

1
SR1EA

OH 93.08

Interview with Gladys Noel Bates, Interview 1

Date of interview: 20 October 1993; Jackson, Mississippi

Interviewer: Dr. Harrison

Transcriber: Kirk Williams

Begin Tape 1, Side 1

DH: Today I'd like to just talk about you, so tell us who you are.

Bates: Well, I was born in McComb, Mississippi as I understand in the year 1920 March 26. Within a few months my dad brought his family to Jackson. As I understand it for the first few months we resided up near the old Pearl St. Church on Pearl St. it seems that Pearl St. has always been our street. And within a few months he rented this house that's next door to us from Lawyer W. H. Moon who lived up the block who was a solid citizen of that time of note. So he rented that house and as soon as possible was able purchase that house and this land, which extends as you see far back. So as within a few years later he was able to build this house in 1924, and as you see it still stands, pretty much as it was when he built it, there may have been one or two changes made.

DH: What were those changes?

Bates: Well, he had been to Chicago and invisioned having a breakfast room. So in this sort of large area here, in the back, were two rooms, so this was the kitchen and next to it was the breakfast room. (Motioning towards the rooms.) We were to have breakfast in the breakfast room, not in the kitchen we were not to eat in the kitchen. And then the dining room, I can remember early on he bought mamma a lovely set of china and

silverware and had those chandeliers. He envisioned having social dinners, but as you got to know my mother, she was not a socialite. She belonged to a literary club but she was a earth mother who was interested in the soil and building thing and caring for things and caring for people, and that was not her bend at all. So he was quite disappointed I can here him now coming in to say I thought i was marrying a socialite, becuase she lived in Chicago and here she is in the garden with mud between her toes out there working like a field hand. But that was what I can recall, that kind of childhood. My mother as I said, I think we were bright children because I can remember I didn't go to the primary grades I learned here at home. My brother and my sisters they were being taught by my parents who were going to Jim Hill. I learned from them and I didn't go into early grades I think went to school in the second grade. And those were very happy years, we did not have to wonder about meals and clothing like some of our friends did have to especially after the Depression of the 30s rolled in. My years at Jim Hill were very pleasant Professor Brakely was the principal and this lady that I had mentioned to you Abi Holly was my third grade teacher.

DH: When you lived on Hattiesburg street?

Bates: No, Vicksburg and that was my first knowledge or understanding of what trust and being trustworthy meant. Becuase I can, and I said this at her retirement, on certain days she might say " Gladys come up to the desk " and I'd go up there and she'd say "I forgot my my lunch I left my lunch at home ." And Jim Hill was on Lynch street and she lived on Pittsburg she said "I left my lunch at home and I want you to go and get it for me, who would you like to go with you " and i would choose one of my classmates. But when she handed me that key to her house it was like handing me the key to the United States treasury because we march looking left nor right. We had this purpose of going to our teachers home and would open the door and to this day I can not tell you what was in her livingroom or dining room. I thought I would betray her trust if I started looking around. I went straight to the kitchen and got that lunch came back out certain that I had locked that door securely and brought the lunch back to Miss Holly. That happened all during the year . I felt that this was the beginning of feeling what

trustworthiness meant , because it meant that someone trusted me and I had a responsibility to be true to that trust. Well as we grew up the five of us ...(085-087)...and John who's here now.

DH: Are they all still living?

Bates: All dead.

DH: Oh, except you and John.

Bates: Yes, except us. I feel that we've had an exceptional childhood in that we were not permitted to engage in activities around Jackson because Papa said " nothing in this world is worth you losing your dignity and your feeling of self worth by participating in it." So we didn't ride buses we didn't go to town , we might want water and he was not having us drink out of that black fountain. We did not go to the Fair, we were not sit up on the bus and be segregated. We were not to go to the zoo because they had special practices at the zoos in those days for black people.

DH: Special practices like what?

Bates: On certain days black people went to the zoo and you couldn't sit on the benches you couldn't sit anywhere you just walked and did not participate in anything there at the zoo. So a lot of things we missed out I think are a really important part of childhood going to a circus in particular. He' just say that " well that isnt to bad that you didn't have to go and be segregated." So we learned early on that not hate in its roughest terms, but we learned that there was no white person who could violate our being. Papa did not allow anyone to come on our front porch who was white. There used to be a lot of insurance agents ...peddlers all inthe black community selling stuff and selling this nickel and dime insurance. Take out a policy and he'd come every weekend to collect that nickel or dime whatever it is. He just would not let them come, he met on the walk as saw them and would not permit them to get in to the house.

