

University of Texas at San Antonio Archives and Special Collections

MS 317. Archives for Research on Women and Gender Oral History Project

Hattie Elam Briscoe Transcript, March 5, 1997

Ruthe Winegarten: O.K., we'll try again to see if this is recording or not. So, it's March 5, 1997 in San Antonio. In the office of Mrs. Hattie E. Briscoe. ...Antonio. Her walls are just covered, covered with plaques of achievement. I'm overwhelmed. Mrs. Briscoe, I guess one of the things I didn't ask you last time was about your sisters and brothers. Uh, did they get an education too, or go into professions?

Hattie Briscoe: Uh, my, uh, I call her my baby sister, finished Bishop College, and she, uh, went into the uh, Red Cross. And she was stationed in Guam. And she taught a little while, but she was not too interested in teaching. She finally went into bail bond business.

RW: In what?

HB: Bail bond. Making bail. Which had to do with the court system. And she stayed in that until she retired about two years ago.

RW: So she was also part of the law enforcement type.

HB: Right.

[Unintelligible conversation, static on tape.]

RW: What about your other sisters and brothers? Could you speak up just a little?

HB: Okay. Uh, my brother, Wendall Elam, was in the military. Uh, three or four years, I guess about four years. And, um, he also went to Prairie View (?), he did not get his degree, but he went to Prairie View. And then he went into the bail bond business, and uh, he stayed in that for about 15 or 20 years, uh, also he went to school, uh, to become a funeral director, which he never really got into. And my brother Calvin, he went to college for one year and then he got married and he had, at first he

worked on, uh, a milk truck in California. And he stayed in that, uh, job, for quite some time. Then he went into the bail bond business, so they all ended up in bail bond business. In California, it's very good business. And, uh, my oldest sister, she, uh, I don't...she might have gone to college for one year.

RW: What was her name?

HB: Willie Gladys Elam. Jackson when she died. And, uh, she never did teach, she more or less did domestic work. And, uh, then of course, here I come. I said, then here I come. Uh, you know with the sisters and brothers...of course you have...all the schools and whatnot that I went to.

RW: So, basically, did the other three went...Calvin was in California, where did the others live? In the same place?

HB: All of them. Wendell was in California, my baby brother and my sister was in California. My oldest sister was in California when she died, so they all went to California but me.

RW: Did you ever think of going, or...?

HB: I would have loved to have gone, but, uh...

RW: ...you were married, and...

HB: My husband had told me when we got married that he would never leave his mother.

RW: Yeah, well...[unintelligible sentence]...so you all, did you go out and visit much out there?

HB: Oh, yes, Uh, we did. My husband and I both went to California quite often, because that's where all of my people were, in California. Now there are only two of us left, and that's my, I call her my baby sister, Theresa (sp?) Elam Clarke...

RW: Call?

HB: C-l-a-r-k-e, Clarke. And she retired from the bail bond business, so she's just enjoying life.

RW: Where does she live in California?

HB: Uh, Richmond.

RW: Uh-huh. And the other one?

HB: The other three are dead. All of them died in California.

RW: When you said that...oh, the two are left are you and she...

HB: We the only two left, the two of us. There were five of us.

RW: So, what we're...do you remember your first case? Do you remember the first...

HB: No, I don't remember the first case. I, now there's a case that was very outstanding in my career. Um, it was a criminal case. Um, there was an officer who shot a black man. Um, the wife had called the police to come so she could get her clothes. And, um, her husband had been drinking, and uh, the officer, when he got there, the black man was just standing in the door with a...a milk bottle in his hand. It was not even broken. And, uh, he just stood in the door and shot him dead, from the front door. So, the wife asked me to be a special prosecutor in that case. And, uh, that was the first time in history that that had happened. Uh, and, uh, I asked the district attorney to let me question them, the officer, and he said "You want the officer?" and I said, "Yeah, give him to me." And, uh, I, when I got through with him, I, everybody in the court room was crying, because it was so cold-blooded, to just shoot a man, dead, and he hadn't said anything to you, he hadn't done anything to you. Just shot him dead in the heart. And, uh, I was very upset about that case. Uh, and then I had a bad experience of, uh, the judge having the bailiff to knock on the door, and when he knocked on the door, it was after we had argued our case and whatnot, I asked one of the uh, jurors, "What were you all discussing when the judge had the bailiff knock on the door?" "We were trying to overcome your argument." I said "You want...that's what you were supposed to do. You're supposed to mete out justice, you know the man was guilty of cold-blooded murder." And so, that really did shake my belief where jurors were concerned.

