to Mississippi from Michigan. I have a strong faith in God and my faith in God helped ^{me} to carry some of those thing out that the doctors and everybody thought that would not happen. So, I believe that some of the high points in my life is helping others .

First National Bank

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J: Mrs. Brinkley, Brinkley School was named for her husband, _____

M: When you were growing up did you all farm?

J: No, ~~not necessarily~~ because my daddy had so many of us he had a little ~~truck farm like, as so far as farming.~~ My daddy being a minister, he would just do enough to keep his family going. We did not have a large farm. My grandfather was a minister on my mother's side, my grandfather was a minister on my father's side helped to build the temple on Lamar Street where Dr. C. P. Jones is the minister. My grandfather on my father's side was a United Methodist Minister who worked with Pratt ~~the~~ ^{the} Church that I belong to now. ~~So, we did not have to do too much farming.~~ We did have farm land like in White Rock, ~~and places like that and plenty of fruit trees.~~ We had farm land where we raised potatoes and corn and that stuff like that.

M: How did you have fun as a teenager when you were growing up?

J: ~~Oh well,~~ when I was growing up we had a lot of fun because we could sing and my step-mother could play the piano. My father could do a lot of crafts. ~~He did a lot of country crafts, games we played.~~ We had a lot of family fun together. ~~We worked with the church and family funds so we really had a lot of fun growing up. We worked with all the people in the community and during the movement here in the sixties I don't want to forget that either in your talk.~~

We worked along with the old people during ~~that time~~ here on Farish Street. I went down and spent the night with the children in the compound to see how they were getting along. We ~~worked~~ with the people who needed us most especially the young women. We went to see how they were getting along in the prison, ~~and all of that so the YWCA stayed alive and worked along and even kept a house for a lot of people who came in our grounds to but yet worked with them to have the best of experience that we could~~
We have people to see them a

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- J: ~~give as the YWCA as giving that moral background and support.~~
- M: What was some of the ^{exciting things} ~~good times~~ in your family ^{did?} ~~home that you all~~
~~would do, some of the things, that you would do that you would consider~~
~~as something exciting in the home?~~
- J: ~~Well in our home, as I mentioned,~~ we would sing together and when the recorder came out into style, we used those in recording ~~voices,~~ my daddy's ^{cards} ~~sermons,~~ my brother's sermons. We would travel. We liked to travel and wherever my brother would start as a young minister, we would go and visit ^{him} ~~him in places like Savannah, Georgia and we would go up~~
~~in the Carolinas.~~ In the home we would do a lot of playing, working together with other children, bringing them in and helping them work with them and working along with us to learn new games and skills. My daddy taught us a lot of skills and crafts ~~and doing things.~~ We were taught and we would help ^{teach} others. Our life was very interesting. We worked with other people in our community and visited the sick and just doing for others. That was part of our life and we enjoyed it. In our home my daddy would play and we would enjoy it.
- M: As a young adult coming up, do you recall anything concerning the depression?
- J: ~~Anything as what now as a young adult?~~
- M: ~~As a young adult, do you remember anything about the depression?~~
- J: Yes, we remember the depression. In those days a minister's daughter, you got payed off in produce a lot of the times. During the depression the banks closed and things like that. We met along with some of that. But I'll be frank with you, we did not suffer during the depression, per say, because we had learned to live within the means of a Methodist Minister's family and got along with what my father could produce for his family and what we could have. We learned to live through that kind of experience. So, during the depression, we could get food at, on that kind of faith and courage.

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M: ~~Backing up a little, talking about you~~ when you were going to school as a child, what type of lunches did you carry? What was in your lunch box? What did you carry your lunch in?

J: I don't know because we lived near the school. We would go home and get lunch. ~~So, I really don't know much about the lunch box days because we lived near the school, near the church school. It was possible for us to go home and get lunch. So, I really could not say what was in our lunch boxes because we did not have to carry a lunch too much.~~

M: ~~Okay,~~ do you recall any event about the flood of 1927?

J: I don't know too much about the flood of 1927. ~~I could not tell you too much about the flood of 1927 because I hardly know where I was at the flood of 1927, if it affected us or not. I don't remember the flood of 1927.~~

M: ~~Okay,~~ could you describe some of the songs that were sang in your church as far back as you can recall?

J: Some of the songs we sang was ¹¹Jesus Love Me, Yes I Know. ~~oo.~~

M: What were some of the things you particularly enjoyed doing on the weekends?

J: ~~On the weekend,~~ Saturday morning I was at the YWCA from 8:30 to 12:00 because I worked my other houses Monday through Friday up north. After that I loved to play bridge. That is a hobby of mine to help keep me going. Then I would go visit my relatives here in Mississippi. I rest on Saturday and went to Church on Sunday. I just love to go to these teas and things because that is a part of the community. We had a lot of programs at the YWCA too on Sunday. We had the fellowship. . .on Sunday and different other things. At the "Y" we had the hanging of the greens in December. ~~Then, our membership drive at that same time, that's on a Sunday as we have mentioned.~~ National YWCA week is in April, we have a program. We have our _____ Fellowship in November that's on a Sunday.