And so I went to Tougaloo ,there was a definent line that I knew that seperated white and black Mississippians.

DH: You knew it mostly from your father ?

Bates: Mostly from my father because I had never met them anywhere else. We traded my daddy (122-123) that before that you even knew the meaning of the word. We never went to (125) we shopped out of Sears and Roebuck catalog and Montgomery Ward because you didn't have to go in and have someone call my mother by her first name. So it was just a common practice and there was a little store here on Pascagoula I can remember Miss. Farish's store.

DH: The Farishes down in the Farish Street area?

Bates: No, down here on Pascagoula. But the produce was that I can remember very well, the chickens smell, And the lemons were hard, and the lettuce was brown. But he said this is one thing that we had in the garden, so it was like that. But anything that we had to buy we'd get it from Farish Grocery Store. And then later on we improved to the extent that there was Forfety's black store on South Street that was owned by Jack Young and his family and uncle, I can't quite think of his name. Anyway the number was 911, that's when you had to call your number in. Mylo was two and three times a day saying "nine - one - one please" and they had delivery. And any anecdote connected to that store.

When I went off to high school at Alcorn we joined Pearl Street Church, and that something I think kids miss today is being in programs church programs, children's day programs, Easter programs, Christmas programs. And I think that any public speaking that I am able to do today I got my foundation at Pearl Street Church and also at the school because we had all kinds of little programs in the classroom that gave you an opportunity to memorize. We memorized so many speeches, and after I finished over at Jim Hill I went to Lanier. There was a bus that I could have caught right up here at Grove Street but my Dad wouldn't let us ride segregated buses. So we walked there I guess it was about three and half four miles over to Lanier High School. Well it's almost paradoxical that the city for the white kids was in this area over on the Cane Capital I guess on Central Street I think they called it Poindexter School. So that all the white kids had to come from wherever they lived and walk through the black area to get to

Poindexter . And we had to leave our area to go over past the Bailey Avenue extention where a lot of lower class whites lived to get to Lanier. So that you can imagine alot of activity ... fighting .

DH: Can you recall any specific incident?

Bates: Oh yes, there were incidents everyday.

DH: Would you ever be involved in an incident?

Bates: Oh yes.

DH: Like what?

Bates: Oh well it all depended on who had the largest number. If I were late , if some other kid was late and missed the bigger crowd he had to walk together. Well if he'd met one or two white kids , it never was evenly balanced, never was it eight or twelve blacks and eight or twelve whites. It was always when one got seperated from the group and became easy prey. So one or two times I was left by myself and got roughed up pretty much by guys, whiteboys who had hit me over the head with a stick and I had a bump on my head, and Papa went over to see the Principal, and he said there was nothing he could do. And by that time it was 1933 and my brother was finishing Lanier and going to Alcorn. So Papa decided to send me to Alcorn in eighth grade so I would'nt have to be totally unprotected from all these trips over to Lanier. So then I left and went to Alcorn and spent the twelvth grade at Alcorn and they were pretty heady kinds of come from the rural areas. But I embraced in the dramatics club and I think I was one of the only high school kids in the dramatic club (201) and they reached down into the high school and something happened that I think has not happened since they made Miss Alcorn as a high school student. That had never happened before and has not happened since. Well that was a ploy, the guys helped they were going to get even with the senior class girls. But anyway I was Miss Alcorn in 1937 . Then I began my college career , but in the meantime as a part of our regimen here at home a part of the task that Papa was telling Myrtle"your going to be my little concert actress. Your going to be in the halls, and your going to give recitals." So he emphasized that he took music lessons from early on. Edmond was going to be his little medical doctor, and my other brother was going to be the dentist, and the boy who is here was going to be

the pharmacist. And "you will all are going to own your own building with the drug store would be right here and Edmonds office would be right here ,and then Gladys would be there ,she's going to be the secretary."

So when I started my freshman year at Alcorn, he had enrolled me into business administration in my preparation. Well he had also prepared me by my seventh grade over at Lanier by having typing teacher to come to the home to teach me typing, but they didn't have typing in business school. So he had bought a beat up typewriter from somewhere and had this lady come, but I had already knew how to type, so she taught me shorthand. So I went to Alcorn and here they were teaching me typing and shorthand again and I said "this isn't for me I want Biology." So I changed my major to Biology sometime during I met my husband as a freshman. He was a coach at Alcorn he had just finished and had come down for his first teaching experience as the coach at Alcorn from Western State College. And he took an interest in me, and I in him, and there the fireworks began between himself and the president. And the president had said that if he'd continue his ..., " the only thing that we were really able to do was walk from the dining hall to the dormitory and from the library to the dormitory, he said if that continued he would lose his job , in which he did and we married at the end of the year.