RW: How did they rule? How did they...

HB: Well, they found him not guilty.

RW: Thank you...

HB: And, of course, that, uh, I made the papers and TV and everything else in that case because I knew I was very good in that case. And, uh, I also knew that we had proved that the man was guilty of murder. But, it did not matter. We did not have a single black on the jury.

RW: Man...

HB: You have...San Antonio is noted for that. If blacks are involved, blacks don't get on the jury.

RW: Do you remember what year that case was, just about?

HB: Well, that was, the end of...it must have been the um, late, uh, fifties or early sixties. Uh, I had, I had, uh, the clerk of the court of the court asked me to let her record my argument. She said she'd been taking uh, dictation...taking...and, uh, covering cases for twenty-five years and she had never heard [static, volume decreases suddenly, then increases]

RW: Well, that's pretty historic, isn't it?

HB: Mmm. I don't...let's see...what I was fixin' to say is that maybe I've had, uh, may need to look it up one day, and maybe you'd like to, uh, to record it, uh...

RW: Oh, I think that's the kind of thing that should be in the archives, you know...at least a copy of it. Maybe we could at least get a copy of it. If you're not...if you want to keep it for now, which I understand. Um, when did the first black in San Antonio actually serve on a jury? Had they already been serving but they just weren't used in cases involving another black?

HB: It didn't involve anything. You, uh, you, well you know how hard I would try to get a black on the jury, don't you? And, I lost all confidence in juries. Still don't have any...confidence in juries. And, uh, I only, uh, well, later on I just fooled with juries when I had to, because I didn't feel that we were going to get any justice, anyway. And that's a bad thing to say, but that was my experience where jurors were concerned.

RW: Do you know when the first juror started serving in San Antonio?

HB: No, I don't. Uh, they've always had the blacks on the panels.

RW: O.K., so they just didn't choose them very often...

HB: They'd strike 'em. One time, I pulled a jury panel out of a hat. To see how many blacks I could get on the jury, to see if I could get so many that they couldn't strike 'em all. But, I didn't succeed 'cause they, I think, I pulled about six blacks, and they struck all six of them, so, that let me know then, that the district attorney's office was going to always strike the black jurors.

RW: Is that still, I mean that's not still true, is it? I mean, they can't do that anymore, can they?

HB: They can always...I forget what the number of exemplary challenges are, five, six...whether they can just strike them if they want to, and, they don't want blacks on the jury when blacks are involved. They still don't want them on there.

RW: So they still are not giving heritage...

HB: No. No. No. I don't feel they are...

RW: Of course, they...

HB: I've only had, in my whole time of practicing, to say when I realized what was happening, I didn't fool with jurors too much. Jurors take up a lot of time, and you're not going to get justice, that's the way I felt about it. And that's the way I still feel about it. And it's a bad way to feel. But, uh, that's the way I feel. I will never forget, um, I had, uh, one case where, and this was not a criminal case, it was a child-support case. And, uh, it ended up with two blacks on the jury. A man and a woman. Uh, and the reason they got on there was because each one of them had had me on the other side of their case. So then the lady lawyer let them stay on the jury. And, uh, but down the line, I think she realized that it wasn't going to help any for them to be on there, so she, uh, let the jury go. And that was all right with me. 'Cause she couldn't win the case anyway, so...but, uh, I have, I really have that malice in my heart about jurors in Bexar County, I really do. I think I was justified in it. I want to thank you for the book that you gave me this morning.

