

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

***HISTORY OF THE COBB COUNTY BRANCH OF THE NAACP AND CIVIL RIGHTS
ACTIVITIES IN COBB COUNTY, GEORGIA***

**AN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE HIST 4425 (ORAL HISTORY) CLASS AT
KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY, FALL SEMESTER 2009**

INTERVIEW WITH RANDOLPH and GERALDINE SCOTT

COBB NAACP/CIVIL RIGHTS SERIES, NO. 23

CONDUCTED BY ERIC MEZ and MATT BELL

MONDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2009

Kennesaw State University Oral History Project
Cobb NAACP/Civil Rights Series, No. 23
Interview with Randolph and Geraldine Scott
Conducted by Eric Mez and Matt Bell
Monday, 26 October 2009
Location: Hattie Wilson Library, Marietta, Georgia

MB: Reverend Scott, if you could, could you talk a little bit about where you grew up and how that was?

RS: Again my name is Reverend Dr. Randolph Scott, and I grew up, educated and trained in Norfolk, Virginia. I graduated with a BA degree in history at Norfolk State University. I also have a master's degree in sociology from Atlanta University. I also have a doctor's degree in theology at Andersonville Baptist Seminary in Andersonville, Georgia. I also was a teacher teaching ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade world history, geography and government in high school in Norfolk, Virginia. That's where I really began my academic training and experience teaching tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade. Then, of course, later on, I stayed there about four years in high school teaching, and then I went into government service as a government employee. I stayed in government service about thirty-eight years. My last assignment with the federal government was at the Martin Luther King National Historic Site here in Atlanta, Georgia. I worked as superintendent at the historic site. I was in charge of the Martin Luther King historic home on Auburn Avenue. I retired in 1990. Since that time I have been the associate minister at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church here in Marietta, Georgia. So I've been working with the local civic organizations. Presently I'm working as a mentor with the young boys between the ages of seven and fourteen years of age. What we're trying to do is to save our young black men, our young black boys. We have so many young black men to drugs and alcohol and drug crimes, you name it. What we're trying to do is save them before they go to jail; that's what we're trying to do at this particular time. I think that right now we're trying to do what we can to help them and trying to keep them out of jail for the most part. I think we have been successful based on what we have heard and based on what we're hearing from their parents. There's been a tremendous change in their behavior.

EM: You said you grew up in Norfolk?

RS: Norfolk, Virginia, yes.

EM: Were your parents originally from Norfolk?

RS: My parents are originally from North Carolina but later moved to Virginia, and that's where I was born and reared and educated in Virginia.

EM: Did you go to a segregated school?

RS: During that particular time school was segregated. A very interesting thing is that when I went into teaching, I started at a segregated school. That was during the early 1960s, and during that particular time, when the law was passed which stated that schools must be integrated, I was the first black teacher to be offered to teach out in an all-white school.

MB: Do you think that was because of the degree that you had in history?

RS: I don't think so. I think that they wanted to prove that they were willing to integrate the schools. I just so happened to have a degree in history, but basically it was because I think they decided that the community wanted the people to know, and they got seriously involved with integrating the schools.

GS: I just wanted to interject there that he was teaching at the Central High School in Heathsville, Virginia, which was a predominately black high school. There was one other white high school in the county and that was Northumberland High School, which was predominately white. He was active in the civil rights movement there in getting the blacks to vote and was leading the registration drive that was encouraging the black residents to go register, which they had never done before. I guess you would call him a progressive black that had moved to that community from Norfolk, which was a big city to a small, local community. As he was encouraging blacks to register and then vote, he became a thorn to the white community because they never had this before. In a move to be able to get him out of the school system, they offered him a job at the predominately white high school. That's how they approached him to go to this white school to teach. They would be able to say his teaching ability was not up to par and they could really insult him. At that point he knew that the writing was on the wall, and he applied for and received a job with the federal government. That is how he got to the federal government status. He became a teacher in a Job Corps program, and from there we moved from northern Virginia to Michigan. In Michigan he started working as a teacher in the Job Corps program, and he progressed from teacher to counselor and then to corpsman supervisor and then to center director of a Job Corps program. He was progressing in the educational movement and moved real fast and was sent to Washington, D.C., to go to school as a Management student. From there they felt that he was prepared to go out. They offered him a position to either go to Atlanta (we were in D.C. at the time) or the Virgin Islands. Of course, he knew he was near retirement stage, so he decided that he would accept a position in Atlanta. That's when they realized he was on the move. He enrolled in school to get his master's at Atlanta University where he obtained his master's in ten to eleven months. He went through and got his master's faster than anybody that I've known.

MB: Was that the master's in sociology?

GS: In sociology. After he completed his master's in sociology they asked him to go to Tuskegee. He went to Tuskegee, Alabama, to the Tuskegee Institute as the superintendent of Tuskegee Institute Job Corps program, and he was there for two years.

After that they asked him to come to Atlanta to the Martin Luther King Historic Site to be the superintendent there. That's where he retired from.

RS: Let me interject this. She's right. When they asked me to come to Martin Luther King Historical Site as superintendent, they had a white female superintendent at the time. Mrs. King, Coretta Scott King, indicated to the director that she felt very strongly that her husband would like to see a black person as superintendent, whether it was a black female or black male, I just happened to be at the right spot at the right time you might say, and they selected me to be the first black superintendent at the Martin Luther King Historic Site on Auburn Avenue.