DH: And you were?

Bates: I was eighteen.

DH: A freshman?

Bates: Yes a freshman. I was eighteen . So I didn't worry about a thing I just knew John would take care of me. We went to Memphis and he began work as an insurance agent with Universal Life Insurance Company. By fall, September, F. O Woodard , who's dead now, told him that he had an opening at Kosciusko, Mississippi and (252-253) so I could also teach to. So we went to Kosciusko and began teaching there I taught there one year. We could not come to Jackson because at that time husbands and wives are family members could not teach at the same time. So went to North Carolina and John taught one year there I stayed as a business manager and Dean of Girls at little presbyterian school called Mayor Potter Academy.

DH: Is it still around?

Bates: Yes

DH: Do you know what year you went to North Carolina?

Bates: I guess it was about 1940. Well we stayed there, we came back Christmas, and heard that they had relax the policy about husbands and wives teaching and we talked to the Superintendent and he said that we both could come back to Jackson and teach the next year. So I began my teaching career over at Smith Robertsons School and my husband at Lanier High School. I guess this was 1940 because I finished college in 42'.

DH: So you taught and went to school at the same time?

Bates: No, I have that wrong I did not teach in the beginning he taught. And then I finished and then my sophomore, junior and senior year at Tougaloo, I graduated in 42'. I may have the years a little mixed up. But I finished in 42' I served my 50th anniversary graduation last year in 1992. And I came to Smith Robertson and I taught over there until 48' and this was the year that I filed my suit.

DH: Well if ...never mind I was trying to figure out if you were teaching at a private school.

Bates: No Smith Robertson was not a private school. I had taught over there and taught some at Lanier. I must have taught summerschool over there because they didn't have a typing teacher and since I knew typing I know I did teach typing and shorthamd over at Lanier. But anyway that was the year the suit was filed and ...

DH: What promoted you to do that?

Bates: Well anytime that I think know whenever there are inequities somebody thinks about the idea of trying to correct it. And at that time I was making \$120 dollars a month teaching at Smith Robertson and a white teacher with the same compitence in certification, education, experience, whatever recieved twice as much \$240 dollars and the only reason for the differential was skin color. And I must say that before I finished college I was preferrably an ACT on the Board of Directors who were an ACT. I had a very strong civil rights lean and it didn't take much.

DH: You don't remember what year became one do you?

Bates: I was one the first youth members and my dad was for thirty-five years the secretary treasurer. And I can remember as a girl attending the meeting I can't enough to say exactly what had happened. But anyway by

now I was a teacher and the Teachers Association at their annual meetings over there at this building that they are now beautifying this is where they had all of their conventions. And who was Governor at the time ...not Paul Johnson ?

DH: The only name I can think of is Tillman Wright.

Bates: Yes, it was Tillman Wright in 48' he was Governor. And we went to the conventions and the (323-324) we had to do something. So we went to the one who was most active at that time, A.A Alexander and E.F. Bishop who is now Mayor of (328), and A.L. Johnson who's down there at Prentiss and Virgil who's principal at Bourbon High School down in Hattiesburg, and Wayne Talbert . These were the voices that you heard so we had to do something about this inequity. So Thurgood Marshall was sent to us and he came and he said yes something has to be done, but you don't have any money so when you get five thousand dollars I'll come back and we'll start our strategy. So then we started raising our money. we used all kinds of means to do that. We even in some counties where they had people who reported thing to thier superintendent like what was going on. They even used the technique of passing a sack around and everybody at the teacher meeting and everybody had to put there hand down the sack. Nobody knew if you released any money or not. So there was nobody there who could go back and say that they gave , they gave , they gave . So everybody put down something just like a collection in church that passed you by, you put your hand in and nobody so if you put money in or not and we soon had the five thousand dollars. Superintendents would ask why are you raising this money and we call it the " benevolent fund" to take care needy teacher and sick and ill teachers.

DH: Now this has been going on since 1948 are the year before?

Bates: No this is the year before, because the suit was filed in 48' so it had been two years before because the suit didn't just happen just like that it was a lot of time in between where we were preparing.

DH: Were you the person targeted to be the one?

Bates: Yes, so after...

DH: Why do you think you was a target?