RW: Oh, you're welcome.

HB: Uh, I believe from slavery black to the space shuttle women, that's a beautiful title, by Ruthe Winegarten and Sharon Cobb(sp?) it's a lovely book.

RW: Thank you.

HB: I'm looking at Barbara Jordan's picture on here...

RW: Did you know her?

HB: Personally? I used to introduce her before she became so big. And when she come here to speak, I would introduce her and she would always tell them, "Why do you all have Hattie introduce me? She makes me work too hard."

RW: Did you have any personal conversations with her?

HB: Oh yeah. We, we were in the same sorority.

RW: The Delta Phi's..

HB: Yeah, the Deltas. We, I used to, uh, talk with her and, uh, of course when she went to Washington, we were all very, very proud of her. And, uh, when she didn't stay, we didn't know what to...we knew something was wrong...but I saw her, I went to her funeral.

RW: I did, too. Can you, can you remember any conversations with her that would be worth remembering on the tape, or any things that she said?

HB: Well, I don't know whether....I don't, I don't, uh, I don't remember anything very significant, because we were always chitchatting, you know?

RW: Sure.

HB: Uh, and then after, I didn't get to talk with her after she had been to Washington D.C. Uh, and so...uh, we just, well, she just got so big and everything, I didn't uh, try, to impose on her or anything, uh.

RW: Well, getting back for just a minute to some of your early experiences as a new attorney, did the...how were you, uh, accepted by the other attorneys? There were, were there any other black male

attorneys at that...

HB: Oh yes. Yeah, we had black male...

RW: How did they treat you?

HB: Uh, I, I demanded respect from everybody. That's the way I have always lived, and uh, I had no real problems with any lawyers, white or black...

RW: ...or Hispanic either...

HB: ...no real problems.

RW: Everybody was respectful...

HB: Right.

RW: They didn't try to make fun of you or ridicule you or...

HB: No.

RW: ...or be sarcastic or anything like that?

HB: No, 'cause I was, at that stage in life, when I started out, I was very mean. And very angry.

RW: Really?

HB: Yes. Because I had been mistreated and uh, you, in life, when you, when you have been mistreated, uh, and it has affected you, you, you don't really, you don't really withdraw from anything. And I always have a classic example that I give, uh, an example of discrimination. Uh, this judge was about ninety years old, and, uh, I had a case in his court that morning. And I'm always on time. My daddy taught me that, always be on time. They expect blacks not to be on time, so you be on time, all the time. So, I was in his court, I was on there, and I was going to have a jury trial. And he called everybody's case but mine, everybody's but mine. Must have had about thirty cases on the docket. Some judges call cases according to who got there first, some call them according to the case number, which is the best way to do it, and so he had called all the cases on the docket, and he was getting ready to try a case, but he had not called mine.

RW: And you'd been sitting there all that morning?

HB: All the morning.

RW: All the morning?

HB: Yeah. So I said, "Your honor, may I approach the bench?" "Yes, Miz Briscoe." I said, "I want to know what method you use when you call your docket. You can't be calling according to who was here first, because I was here first. You can't be calling according to numbers, because my number came before a whole lot of other numbers. Now, what method are you using?" He said, "I put you last." I said, "By what authority?" "I hope you have a ticket on your Cadillac." I said, "What's that got to do with my case? But for your information, my Cadillac's on the parking lot." And I said, "But if I were parked on the street, and I'm able to buy a Cadillac, I'm able to pay the tickets. Now when are you going to call my case?" "Stop everything, stop everything. Miz Briscoe's in the courtroom. Bring in her jury, bring in her jury." And that's the way they treated me. And I won my case. Walked him out. Nobody else ever did that to me.

RW: You taught him a lesson.

HB: Yeah, and I'm sure that...see what would happen, whatever I would do down there, 'cause I was kind of like a freak, you know, would go all over the court house, what did Hattie do today? I was always doing something. And so, I'm sure that when that came up and he told them, they said don't put her last if she's not last. If she's last, she goes last, you know?

