

Ro: As you know, I'm here to interview you, ask questions about the Ogden school because you were one of the students there. What year did you start school at Ogden?

Ra: To the best of my knowledge, it was. . . I was born in [19]26. It [must have] been in the 30s, about '35.

Ro: How old were you when you started school?

Ra: Five.

Ro: You were five. And that was your first school?

Ra: Yes.

Ro: In what year did you stop school at Ogden?

Ra: It was about [19]40. In the 40s, because I was about seven years old. I didn't go out there [for] just about three or four years.

Ro: What was the last grade that you finished at Ogden?

Ra: Fourth.

Ro: Fourth grade, okay. You started in the first grade, and you were five years old.

Ra: Yes.

Ro: And then you finished in the fourth, you went through the fourth grade.

Ra: Nine years.

Ro: And you were nine years old?

Ra: Yes.

Ro: And you say you were born in '26?

Ra: Yes

Ro: So if you were nine years old, that was in about '35 when you stopped.

Ra: Yes.

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Ro: What month did school open when you were going to school?

Ra: September.

Ro: September. And it closed what month?

Ra: May.

Ro: September and closed in May. What time of day did school open?

Ra: Nine-thirty.

Ro: And it closed [at what time]?

Ra: At four.

Ro: At four. From nine-thirty to four. How did you get to and from school?

Ra: Walk.

Ro: Walk. How far did you?

Ra: It's a couple of miles. About four miles.

Ro: Who was your teacher?

Ra: Well, the first teacher was Ms. Eunice Blackwell from Tampa. And then we had Mr. Vermer Welch. Next we had Mr. Whitfield. Then we had Ms. Eunice Jackson, she's Simmons now, as their helper.

Ro: Unita?

Ra: Yes, Unita Simmons.

Ro: So this is at Ogden. Ms. Blackwell was your first teacher.

Ra: Eunice Blackwell.

Ro: And Mr. Vermer Welch was the second one.

Ra: And Mr. Whitfield.

Ro: Mr. Whitfield taught out there?

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Ra: Yes, for a while. He was Mr. Welch's helper.

Ro: OK. And then Ms. Unita Simmons was the helper as well. And they were all teachers?

Ra: Yes. She was a sub[stitute] then.

Ro: Ms. Simmons?

Ra: She was the helper.

Ro: Who was the principal, or the head teacher, or the lead teacher?

Ra: Well Ms. Eunice Blackwell was the only teacher, then Mr. Welch came out, then he was the principal and she was the sub.

Ro: OK, so she was still there when Mr. Welch came. But Mr. Welch became the head teacher?

Ra: Yes.

Ro: Though she was the only one when you first started.

Ra: Yes, when I first started.

Ro: How many students were in your class?

Ra: Well, it was two classes. It was about ten of us in my class and in the larger kids' [class], it was about fifteen or twenty. Well, there's only one room. Everybody's in the same room. We were on one side and they were on the other when I started.

Ro: So that was a noisy classroom, wasn't it?

Ra: Yes, it was kind of noisy. But we learned.

Ro: So you answered the next one. The next question is how many rooms were in the school, and you've already said that it was just one room. How was it heated during the winter time?

Ra: A wood heater.

Ro: A wood heater. One wood heater for the whole [room]. What about cooling? What about the summertime when it got hot?

Ra: Open the windows.

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Ro: Just open the windows. There wasn't a fan?

Ra: No fans or anything, it's all good.

Ro: So were there a lot of windows around the school?

Ra: Yes. Windows on both sides and the back.

Ro: Where did you eat lunch?

Ra: In the building, if we didn't go outside.

Ro: If you went outside, did you have a place to sit?

Ra: There was a table out[side].

Ro: And you stood up? Or were there chairs?

Ra: Well, there were benches.

Ro: Benches around the table. How long did you have to eat? How long was the lunch period?

Ra: We had an hour.

Ro: Was food prepared at school?

Ra: We brought bag lunches, but when the government started giving us commodities, we cooked.

Ro: On what?

Ra: Wood stove.

Ro: So you had a wood heater and a wood stove. And Ms. Blackwell?

Ra: Yes, she taught us how to cook.

Ro: And what kind of commodities, what kind of food did the government give you?

Ra: We had the yellow grits and the yellow meal and we had the powdered eggs, the powdered milk. We had canned meats.

Ro: What kind of outside activities did the students participate in?

Ra: We had basketball, and we had baseball. And that was about the only two we had. We played ring games and games outside.

Ro: How long was that? Was that during recess?

Ra: Yes.

Ro: How long did you have for recess?

Ra: We had an hour to eat lunch, and play, and what-not. If everybody did really good, we would come back out about thirty minutes before we got ready to go home.

Ro: What kind of outhouse did the school have?

Ra: Just a little wooden outhouse out there. [There] weren't any flush toilets or anything like that.

Ro: Where was it located?

Ra: Behind the school, kinda out from that.

Ro: Was there a separate one for boys and girls?

Ra: Yes, a separate one for boys and girls.

Ro: And could you just go any time you needed to, or was there a time that all the children went at the same time, [when] they had like recess or something [like that]?