Bates: Well because first of all I was a member and a board member of the NAACP and from what they said later on that they felt that I could make

a good witness and I was a capable teacher so all of those things went into to why they chose me, they asked me first and I would like to say this, I often say this. My father in this very kitchen, John and I, mom and papa sat here not at this table another, but these same chairs. We sat here and discussed it, should I, and Papa said, he quoted Matthew 10:39 and it goes something like this " that he who loses his life, for my sake also gains his life." And then he explained that when in times in your life where you seem to have lost your life because you know you may use your job and things may not go well for you, but in the long term when you think of the thousands of teachers will gain a life will get better salaries will be able to educate their children better in the end you will redeem your life.

DH: So your father was for this?

Bates: Oh yes very much so, and after that John and I, I think that very session we went home that night and we said we were going to do it.

DH: But your husband wasn't employed by the system?

Bates: Yes, he was at Lanier. But both of us were fired at the end of the year.

DH: But only you filed the suit, right?

Bates: Yes I filed the suit, well that's how things were done in that time in fact it's true now. But women seem to feel better as far as intimidation and all other kinds of things. Well at the time I can't prove it, but our house was burned down.

DH: Where were you living then?

Bates: Over on Deerpark Street. We came back over here to live.

DH: What was your address?

Bates: 1087 Deerpark and our house was burned and we found burnt holes in the living room windows. So it was easier for a woman (410-411) instead of a man.

DH: Could you just walk me back the process of filing the suit. Who was your counselor? How did you decide that you were going to file the suit, did they decide for you?

Bates: No, after we had decided, the NAACP, that it was going to be underwritten by the teachers of the state, but the NAACP was stunted and there again is the story because the money was laundered, were talking about drugs then. Money was laundered, there was a bank in Memphis, Tenn. called the Tri-State Bank, it still sits, and the money that the teachers raised was sent to the Tri-State Bank in Memphis and from Memphis checks were drawn to be sent to the NAACP and to me. They agreed to pay my salary of \$120 dollars for one year following the filing of the suit.

DH: The public schools didn't pay you?

Bates: Well yes because it was there money, but I said they had laundered it by sending it to Tri-State Bank and depositing it not at a bank here in Mississippi in an out of state bank and then the checks were then drawn to the NAACP and the NAACP payed me. But you see in reality the money came from the teachers. But it was there system of hiding the source of the money by this kind of operation. So after the this and the fire I had all these papers at Tougaloo, headlines come " Negro Teacher Files Suit". And I was warned in the beginning do not breathe this to anyone, don't have a best friend that you'll discuss this with because you'll get fired before you have a chance to file the suit anyone hears about it if its rumored. So it was time before the suit was filed where everything was very hush hush, and the meetings, many of them was right up in this kitchen and Summers Hotel often our lawyer from New York came and we would meet down in the Summers Hotel. And the date was set March I can't remember the exact date it was March something. March of 1948 and it came out on the headlines i went to school, Smith Robertson that morning and all the teachers were out in the hall with the papers reading and they saw me coming and everybody left for their classrooms and I entered the building alone and went to my classroom and I can recall that I recieved several anonymous notes from teachers who didn't sign them say we are so happy that you have hit the first blow, and occasionally for the remainder of the year, March, April, May teachers would say something to me about it. But the most pressing part of the trial, the trials were something unheard of, the courtrooms were just full, they had a suit filed against the state of Mississippi and everyday someone would send me a carsage everyday of the trial I remembered that. The courtrooms were just filled with not the elite of Jackson (514-516) mostly blacks the whites were there out of curiosity if they were there. And my principal was called to testify and my lawyer asked what kind of teacher was I and he spoken really kind about my abilities. I had made a disinct contribution and everything looked like it was going well. Then the school board attorneys sent a letter out of their attache case and said " Charlie read this" and here he was saying asking for me to be fired.

Bates: Yes, he was at Lanier . But both of us were fired at the end of the year

DH: But only you filed the suit, right?

Bates: Yes I filed the suit ,well thats how things were done in that time in fact its true now. But women seem to feel better as far as intimidation and all other kinds of things. Well at the time I can't prove it, but our house was burned down.

DH: Where were you living then?

Bates: Over on Deerpark Street. We came back over here to live.

DH: What was your address?

Bates: 1087 Deerpark and our house was burned and we found burnt holes in the living room windows. So it was easier for a woman (410-411) instead of a man.

DH: Could you just walk me back the process of filing the suit. Who was your counselor ? How did you decide that you were going to file the suit, did they decide for you?