RW: It paid to speak up, didn't it.

HB: Oh yeah. Yeah, it did. And, uh, I, uh, I was like that with all of them, I didn't let anybody run over me, judges, uh, lawyers, uh, nobody....

RW: Like the district attorneys and all those people who treated you with respect?

HB: Oh, I made 'em. You know, I just wouldn't lay back and let them run over me. Now, I told you when I started I was mad. I have to tell you I had [static]...I had [static]

...when I came back to school I found out that I did not have a job. I majored in administration and supervision, not to be the principal, not to be the superintendent, but I wanted to be the first state supervisor of cosmetology in the state of Texas. And, I don't, I don't know I'm doing anything wrong by majoring in administration and supervision, but I had the same degree as the superintendent of schools.

RW: The white superintendent of schools?

HB: Yeah. I had the...that's all he had was a master's in administration and supervision, and that's what I had. That's what the principals had. But I didn't do it from that angle. So then, I called up Wheatley High School and I told the principal that I don't understand that I don't have a job, is that true. He said "It is." I said, "Well, why?" He said, "Well, I'm not discussing that." Then I said, "Well, may I come out there and get my things?" And he said "Yes." So I went out and got all my junk, my kits and all of that. And then I started to fighting the school system, trying to get a letter to the fact that I was fired and why. I never got that letter. I still don't have that letter. I carried all of them over before the commissioner of education's office, and he made out he did not have jurisdiction. I appeared before I went over there, I appeared before the school board, and nobody would take jurisdiction of anything. And so, I, I, we fought for about, almost a year, I guess. And tried to get why I was fired, you know. Because that was terrible, here I am, I've been a six-year contract teacher. And nothing. I can't prove to you that I was fired. So then, I decided, well, I'm going to have to get some kind of job here. I was an expert typist, so I took the civil service exam and made 98.6.

RW: Yeah, you were telling me that, yeah.

HB: Called me like that. And, uh, so I was working at Kelly Field, and this friend of mine inspired me to go to law school. That's how I ended up in law school.

RW: Well, that's pretty amazing. [static] Did the bar association of San Antonio let you join after you got to be a lawyer...

HB: Oh yeah. Uh, I uh, wait a minute, at first, when I first sent in my application to become a member of the San Antonio bar association they turned me down.

RW: Did they say why?

HB: No. They just turned me down. I can't think of that guy's name, I thought I'd never forget it. Westbrook. Joe Westbrook was the president. And so I bear it alone. I, uh, also tried to get the district attorney's office, but they wouldn't let me in, either. And that's when my husband told me, "Hang out your shingle. You're going to make it in..."

RW: Good advice.

HB: Oh yeah. 'Cause it's been hanging out there. But, uh, you could imagine when I said I was mad, you could understand why I was mad.

RW: When did they finally let you join the bar? Or did they...

HB: Well, let me see, it might be up there...

RW: It's up there, I saw it someplace...

HB: It's up there. Uh, Jimmy Ellison, who's president of the bar association, he insisted that I apply again.

RW: Did a few years go by?

HB: Oh yeah. Oh yeah, quite a few years. I wish I could find [static]

RW: You had quite a few obstacles here...[static]

HB: Oh yeah..

RW: Well, I want to switch for just a few minutes. Do you have another thirty minutes or what is your schedule?

HB: O.K., well, I have to be ready to leave here at ten minutes to twelve.

RW: O.K. Well, let's go maybe, twenty more minutes. Do you have to have to some time before that to wind up some things?

HB: Well. I don't know if I do, you know.

RW: Alright, well, let's see what we can do in fifteen minutes. What I want to switch to now is a little talking about some of the voluntary activities you had in the Deltas and the Y and the NAACP, and any, you know, did you...what organizations meant the most to you?

HB: Well, now, uh, my sorority, naturally. I'll die a Delta. And I was, my sorority, they let me in in 1937, in Wiley College. At that time, they viewed, in the college, where they had girls in the sorority, you couldn't get in after you got out here.