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- J: ~~You find us very busy with forum and different things.~~ During Black History week we have forums but that's not necessarily on the weekend, we have other people using our buildings on the weekend. I think on August 2nd of this year we will have a forum. Dr. Harrison will be working with us. We are having a speaker and everything on the Preservations of the Farish Street Area. The weekends are very busy, visiting some of the parents in the area, carrying some of the children to different places also,
- M: Can you recall the first expereince you had in teaching in the Jackson public school?
- J: Yes, ~~I can in a way.~~ When I first started teaching they told me that I was too young to teach in the public school. That was a good way to keep me out I think. My uncle was Principal at Lanier said when he found out that they could do that. So, I taught a half a day at St. Mark's Episcopal Church and then went to Jim Hill in the afternoon to start teaching in the afternoons for ten dollars or more a month. We were making big money at that time. We were making twenty dollars a month and then I went to Jim Hill I had thirty seven(\$37.50). (Laughter) We went to teach at Jim Hill that was quite an experience. We started with Professor Brinkley, the person Brinkley School was named for. It was really Sally Reynolds at that time because they were building on Jim Hill at that time. I I was teaching at Jim Hill over on Lynch Street with Professor Brinkley. ~~With that experience, we were over on Lynch Street. It was dusty and everything.~~ We had a lot of experience in that little space being a teacher. ~~All my little children would come to school.~~ We just had a classroom full of ^{children} ~~them.~~ If it would snow they would still be there. ~~They would say Mrs. Walker, looka here. . .maybe might would have wanted to stay home and stay warm, but they would come anyway. I was Mrs. Walker then. They would say here we are.~~ A lot of them are great men in business now in Chicago, California, Detroit and other places.

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J: They got their start here. When they come back now they are happy to come back and say through the efforts of Mrs. Walker that's the reason I am the type of businessman I am now, because I really stayed behind them.

M: What are your recollection of the health services that was offered during your time?

J: Health services was poor at that time because the lack of facilities and people not knowing. We didn't have the community comprehensive health centers and things that are going now. The Health Department was very . . . let me back up a little. We had a lot of health service going on. We had a Nurse Perkins, ~~I knew~~ ^{She} who use to go around to the school giving inoculation and talking with groups especially in our Black school. It was these kinds of things that was helpful to us. We had those days that she would come around and you wouldn't have go to to the Health Department, but line up in the school. I believe that did a lot of good in that day. . . That was a good time when the health services moved into the school and helped to create an atmosphere.

M: Did you have any Black doctors and who were they?

J: Yes. We had a few, but they were all. . . as you might find now, we had some Black doctors in that day. We had Dr. Smith here at the clinic above the YWCA. We had Dr. Dennis McCoy, Dr. Barnes, then we had another doctor here on Farish Street at the clinic. There were quite a few doctors here on Farish. Dr. Ham Dennis and we had other doctors who worked here on Farish Street. You know we have many. . . I think Dr. _____ is about the only Black Doctor who is left practicing on Farish Street, where we use to have Dr. Williams and a lot of other doctors. Dr. C. L. Barnes was the dentist, ~~I think~~. Dr. Redmond and Dr. Dozier use to be here on Farish Street. So, we don't have as many now as we use to working in this area.

M: Were there any Black nurses?

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J: Nurse Perkins ~~I told you about~~. She was the main health nurse in the county. ~~worked out of the Health Department~~. Then we had, well she wasn't a nurse but we had a case worker that worked with children, Mrs. Sampson Marshall, ^{was a case worker. She worked} out of the Welfare Department. So far as the health. . . I am trying to think of another Black doctor that was very helpful to this area. I think most of the young doctors that come in here, Dr. Smith and some of the others have been a lot of help to us.

Dr. White has been very helpful as an Optometrist in this area in helping check eyes, giving free screening at the "Y". People come in for dental services also. Dr. Christian is the other doctor that was here a long time and had a clinic on Farish Street.

M: Did you ever go down there for services?

J: Yes, I've been to just about all of them. I mentioned they had offices here on Farish Street.

M: What is your earliest recollection about public parks?

J: The public park is at College Park. I think Mrs. _____ Hall is over College Park Clubhouse, ^{conducted a} ~~That swimming pool out there~~, the YWCA had a ^{classes} ~~class, conducted classes~~ at the swimming pool. It was taught by Mrs. Britton. I think the youngest swimmer was about two months old, ~~that~~ was a mother daughter swim plus others who wanted to learn how to swim. Then with the _____ we had a lot of things going on. We even worked along with. . . a golf club for women. The YWCA worked along with one of the area out here. It was the old Jim Hill, Blackburn School now, with ^f tennis. The YWCA started Tennis Classes and tournaments. We had one of the first tournaments here won by Lionell Frazier who is away. He doesn't live here anymore. He won the tournament that we had.

M: What was the most popular sports in Jackson during the 1940's?

J: ~~The most popular sport back in the early 1940's was~~ baseball and football. ~~Baseball and football were the most popular sports because of the colleges and all that. Everybody went for that. Right now we find that~~

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J: some of those sports have come on up through the times because here at the "Y" we would have a lot of basketball. We had a lot of basketball in the winter. We have ^{had a} ~~the~~ softball league in the summer time for women for the last eight or ten years. This year is my first year not having a softball league for women. We do play a lot of basketball during basketball season in our gym. We think our gym is well kept. We do a lot of the same sports now as we did then, but those were some of the main sports that we had basketball, baseball, volleyball, softball, and tennis. Tennis you think of as a new sport, but it is not. They had plenty of tennis back then.

M: I would like to thank you Mrs. Jones for your interview.

J: You are quite welcome. Then ~~a lot of those things. . . that played~~ with the churches now have got their start at the "Y" or through school. I would like to mention Mr. Willie Hughes, ^{a musician} ~~who plays music and~~ ^{Teacher} ~~teaches~~ in the city. He is the musician at the Lynch Street C. M. E. Church. ~~From a little boy we gave him a push in music.~~ A lot of the other person we have worked with have stuck by the "Y" through the years we have quite an influence on their lives. . . now those who really came up in the "Y" and now her son works at the "Y". He has his masters' from Jackson College. He still does summer work and part-time at the "Y". It is a family tradition we have helped a lot of the children get jobs in the community. These teenagers helping them to help others in the summer and they keep them.

M: I would like to thank you again for your interview.