Bates: No, after we had decided, the NAACP, that it was going to be underwritten by the teachers of the state, but the NAACP was stunted and there again is the story because the money was laundered ,were talking about drugs then. Money was laundered, there was a bank in Mempis, Tenn. calledthe Tri-State Bank, it still sits, and the money that the teachers raised was sent to the Tri-State Bank in Memphis and from Memphis checks were drawn to be sent to the NAACP and to me. They agreed to pay my salary of \$120 dollars for one year following the filing of the suit.

DH: The public schools didn't pay you?

Bates: Well yes because it was there money, but I said they had laundered it by sending it to Tri-State Bank and depositing it not at a bank here in Mississippi in an out of state bank and then the checks were then drawn to the NAACP and the NAACP payed me. But you see in reality the money came from the teachers. But it was there system of hiding the source of the money by this kind of operation. So after the this and the fire I had all these papers at Tougaloo, headlines come " Negro Teacher Files Suit". And I was warned in the beginning do not breathe this to anyone, don't have a best friend that you'll discuss this with because you'll get fired before you have a chance to file the suit anyone hears about it if its rumored. So it was time before the suit was filed where everything was very hush hush, and the meetings, many of them was right up in this kitchen and Summers Hotel often our lawyer from New York came and we would meet down in the Summers Hotel. And the date was set March I can't remember the exact date it was March something. March of 1948 and it came out on the headlines I went to school, Smith Robertson that morning and all the teachers were out in the hall with the papers reading and they saw me coming and everybody left for their classrooms and I entered the building alone and went to my classroom and I can recall that I recieved several anonymous notes from teachers who didn't sign them say we are so happy that you have hit the first blow, and occasionally for the remainder of the year, March, April, May teachers would say something to me about it. But the most pressing part of the trial, the trials were something unheard of, the courtrooms were just full, they had a suit filed against the state of Mississippi and everyday someone would send me a carsage everyday of the trial I remembered that. The courtrooms were just filled with not the elite of Jackson (514-516) mostly blacks the whites were there out of curiosity if they were there. And my principal was called to testify and my lawyer asked what kind of teacher was I and he spoken really kind about my abilities. I had made a disinct contribution and everything looked like it was going well. Then the school board attorneys sent a letter out of their attache case and said " Charlie read this" and here he was saying asking for me to be fired.

DH: The Principal?

Bates: Yes.

DH: Who was the principal?

Bates: Charlie Wilson ,Charles Wilson they had I'm sure they had..

DH: He wrote that book

Bates: Yes on Mississippi history, I hear that they had almost written that letter for him and made him sign it to ask that I be dismissed. So then they could say that they did not fire me whatever they did they did so my principal who asked that I be fired. So John was fired though he was just, I used to say my roommate.

DH: How did they manuever that?

Bates: Well they could manuever anything they want to. They didn't have to manuever just because he was my husband. They'll just fire you they don't have to have a reason in those, in fact there are several other people who were fired just because they possibly said the wrong thing. In a faculty meeting I expected sympathy I remember a Micheals girl who taught over at Jim Hill we were fired at the same time and everybody knew it was because , and it was unfortunate for them because they didn't even get any publicity out of it they moved to Alabama to teach. There were several who ...

DH: Do you know any of the names of the Micheals girl?

Bates: I can't recall it.

DH: You don't know, we can get that later to.

Bates: But i know there were Micheals who lived down in Washington and Deacon . So then John and I were left after the first years, 48', without jobs. John had to work at a box factory called Will Pickman Box Factory. Later on Fred Scott ran a little upholstery shop on Lynch Street and he went to work there. I did part-time work for Miss Ruby Rothschild who was director of the "Y" .Then Thurgood Marshall and robert Carter came down and

found that we were not entirely popular and we were having a hard time making ends meet. They wrote a very pressing letter to the Mississippi Teachers Association to say that they had left us hanging in the wind and the least they could do is to offer me a job and they offered me a job as editor of the Mississippi Educational Journal and took as an executive secretary which I did for eleven years, so until 1960.

DH: You stayed here in Mississippi all that time?

Bates: Yes, were you here ?

DH: No I was not here.

Bates: Well I worked at the board for the black teachers as head of it well W W Blackburn was head but he was old and senile so essentially the executive secretary because I did all the travels and had some very interesting experiences. I would be asked come to a certain town to speak and the principal would be afraid to introduce me. So I had to be very aggressive and just come on in and do it, knowing all time what the situation was and say thing that the teachers wanted the superintendent to hear but they couldn't say themselves. We went to that period of having some presidents of associations that were who were pro-me and some who were anti-me who like Tabourg who later became president of Alcorn College who was not in sympathy with me or any kind of civil right move and who wanted to get rid of me, but mostly the presidents were pro. And for me interesting...