RW: You had to join while you were in college?

HB: That's right. I didn't have ten dollars to pay my way in. So, I told them, I said, "I don't have any money," I said, but I have my job waiting for me, and if you all will let me in, I will send you my ten dollars out of my first check. And, uh, it was, grand secretary, was there to speak for us, Edna Kitchen (sp?), from [unintelligible] I can't forget it...

RW: Yes.

HB: You knew Edna Kitchen(sp?)? And, uh, so I was with her, and I asked her, "Do you have a fine black dress you'd like me to press for you? And she looked at my hands and she said, "I guess you know how to press a fine black dress." She told me, "yeah," and she gave me a fine black dress to press, honey, and you know I pressed it, don't you? And she said, "I want that one to wear my pin, tonight." That was...you couldn't touch me, honey, you know I was wearing the grand secretary of Delta's pin. 'Cause I was on...and it was after I got out of school and everything and, came here, I was president of my chapter for two years. And, I mean two terms, before we moved in the hall. And I served as chairman of finance committees, and I was, uh, secretary-treasurer for a while, and I just had all kind of chairmanships. I mean I really worked for my sorority. They got their money's worth out of me. Now, I'm a life member of Delta Sigma Theta, the NAACP, I, was nationally, I made speeches all around, uh, for the NAACP, and I'm a life member of the NAACP also.

RW: What were some of the issues the Deltas and the NAACP were working on during those early years?

HB: Well, discrimination, you know, during those early years, we had to really work. Now the NAACP, you know, that's one of its main purposes. And, I was, uh, as I said, where life was concerned, you know, I just moved around with ease. Wherever I had to go, or whatever I had to do, I could do it.

RW: Did you travel around in other cities for the NAACP?

HB: Uh, not the for the NAACP, but I did for my sorority.

RW: The Deltas? Yeah. What were some of the things they were working on nationally, do you remember?

HB: Well, we had mental health programs, we would go on that. And we had what we called the library project back there, uh, because we didn't have a whole lot of libraries...

RW: You mean in the South...

HB: Yeah. And the mental health over there, that was one of the things I really did for my sorority, where the mental health program was concerned. I went down to the jailhouse one night to get somebody out, and here was this beautiful black woman, who had cracked up downtown. And she was down on the floor, crawling around, she had two little children that were out in the hall, and these cops and things were just sitting up there laughing at that lady. Oh, that hurts me. I told them "All of ought to be ashamed." 'Cause you had to go to the jailhouse, honey.

RW: Because they didn't have any other facilities at that time...

HB: No, you had to go to the jailhouse and stay in the jail until they had an opening in Austin.

RW: At the state hospital...

HB: Right. So I went to my sorority at the national meeting [tape ends]...[side two begins] I told them about that situation and since that was one of our national programs I asked, "What should I do to

help clear this problem up in San Antonio?" They said, "You go back and set up a panel and you get the people who are in charge of the state hospital in San Antonio to come to the panel meeting and you ask them questions and find out what it is you can do to stop that practice." And, uh, I did that. Uh, the man who was over it made out he didn't know anything about it, but he was a liar, he knew that's what happened. And, so the very first person that was let in the state hospital, here in San Antonio was one of my clients. And so from that day forward, we never had that situation anymore.

RW: That must have made you feel really good that you...

HB: Oh, oh, yes, yes, yes it did, it really did, because I didn't know what to do, I really, 'cause that was the law, you know...

RW: Well, that was a good, they gave you really practical advice, didn't they?

HB: They did. And, uh, so that was one of our projects. So, uh, I have never forgotten that, never. Now of course, you know, during the civil rights struggle, we were going as a lawyer to make speeches at various places and various schools and churches and that sort of thing. I did, I spoke all over this town, uh, concerning, for the NAACP and for my sorority...

RW: Do you remember approximately when this change in the state hospital, uh, procedure...approximately...

HB: Oh, let's see, in the sixties. In the very early sixties.

