

JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

THE FARISH STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT PROJECT

ATTORNEY IN THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

O. H. 78.01

CARSIE HALL

Interviewed
by

WILLIE WASHINGTON

on

June 22, 1978

Biographical Sketch

Name: Carsie A. Hall
Age: 69
Place of Birth: Prentiss, Mississippi
Resident Present: Jackson, Mississippi
Address: 538½ North Farish Street (Business)
Married: Doris Thorpe
Employment: Counslor of Law

Summary of Interview

Name: Hall, Carsie A.
Interviewer: Mr. Willie Washington
Position: Graduate Student
Date: June 22, 1978
Time: 10:55 A.M.

The interview was in the office of Attorney Hall . There were some telephone calls.

The interviewee was in good health and his responses were very direct to all question. Since the area of questioning was about the life of the interviewee.

Introduction

Mr. Carsie Hall was born four miles from Prentiss, Mississippi in 1908. He is the oldest of two children. His parents are Mr. Estus and Mrs. Laudi Hall. He went to Cedar Grove School and completed his education at Jackson College. He went to work for the United State Post Office in 1928 and worked there for 35 years. He passed the Bar exam in 1953.

Mr. Hall discusses aspects of the Civil Right Movement, segregation, freedom marches and the fight for intergration. He relates the negative effect that intergration causes. He talks about the uniqueness of the Farish Street area, changes he would like to see, and the importance of revitalizing the Farish Street area.

INTERVIEWEE: Carsie Hall
INTERVIEWER: Willie Washington
DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 22, 1978
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Washington: Attorney Hall, will you give us a recollection of your life before coming to Jackson?

Hall: Yes. I was born about four miles from the town of Prentiss, Mississippi, in 1908. I was the oldest of two children of Estus and Laudi Hall. We (my daddy had a farm) lived on a farm. I went to public school, the name of it was Cedar Grove. School ran from October to the last of April. The school was a frame building with the preverbial pot belly stove. Of course, boys had to do most of the preparing, and having wood for the school. I passed to the seventh grade, I believe in 1921.

Washington: What about your coming your to Jackson?

Hall: I came to Jackson in the fall of 1921 along with a friend of mine, known as Bill Pace. We came to Jackson College. Bill's father and my father brought us to Jackson. I think, maybe this was the first time either of us had been on a train. We arrived at Jackson College on the first day of school. Having had no records as to the schooling in Prentiss, there was no report card or anything. I just told the teacher, who happened to Mrs. F. O. Alexander, that I had finished the seventh grade. She didn't accpet thac. I had to take a test in the eighth grade. That's when I came to Jackson. I stayed with this cousin of mine. This was my first knowing about some of the things that went on in college. This was the fall of 1921.

Washington: Can you tell us a little something about your religious background or preference?

Hall: I think most blacks in the community were taught that when you get twelve years old, you should join the church. At twelve, I joined the church where my parents were members. Of course I was baptized.

I don't claim to have had anything unusual happen to me. I just joined the church. That's about what we were suppose to do. I have been a memeber of the Baptist church ever since I can remember. I do not condemn young people for joining the church. I think it's a good thing. I think it helps them to develop a meaningful understanding of the

Hall: of the church. As I said, I don't know if joining the church at twelve meant anything other than the continuation of a tradition.

Washington: What about some organizations in the church, boards or something?

Hall: I'm on the Trustee Board of the Farish Street Baptist Church. I have been on this board for fifteen years. I have taught Sunday School. I don't have any other worthwhile affiliations with the church. I think the church offers possibly the best opportunity for people to grow, develop, and to give reasonable time and energy to religious programs. I think it's worthwhile and then again there's a mission about the early days of church membership. I'm still of the opinion that most of us still and most of us at this point, do not really recognize or have any in-depth understanding of christianity.

Washington: What about some of your early employment?

Hall: Fortunately they were or unfortunately, I don't know about employment. My first employment, naturally, was on my daddy's farm. When I came to Jackson College, having no money, I had to work for the college to pay for my schooling. Whether you consider that employment as such, I don't know. I don't think so. I think it's worthy to note that for some three years at college, I worked.

I was paid 7½ cent per hour and made 15¢ per day. Of course, I didn't draw any money, that went for my schooling. The first real job that I had was at Kolb Cleaners. A cleaning plant located on Amite Street here in the City of Jackson. I worked three weeks there. Having already taken the Civil Service Examination, I was called to the post office three weeks later. On or about the June 21, 1928, I went to work for the United States Post Office. I stayed there for thirty-five years. That was the first worthwhile employment. The other employment that I have had since was in 1973, in the meantime, after thirty-five years of the post office, I started practicing law. Having passed the Civil Service Examination and the Bar Examination in 1953 (1976), that's the extent of my employment.