DH: Was H.M Constan along with any of these thing?

Bates: Yes, H.M.Constan was pro but he had not gained the stature that he later had gained .

DH: But in 1948 when you lost your job...

Bates: Yes he was teaching at Lanier High School. All these were people who gave support, it couldn't be just the support that say "I am with

you", because at there very same time (598-602) for Jackson teachers, they had to sign a pledge that they were not a member of the NAACP nor did they subscribe products of the NAACP. You either had to sign a pledge or else you had to go. And H.M did, if I can remember, tried to get teachers to say that they were not going sign the pledge. I can't remember in detail how that worked.

DH: I just knew that somehow or another he had some role there, but I didn't know what.

Bates: Yes he was the voice of the Jackson teachers, it was a disguised voice more or less he couldn't come right out and say what you thought but at the same time you were trying to marshal teachers to support the cause and which they did under the table it just could not be above board kind of support. So we went through those years we went to Carolina to see our brother my brother who were practicing out there. We'd go to see each summer which provided breathing space. And they said " why don't you apply out here" and I said " I've seen the application form and it said at the top " if you are past 35 please do not bother to apply " and both of us were past 35. He said "well try it anyway , lets go on down there" we went down there and talked the personell director and in the meantime John had been considered for the executive Y here and another school had turned him down he'd been considered in Nashville and Louieville and all around and something would happen. So we told the executive director exactly what had happened to our lives and felt we would just try the application. By the time we got to Jackson , we had went on to L.A., a letter was there saying we had been employed by the Denver Public Schools.

DH: Now what year was that?

Bates: 1960, so immediately John sat in my office while I drafted my letter , and a week after he was employed for screening at Camber College and he drafted his letter and by July we were headed for Colorado. As soon as we got there we went to the Superintendent office to see Mr. Peter Holmes who was active personell who had sent us the letter and his secretary said" oh he's dead " and we said "dead, when did he die?" Our letter

was dated July 16th he died on July 17th. Providence, providence that if he could have just delayed one day or two days later we possibly we would still be in Mississippi but we never got our chance to personally express our appreciation for believing in us to the extent that though we were passed the age of employment and though it would have been damaging because every application has "have you ever been denied employment" and they always have that question and he had confidence in us. We began our new career and a new life there I have one of my example speeches right here that I gave in Denver I gave that just in March of this year saying how when we came to Denver we thought that we were in heaven, but we soon found it was a matter of degree they said we had to put our battle clothes back on we can't sit on the side lines here. We thought we were getting a chance to concentrate on our jobs and finding our new home and our children.

DH: How many children did you have?

Bates: Two. And so we had to get back on the firing line and ...

End first side.

Bates: We won the "Don Glass Faith Award " that they give each year to certain individuals who done most in the area of human civil rights in the community in and out of the state. So each year it would be an honor to go back to the association and present the award to somebody who had been chosen to get the award for John and I in Colorado most of our awards have been the Don Glass Award. We had got them from the City of Denver, from churches , from libraries and most of them or the John Glass Award.

DH: Well your going to have to tell me what was it that you actually did when you all got there you said you put your battle clothes on.

Bates: Well first of all they didn't have a civil rights commission in the association and got it to see that they had that. When I was appointed assistant principal at a junior high school.

DH: What school was that?

Bates: Faith Junior High School. We had been there I guess about three weeks before we had our first riot. They had planned that school, it was a three million dollar school at that time in 1968 that was a lot of money with carpeting all around. They hadn't allowed blacks to be at that school and then they did succeed that Blacks had to go there. So it was my job more or less to sensitize the teachers at which who did not wish to be sensitized, and to sensitize parents and to be the mediator between black and white parents. I was instrumental in setting up a computerized system of matching a black parent and a white parent and a black student and a white parent. If a white kid was interested in horseback-riding and a black parent was interested in horseback-riding I formed teams so that on the weekend they can go horseback-riding together. It was systematic those who liked to skate those who wanted to hike I matched the entire faculty and the parents and the kids in an integrated fashion. There were after school activities it was called "People to People" committee which I received a lot of commendation for. Since nobody there had had any black history I was relieved to go to the administration building and was on leave to write a syllabus on black history to be used which is still used because I had my black history at Tougaloo but at the time in going through transcripts they just couldn't find anyone else. Well they did find one other Paul Hamilton and I was released to write this syllabus. And I conducted seminars on race relations I did a lot of things to improve race relations.