Ra: No, if we really had to go, she would let us go, or he would let us go. At lunchtime, they would tell us all to use the bathroom before we came back in.

Ro: So did you have to line up to go, or you just went?

Ra: We just went.

Ro: What were the textbooks that were used?

Ra: We used *Baby Ray*, *Jack and Jill*, *Little Red Hen*, and then some other books. We had our number books.

Ro: You mean like for arithmetic?

Ra: Yeah, arithmetic is what it was. We had the *Blue Black Speller*, I'll never forget

that. The instructors would bring us different books to read. But I remember them.

Ro: What condition were those books in?

Ra: They were used books.

Ro: Did all of them have the back on them?

Ra: No, some of them had the back off.

Ro: Anything else you want to say about the books?

Ra: Well, we enjoyed them. At least I did the best I could, because we were trying to get our education, and we appreciated it and that's where I got my start from, is the Ogden school. And when I left there I went to Mabades.

Ro: A.C.T? It was A.C.T. at that time.

Ra: Yeah. And that's where I got some of my learning, and then my mother moved, back out there somewhere. I went to Tampa and I finished at Tampa High. But that's where I got my start, and I appreciate it and I loved that.

Ro: You think you got a base that was as good as any?

Ra: Yes. I got a good base. Because Ms. Blackwell and Mr. Welsh didn't play. [Laughter] They made us get a good basis.

Ro: So you learned what they were teaching?

Ra: Yes.

Ro: What kind of school closing activities were held at the end of [the] school year?

Ra: We had our little programs and we had our little graduations. A little marching, and plays and little things like that.

Ro: You had an end of the school year play?

Ra: Yes, play.

Ro: So everybody had to participate in it?

Ra: Yes, everybody had a part.

Ro: But you also had graduation where you marched to the next grade?

Ra: Yes, I'll never forget the song. It was "God Knew That Guide Me Over Great Jehovah." That's a little song we sang to graduate.

Ro: What's the most memorable event that happened to you at Ogden? What do you remember most? Something special that happened to you while you were going to school there?

Ra: I remember a little play we had and I got a present. The little play was so good, Francina Jackson and Dorothy Lee and I got a chance to ride a train with Ms. Blackwell to St. Petersburg.

Ro: Because of how good [the play was]?

Ra: Play, yes, in that little play and what-not. On a weekend.

Ro: So you spent the weekend with her and came back Sunday?

Ra: Came back Sunday p. m. That was very nice.

Ro: Where did Ms. Blackwell stay when she was here?

Ra: Sometimes she would live with us, and then [with] different families. She would live in [local homes] till the weekend, then she would go [home] to St. Petersburg.

Ro: I see. So she didn't have a special place, she just lived with the families that [had] the children going to [the] school.

Ra: Yes

Ro: Okay. And I think you've answered this one: How would you judge the education you got at Ogden? You say you think you got a good basic education?

Ra: I did. I got a good basic [education].

Ro: How did your parents look at education? How did your mother view education, because your father, was he still alive when you all were in [school]?

Ra: Yes, my father was alive then. But the parents were really strict then. And you had to get an education. The teachers and the parents that would come, they would meet and find out what good [things] they [were] doing, [what] they could do to get more things for us and a better education.

Ro: So they were interested in the children.

Ra: Yes, they were very interested.

Ro: What sort of values did you see your teacher embodying? That's kind of a way to say what did the teachers care about? What did you think they were concerned about?

Ra: They were really concerned about our education, and our well-being. Ms. Blackwell would go so far as to try to get us different clothes, and Mr. Restnoes would try to get commodities and try to get us some transportation, but that was really hard to do.

Ro: You mean, in the form of a bus?

Ra: Yes. It was hard, so we had to walk.

Ro: They never did get a bus.

Ra: No.

Ro: What else do you want to help me [discuss], cause I've asked all the questions that we have on the list. Anything else you want to say about Ogden school when you were going and during that time in your life. You say you were nine when you left there. So from five to nine, you were at that school.

Ra: Well, I was very close to the Lees, the Thomases, and the people out there. At that time we were going to New Hope Church. It was still Dorothy, Francine and I. We stuck together all through Mabane school.

Ro: You mean A.C.T. now, which became Mabane?

Ra: Yes. We had our little Sunshine Band. I don't know if you remember it, but we used to sing at New Hope, we three did. I think they've gone on, but I still love them, and I love what I got from Ogden, and I love the teachers. I think they really did a good job. I really do. I'm so glad you all [are] trying to carry it on.

Ro: And get the history. Well, thank you, Ms. Randolph, and I appreciate you taking your time to answer the questions that I asked you.

Ra: I enjoyed it.

Ro: And I'm glad you are interested in what we're doing.

Ra: Yes, I am. And I enjoyed [meeting] you and I'm glad that I'm able to remember this things. I am seventy-eight years old, I still remember.

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Ro: That's a blessing.

Ra: Thanks again. I'll get a copy of this over to the University, and they'll be sending you back the transcribed copy for you to make any changes, because they don't always hear everything that we said just like you said it. So if there are any changes that need to be made, then you'll have the opportunity to do that.

Ro: I'll be glad to do so.

Ra: Okay. Thanks again, and goodbye.

[End of Interview.]