Washington: Attorney Hall, what kind of an attorney are you? Are you a criminal lawyer or what?

Hall: I guess you could call me a general practitioner. I deal with some criminal law and most of mine is domestic relations dealing with divorce, adoptions, custody, child support, and it could be over land deeds. Generally, I don't get involved with taxes, or any of the other highly technical practices that some lawyers become involved with.

Washington: In doing a little homework (hearsay) I found out that you worked on case involving Jackson State University. Can you tell us something about that case?

Hall: Jackson State . . . how, what?

Washington: I read in an interview from Attorney Young (I think) and he mentioned in that interview something about a case with Jackson State University involving civil rights.

Hall: I don't recall having being involved with any case with Jackson State University. I don't recall them having being involved with any civil rights activities.

Washington: I might have my information wrong.

Hall: Yes.

Washington: What are some of your major cases?

Hall: Well, unfortunately, I have not been involved in any earth shaken cases other than all of the cases that fall under the heading of Civil Rights cases. From the coming of the . . . what do you those people who came down?

Washington: The freedom marchers.

Hall: Yes, the freedom marchers, 1963 to 1964. Even later we were involved in each of those, all of those. All of these cases are not classified as earth shaking like some of the cases that you always quote. As far as Mississippi and the black people in Mississippi are concerned, I think, the freedom marchers made probably the greatest contribution to the freedom of black people in Mississippi than anything else. There were a number of things that had to be done. There was the breaking up of the segregation laws that made it possible for black people to move freely. When you think about the inability to congregate, the inability to pass out leaflets and the inability to drink water from public

Hall:

places, all of these prohibitions were knocked down due to certain rights/activities during the freedom riders situation, which to me could very well be classified as earth shaking cases. As I said, you don't quote them when you're talking about different things, but certainly it seems to me that the right to pass our leaflets, condemning or merely suggesting a meeting of a group of people to protest something, that's as big a case as I think you can have. Of course all of this happened.

I think among everything that those people (present day) fail to remember is that for some three or four years, we only had three lawyers to cover Mississippi. We had to do it. Of course, we're thankful to lawyers who came from other parts of the country to assist us. But even with that assistance, they could not practice, they could not do anything without the presence of one of the local lawyers. I just feel that without the three of us, Mississippi may not have been involved in the Civil Rights activities of the 60s.

Washington:

Since you are a long time resident of the Jackson area, what do you consider your most outstanding achievement?

Hall:

I don't know if I have an outstanding achievement. I guess the most outstanding achievement is that I'm still living. If I had to answer the question, I probably would say the fact that I was able to study law on a part-time basis, under a man who was definitely dedicated to the well being of the Blacks in Mississippi and the nation, and who taught the three of us law without any charge. To be able to pass the Mississippi State Bar, which made it possible for us to be the first black lawyers in some thirty or thirty-five years. Then, after having passed the Bar to be ready, willing and able to assist in the breaking down of 90% of the segregation laws of Mississippi. I certainly would think those to be the greatest achievements of my life.

Washington:

What changes have been made in the legal area that have upset you the most?

Hall:

I don't know if there have been any changes in the legal area that have upset me. I think maybe the thing that upsets me the most is the results of the things I fought hardest for and that is integration. I fought for integration and I still believe that integration had to come.

Hall:

The thing that upsets me now is that as far as black people are concerned, especially in Mississippi and certainly Jackson, is that integration is being used to tear us apart and cause us not to have faith in one another, have confidence in one another. It has caused us to do away with all of the, if not all most of the economic gains that we have had. We do not have anything now in Mississippi that is new as far as black people are concerned. Not only . . . we do not have anything that is new, but I'm talking about business. We're loosing.

We have one Savings & Loan that was started before integration. We got the funeral homes, but we do not have any cafes. We do not have shoe shops. We do not cleaning establishments. We do not have any new motels. All of this is the result of integration. All of this social activity that we have now goes to the Holiday Inn and other white establishments. None of the money that use to be spent with the black people is being spent there. So, I'm disgusted with the way we have used integration. It seems to me that even in the schools, black children have had to pay an unnecessary price for integration. Now mind you, I was not against integration, but I think there has to be a new approach to the implementation of integration.

Washington:

Attorney Hall, why have you remained in this area for so long. I've been taling to a lot of people who say that Attorney Hall has been here for years, which is good. I want to know why have you remained in this area for so long?

Hall:

I don't know. It has been said I remained here because I'm crazy, which may be the best answer I can give. More reasoning has been that people have to have an image. They have to have something that they can point to that gives them inspiration. Now about 90% of all white kids have an uncle or cousin or somebody that they can point to as having been successful. Black kids don't have that.