RW: You wonder how many other people had been locked up before then, wouldn't you? I don't know how long they might have been locked up for.

HB: They ain't never changed, it had always been that way, and it was just, it was only for the blacks, now.

RW: I see. The other people they could find...

HB: They would let them take them on out there where they was supposed to be. But if you were black, it didn't make them any difference. And so, that was terrible, you know how I felt about that.

And these were the sort of things that I would, uh, talk about. And, uh, where discrimination was concerned, uh, I, my father had instilled so deeply in me and my sisters and brothers that all people are created equal. Walk that way, don't let anybody tell you anything different. So...

RW: Sounds like he was one of the big influences on, you know, your parents, were they the greatest influences on you would you say?

HB: Oh, yes, I would say. I would say. Uh, other than the Masons where I worked in Marshall. But my daddy was a, I think I told you he was just as white as white, with red hair... That's the way he walked, in life, you know, uh, 'cause you really didn't know what he was, you really didn't. And, uh, he wanted us to feel that same way, and he would teach us this, you know. And my mother, I never did know how she felt about discrimination. Because, as I told you she would sew for rich white people and she was an intellectual, so I never did know, she never discussed discrimination with us. Just my daddy, and, uh, then I guess, uh, he instilled it so deeply, as far as I was concerned, that that's the way I have always walked. Everybody's equal. It's got me in trouble sometimes, but that's still the way I walked, and I don't regret it.

RW: I know that nationally, the Deltas were real active in an anti-lynching movement. Was that before you got involved, or do you remember any...

HB: Well, I first got involved in college, but, uh, but we've always been involved in things that were for the benefit of mankind. And, uh, so, uh, but the lynching, I was never actually involved, but I hated it... I despised it and I never forget Emmett Till. And now, you know, you're speaking, you're talking about those things, as lawyers that's what you have to do, you have to talk about it. And we have to try to influence other people to see that this is so wrong, we need to try to do something about it by the ways of laws, or that sort of thing.

RW: The Congress has never passed an anti-lynching piece of legislation.

HB: Not that I know of...

RW: Not to this day. It's amazing.

HB: It would be, I hadn't thought about it, but what I'm saying is stop that.

RW: Yes.

HB: As a matter of fact, now, I don't think we would take it.

RW: That's probably true.

HB: But the lynching movement is terrible.

RW: Well, what advice would you give young women today if they came to ask you, in preparation for their lives?

HB: Uh, well, number one, I would say to them, uh, whatever it is that you want to do in life, you have to become educated. So, if you are interested in social work, you got to go and get you a degree in social work to be really qualified. Because people are not going to hire you unless you are qualified, that's the number one thing. O.K., you have to so live in a community that you will be respected, and that you can demand respect, according to the way that you live. Also, I would let them know that it's very important that you are connected with a church. Whatever church it is that you want, it doesn't matter, as long as you are connected with a church. 'Cause you have to have some sort of religious philosophy in life, to go anywhere. Then I think I would also say to them, it's important how you look. You don't have to be wearing furs and diamond rings, but that you should always look neat, and respectable, and you should dress properly for the places where you're going. And if you don't know how to, then you need to go to school and learn how to dress, 'cause I think that is very important, too. I always try to look nice, at, at the courthouse. I'm crippled now, and I wear pants quite a bit, I used to didn't even wear them at all. But, I used to wear nothing but dresses. And I think that is important, to always be feminine, always be feminine. Alright, let me see, what else would I, of course I'm a person like this too. I believe that you should be a social being if there is any way possible, and that you should attend social functions, that are uplifting, you know. Uh...

RW: What do you...what is your opinion of the women's movement, or did you feel you were influenced by it, or...

HB: I don't think so, I don't remember any real involvement, because I believed in what they were talking about. And I've never had a complex because I was a woman.

RW: Doesn't look like it, does it?

HB: No complex. Uh, so I guess as far as the women's movement was concerned, I was so much in favor of it until, uh, I didn't get involved in an organization, per se. I didn't.