DH: And your husband?

Bates: He did the same thing, he was on the board of directors of CEA and DCTA and (O41).

DH: Do you know what is?

Bates: The Colorado Education Association and the Denver Colorado Teachers Association and the YMCA he headed up membership drives which was for financial reasons for the 'Y'. John always took the prize for bringing in the most members. After this talk here we moved and went to

another community that was all white community we were the only black people on the block then finally they started leaving street by street the whole area was turning black. And somebody ministers got together and said well first of all these are some mighty nice home to just give up. So they didn't do like they did over on Pecan Blvd they thought if we can save our homes and let no more than four or five black families on the block we can all stay together. So we became active in the its called the (O46) community and John one year served as president and I this past year has served as vice-president and on the board of directors planned integrated activities homes tours, fairs, haydays for the youngsters at that is noteworthy the other thing is my drug activity, not as a drug user, but as a drug chaser I don't know what I was doing towards getting that I was mostly into preserving my own. But I became so very active in fighting drugs I became chairman of the project community "Safe Neighborhoods" and that was the organization that faught drug-users. They had come on my street and when I noticed it I had sent out a flier to all of our members and our neighbors and said meet at the community center and about three hundred came and thats when I became chairman they elected me chairman and we met every Thursday. But the Major or the Governor and District Attorney, Manager of Safety, the District Police and District Captain Police and everybody saying drugs had to leave. I was recording everything I saw in fact the McNeil Larrer News Hour came down and featured me on one of their news programs.

DH: Thats recent huh?

Bates: No that was about four years ago. They showed me mainly with my binoculars and my camera which I had standing on my kitchen table that if I ever see a person I can't identify. See I leave on a place which isn't a big street that I take a picture of it and with my binoculars I can read the licence plates and if I see it again that car is going to be reported to the police and they'll have to let me know what they found out whether it was a stolen car or what they'll have to let me know. This has been for the last I supposed I think in that article I was supposedto march with the Governor on the night that I was being honored up there. But things had got scary...

DH: But you were very courageous.

Bates: Well the Crips and the Bloods had left messages on my doorsteps and back then John and I started a program of graffiti removing. We drafted a letter and if I would walk, I don't walk anymore, if I would walk and I would see graffiti I'd ring your doorbell and say I see graffiti on your fence or your garage door or whatever. I would ask you would you like to have it removed and they would say yes and I would say that if you have the money to pay for it it would be fine but if you don't we will remove it anyway and then John and his crew every Saturday would fill-out and paint over graffiti. So we don't have any graffiti its all wiped out we don't have any drugs we don't say that we got rid of drugs we just moved them to another community and let them buy them.

DH: Because they can't stand alot of individual publicity.

Bates: No, they like to go to a place where people are afraid to fight them. And now about my children and my husband who have shall I just say swept me like the wind beneath my wings through the years. And our son is a Physicist with the Department of Defense here in Denver he has a wife and two children and by another marriage he has another daughter who finished over here at Jackson State, Anita Bates, who finished here two years ago she has her Masters now.

DH: In what?

Bates: In Marketing and she's a manager she got here Masters at the University of Wisconsin. Our daughter finished at Tougaloo did not complete her Masters at Colorado University but she is very active in the politics and the Democratic Party and her two children the young daughter is at the University of Arizona getting her Masters in Proxycology and her son is a policeman there in Denver and they have two children at that makes us grandparents.

DH: This 1948 case, how do you recall it being solved?

Bates: Well, it was resolved by being portrayed meek the initial case was filed called (122) of Georgia in Atlanta and that case was one step ahead of our case

DH: Like the year before?

Bates: Yes, something like that. The argument that they used was that we should exhaust all administrative exemptions before filing a case against the state. Alright what were the administrative exemptions you should first seek redress from your county superintendent and if he doesn't solve your problem and then you should go to the state superintendent if he doesn't solve your problem then you should present your grievance to the state of Mississippi well you can see the falls to that, before you even get to the county your fired. So that's when Richard J. Brown stepped in saying that I should have gone to the county before filing suit against the state otherwise I would have been just out of it then Richard J. Brown steps in before they can get him in they fired him so how can anyone ever proceed but that is the legal argument. By that time the state of Georgia and any other kind of state had used everything threatening. So it became loose it went to the United District Court of Appeals and to the United States Supreme Court and it was declared a loose case and by that time it was alright because they had equalized salaries and equalized facilities and everything was equal. But then before any of us could rest on those laws there was the integration battle. So by 1954 the Supreme Court declared segregation illegal, that's when everything, the schools became integrated and that brings us up to the present.