In the community downtown 99% of these blacks who feel they have been successful have moved out and the black kids have nobody in the community that they can look up to, who they can get an image from. I get the impression that it means a whole lot for a black kid to be able to say that he knows a lawyer, doctor, or somebody personally and that he lives in the same block with them. I guess

Hall: this is the basic reason for my remaining here, is to give what little worthwhile image I can.

Now, I have on my street a number of youngsters who pass by and speak to me as though they feel that we are together. We are the only team. I get a whole lot of pleasure out of this. Of course there is one selfish reason why I have remained here, that is because it's close to downtown. I can walk to the Courthouse and I can walk back on Farish Street when the day is over.

Washington: Can you cite some of the organizations that you are a member of?

Hall: I guess maybe, I am a charter member of the black YMCA, Voters League, Boy Scouts, Jackson College Alumni Association, and Bethlehem Center to name a few. I really don't know because at one time I was so involved in organizations that they almost broke me down physically.

Washington: What changes, say on Farish Street or in the Farish Street area, would you like to see come about since it has been predominately black controlled in the heart of downtown Jackson, Mississippi, which is a unique position for a southern town to be controlled blacks.

Hall: Yes, I think Farish Street is unique in that it was from the very beginning of the City of Jackson. Farish Street divided the city. It went north and south. Capitol was divided into east and west. To most blacks in the early years, you didn't come to Jackson unless you went on Farish Street. Farish Street became known as the lifeline of black participation in the City of Jackson. Now as you mentioned, Farish Street goes straight into the downtown area. The downtown area is being revitalized, so at the same time, Farish Street is deteriorating.

It is my contention, I've said this over and over again that we need to recognize the fact that downtown Jackson will never be revitalized to any meaningful proportion unless Farish Street is likewise. We do have a movement on foot to revitalize Farish Street from Amite Street all the way up to Ash Street. We hope to develop a redevelopment corporation that will be able to remodel, redecorate the better buildings and demolish the old buildings and put up new buildings. Otherwise, Jackson will develop into an outer city. All the worthwhile things will be on the outside of Jackson and the downtown will be rotten core.

Hall: We certainly hope that we will be able to do something to revitalize Farish Street because if we loose Farish Street we don't have anything that we can lool back on with any significance of this great life.

Washington: Let's all hope that never happens for black people in Jackson. I think the building we're in is the Crystal Palace building?

Hall: Yes.

Washington: It was once owned by blacks?

Hall: I would say that the blacks own 90% of the business establishment. Now, their homes they own are still on Farish Street. The houses, most of them are owned by absentee landlords who was in most instances white. We have funeral homes owned by blacks, the churches, the Farish Building owned by Mrs. (Dr.) McCoy. You have Frank Conic of Conic's Beauty & Supply, George Harmon and liquor stores. I would say that about 90% of the business establishment is still owned by blacks.

Washington: Attorney Hall, I want to thank you so much. I want to personally thank you for fitting me into your busy schedule to give me this interview. I hope that the struggle in the area of civil rights for black people in that area can continue as well as it has for these number of years you've been here. Before concluding the interview, do you mind this tape being used by the Jackson State Oral History Program for scholarly pruposes?

Hall: No, I don't mind that, if I understand what you mean by scholarly purposes.

Washington: Dr. Alferdeteen Harrison and the Oral History Department at Jackson State University are studying the Farish Street area for preservation.

I was concerned after reading other people's papers and talking in the community that there was nothing written about Attorney Carsie Hall for scholarly purposes. We're just going to use this information in the Oral History Department for trying to hang on to the history of blacks in Jackson and you've been a big part of that history.

Hall: Yes, I appreciate it. I guess the history writers just have not found that what I done or what I know is really

Hall: improtant. You may find the same to be true. I do, however, feel that one contribution may or may not be recognized, certainly at the time the contribution is made. I have no problem with it. I have never been anxious to be known, to be out in front and I just like to do what I can and go somewhere and sit down.

Now, it's been good to have met you and to have been able to give you these little scattering tidbits of what I have done. As I said earlier, I am concerned that too often many of us are forgetting where we started. I have no quarrels for the people who have succeeded. I have been conscious of the fact that we are all tied together in the same hand and until we recognize the fact, we will be able to do as they've always done. Too many of us are forgetting where we started.

Washington: I want to thank you again Attorney Hall.

JACKSON STATE COLLEGE
Jackson, Mississippi

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWER AGREEMENT

I, Willie Washington, in view of the
(Interviewer, please print)

historical and scholarly value of the information contained in the
interview with Carsie Hall, 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.

Willie Washington
Interviewer (signature)

O.H. 78.01
Interview Number

6-22-78
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, Carrie Astor 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, Mississippi, 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.

Carrie Astor
Interviewee's Signature

July 3, 1908
Interviewee's Date of Birth

Sept. 15, 1982
Date Agreement Signed

OH 81.56
Oral History Number Assigned