RW: Just to kind of wind up here, what are you the proudest of, as you think back about many of your law cases, your voluntary activities, maybe that's not a fair question because you're proud of a lot of things.

HB: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I guess maybe I'll say this: that I was very proud to graduate from college, because I worked my way through college. I washed, ironed, cooked and cleaned up, and a lot of folks wouldn't have done that. But there was only one thing in my mind: get your degree, get your degree. And lead as normal a life as you can, so I have always been proud of my graduating from Wylie College. Then, I was proud as a teacher, because I felt that I had done a good job as a teacher. I started at age twenty, with fifty-four students in the fourth grade, fifty-four. Which was very difficult, but I did a good job.

RW: Most, most teachers would have turned around and walked out.

HB: Yeah, I was age twenty, so I was very proud of that fact. I was proud when my husband taught me to do beauty work, and I went to the state board and passed, the first time...

RW: Without even ever taking a beauty course, right?

HB: That's right. He had a seven-chair beauty shop, and I worked in there. When I was in Wichita Falls I do people's hair and my hair and whoever would let me work in her beauty shop. Then I was proud when he made me take instructor's course in cosmetology. I went to Hicks View School for that.

And I didn't want to teach, anymore, but he said, we may have a beauty school, so okay, I went on to that. And then it ends up in the beauty school instructors course, I get the job at Wheatley, and I go on and he insists on me getting a master's degree. I get my master's degree, I was proud about that. Then when I get that, I get knocked down. I wasn't proud of that, I wasn't proud of that. I just show you how he entwined in the whole thing, in my whole life.

RW: Sounds like you're really proud of your educational achievements.

HB: Oh, yes, oh yes, 'cause you can't make it without education. You really can't. And I always, I feel that education is the key to success. And, uh, so I've always stressed that to young people, and to any people when I've spoken to them and that sort of thing. I'm, I'm also proud of how my sorority really used me and, uh, 'cause I did love my sorority. I don't know if you've ever been up there at all, but we have a Delta house, at 320 North Pine Street. It was the old YWCA, and it's nice.

RW: What, weren't the Y and the Deltas kind of closely connected?

HB: Yes. Uh-huh, 'cause I know you know Dorothy Hight(sp?). And, uh, so the Delta house is something I'm very proud of, too, and I, uh, when we went into the Delta house, I had past presidents to donate money to buy a brand new piano, for the living room, and I got the Belltones (?) to give a brand new piano for upstairs, and, uh, those sort of things that I like to do, significant things in life.

RW: Did you know Marla Hemmens(sp)?

HB: Oh, gosh, yes, I should say I did. She used to ride with me to school everyday.

RW: Well, tell me about her. I know we only have a couple more minutes...

HB: Well, she was very brilliant woman, she was one of the founders of Delta Sigma Theta. She was the first president of Delta Sigma Theta, she was also the first president of this chapter, uh-huh, of Delta. She was also a terrific teacher in literature, and the kids loved her and she would dramatize...I used to be in her plays...when she used to have the plays. She had them for the Deltas. And then she used the plays from the Deltas and gave it to Second Baptist.

RW: Oh, I see, I didn't know that piece...

HB: Oh, yeah. And so I used to be in all her plays, and my husband, too.

RW: What were some of the plays you can remember being in?

HB: Uh, the, "The Woman Upstairs," I remember that one. Uh, it's been so long, that they have, you know, escaped me, but, uh, every play that she'd have for the Deltas, I was in it. Uh...

RW: Did you know Jessie McGuire (sp?) down in Galveston?

HB: Yes, not like I knew Marla.

RW: I haven't been able to find out very much about her husband. She was involved in the school equalization, that battle for pay equalization for teachers...

HB: Oh, yeah. Yeah, you'd have to talk to somebody from Galveston, but I knew her because she was a Delta. And, we've had her here in San Antonio, for founder's day.

RW: Well, I don't want to make you late, and it's almost a quarter till and I know you have to get your things together.

HB: Yeah.

RW: Thank you very much.