DH: What I was also wondering is when you went to Denver were you ever put in the position where you had to recall or defend you having filed the suit.

Bates: No, it seems that just since recently that being my kind of teacher I've never had a case were people said I filed a suit in Mississippi.

DH: People were unaware ?

Bates: No, well some people were people who I was mostly associated knew. It was never mentioned in the faculty meeting. Do you recall it being mentioned at the State Teachers Convention where we were given awards and things.

..... -Break-

DH: When you look back on it do you think it had any impact any positive impitice toward change I know it impacted your in a very negative way?

Bates: At that time it did, but the whole structure of this country had around. I disappointed and disillusioned and I think most of us who went through the early years who would have thought that after Martin Luther King that we would, many of our problems economically, educationally, socially anywise would be almost at the point of disappearant. Instead our problems have increased to the extent that hardly I don't see a solution in the near future. Babies having babies was no problem ,in the 40's whenever that unfortunate occurance occurred the families or else someone tried to help. It happened so unfrequently that it could not be called a certain problem. You would have thought with inceased salaries, better salaries for families that our achievement school achievement would be almost at least tripled. Most of the states are falling down southern states in particular are falling back in their S.A.T. scores. It is heartwarming to see many of our teaachers though living in a very high standard of living. But education persay and the social structure persay it just isn't in Mississippi it is all over this country. It is a terrible,terrible time; social delimma that we all are facing and nobody seems to have the education.

DH. When you file the suit, what were your dreams or hopes for progress for the difference that it would make?

Bates. Well, I'm not saying that I was so farsighted at time it was just a matter of feelings.

DH. Economics?

Bates. Well yes. At the time of feeling that everybody to be paid the same for the same amount of work it just as simple as that. Part of our problems stand from the fact that you had a dual, not only a dual system of education, but a dual system of pay for your labors. It didnt go to much farther, except when this system when stab at the whole problem.

DH. You think it was a race durail the system, your filing the suit?

Bates. Yes. For at least teachers. I didn't see that it would extend over into other areas of occupations. I didn't even think about that, I don't think. I know that if we won the battle that at least teachers would be an equal paying field as far as salaries.

DH. Now did you tell me who your lawyer was at the time?

Bates. They were Virgil Marshall, Constance Motley, and Robert Carter.

DH. They came down immediately when the suit was filed.

Bates. Yes. Unsung hero was a man by the name of John Redmond had nothing to do with it. Jack Young and C. Hull were young

DH. Lawyer Moon, he was dead.

Bates. He was dead then and he wasn't that kind of lawyer anyhow. He was the kind of lawyer who could get you out jail. How Redmond come in to play later on. He went to law school with Jack Young and Cassic Hull from his office in St. Louis and they took the law exams here and became attorneys, but that was after the suit. Lawyer Burns was an old man who was near death, but they needed someone to record and file papers. They send off items from New York everytime a paper , amotion have to be moved. So they said we have to find somebody who can do this and here was old man Burns, who came over on a bus and sometimes he could hardly finish his work before he could make it back and get back in bed and he didn't charge anything; bus fare and I have the correspondance up at Tougaloo and which he

would stay and pay for a hamburger. Attending to your business. But he should never be forgotten because if we hadn't found him then it wouldn't been anybody where as the lawyer at Tulane from New Orleans he would come to help him sometimes, but that was two hundred miles from here but he did all of the late work and the initial filing of motions and papers that had to be done, be show the case is filed. One of the interesting things about the case before it got started was that all the papers had called me the Bates negriss, no the Bates woman and Constance Motley the Motley Negriss. So we spotted this the very first day of the trial and the schoolboard attorneys spotted this business about the Bates Negriss and one of us is a woman and and none of us negros, and that was her first notion before the judge that here after all reference to the plaintiff and the attorney on record would be Mrs. or proceeded by a titled either Mrs., or a Mrs. Bates. and that they'd granted that motion and the crackerlackers had to then use the title, attorney or Mrs. and that was the very first battle that was won.

DH: O.K. Well, we have taken up enough of your time for one day. I need to get on the tape your saying that's it's O.K. that we use this for scholarly purposes.

Bates: Are you a Doctor?

DH: Yes.

Bates: Dr. Harrison, it is certainly my permission and my consent that you may use my statements to use in whatever manner you choose. That says a lot, doesn't it.

DH: I think it does and thank you very much.