GS: I also want to let you know that as a result of his being the first black superintendent at the MLK site, he is instrumental, in fact it was his idea that the memorabilia that Dr. Martin Luther King had would be put on display in Atlanta. It was his idea to go to Mrs. King, and he and Mrs. King went down in the basement of the house where all his memorabilia was stored. Mrs. King and Randolph brought out the items, and he told her what he felt would be the proper memorabilia to be displayed, and that's how all that came about. There were some items at the airport, there was some at the MLK site, and they still have some on the square now at the MLK site in one of the buildings. His robe, his rings, his clothing, his suits—some of the items that are important. None of that was on display, nor had it been displayed before. Also his Nobel Peace Prize was on display. They had a replica of it because you couldn't put the real Nobel Prize out. So they made a replica and everything that he had of importance, and they put it on display.

RS: There were replicas that were on display. His shoes, the ones he wore on the march to Montgomery, Alabama, we placed on display. The clothes that he marched in, we wanted to make sure that the people saw his actual clothing that he marched in in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. So we put them on display for the people to see that these were his marching clothes.

MB: So you've been involved for a long time?

RS: Oh, yes.

MB: While you were going to school were your main intentions to end up teaching at a high school level or did you intend to go to government at any other time?

RS: My main purpose, my main goal was educating and training. That was my field, my interest, mainly because I felt very strongly that blacks at the time when I was coming up were not getting the proper type of training. They could not afford the kind of education I felt that they needed. That's how I got into the field of education.

MB: Do you think your parents inspired you to go into education?

RS: Oh, yes, definitely, no doubt about it, mainly because my mother and father never finished high school. I think my daddy went through the ninth grade perhaps and my

mother maybe the sixth grade. They always told me, “Son, one day, the door will be open where you will have the training, and be qualified once that door is open.” And that’s what inspired me.

EM: Were your parents involved in any civil rights activities?

RS: Not really, no.

GS: That was not that era. That was too early.

RS: And then too it was dangerous.

MB: Yes, especially in Virginia.

RS: That’s right.

GS: He as the youngest of four siblings, so everything was kind of left for him to lead the way. The others ultimately got married. Since he was the youngest they wanted him to succeed, so they pushed him. His mother, at the age of sixteen, was a teacher, and I believe she had a seventh grade education, maybe a little less, but during that era, that was exceedingly high for a black female to be able to teach. She was born in 1898 and at that time for a black female to even be able to read and write was exceptionally great. She was an inspiration and wanted him to be a successful educator. She really wanted him to be educated, so she pushed him to do so.

EM: You mentioned helping the community, getting people to vote in one of the first elections.

GS: Well, yes, this was in Northumberland County, and they were, I guess you would say, slow at this; they had not been afforded the opportunity to have the leadership there who was willing to step out and lead the way. He was more aggressive because he had come from the city and had that aggressive mind that he could make changes in the community.

RS: However, pressure was on me from the white community, and I felt very strongly about it that my contract would not be renewed, so before they fired me I gave up and found another job. That’s when I moved into government service. I knew it was coming.

EM: So the pressure was on you because you were black?

RS: Because I was encouraging the blacks to vote.

GS: He was encouraging and taking people to the Registrars to become registered voters so that they could vote. Many of them had never voted before, and in fact they hadn’t registered.

MB: Were you spoken to about this? Had they asked you to stop?

GS: Nicely.

RS: Yes. Pressure was put on me through my principal who was black. They put pressure on him, and he put pressure on me because his job was on the line. So the pressure didn't come directly from them; it came directly from the principal; but the pressure came directly on him, and the pressure came down on me, and I saw the handwriting on the wall.

MB: During this time were you involved with the NAACP?

RS: Not really. The NAACP was not really active at that time. It was done really on an individual basis.

MB: And then after that you moved to Michigan?

RS: My first assignment with federal government was in Michigan, yes, as a Job Corps teacher, working with young juveniles from Chicago, from the rough sides of Chicago and Michigan and other large cities of Minnesota and Indiana.

MB: Did the sentiment in Michigan differ from the sentiment in Virginia?

RS: Tremendously different. In fact, in northern Michigan, you had very few blacks. Many of the citizens in that community were not exposed too much to blacks in that particular area for the most part.

GS: We for the most part were a novelty. I want to say there were few blacks there, only six or seven blacks that had been imported in from southern states who wanted to get jobs in the federal government, so we were like the first black family to move to that area. We had children and integrated into the system very easily; they were hungry for exposure to blacks. This was northern Michigan, the northernmost part, up near Lake Superior about as far north as you can get without falling into Lake Superior. They were anxious to get to know us, and we were treated like royalty, believe it or not; with four children, they just welcomed them into the school system because I guess it was a novelty to be able to expose those kids to us and our kids. They hadn't really lived around blacks. They had only seen them on TV. The time that we moved was during the civil rights struggle and with Martin Luther King there were many marches and whatnot. This was in the early 1960s, so during that time they were glad to be able to see that we were not what the South had predicted us to be because according to what was being seen on TV, we were a bunch of animals who wanted to invade their territory. They said, no, that's not true. We see a difference. We beg to differ from you that that's not true. Right now we still have friends there, and we still communicate with people and visit with friends there now. They are true friends, not superficial but true friends. We have a lot of superficial friends around us now.

MB: Did you run into any racial stereotyping while there in Michigan? No, none at all?

RS: No.

MB: Do you think it changed your conception of people as a whole?

GS: Well, we knew that the reason there was so much strife here was due to the fact that whites during that time didn't want blacks to cross that racial line and invade their territories because then they would have to give up their jobs, and it was a moral thing. They just didn't want us. They said, "Were not going to have it." That's when the marches came about and the marchers were demanding that, they let us in. And, of course, they fought with all their might. In the end it went through.

RS: I also believe that being the first blacks in northern Michigan—I believe many of the whites were not aware of the behavior of blacks, maybe stereotypes from TV and what-have-you. But I think we portrayed a different image to them, and I think what really did it was I was firm and therefore their perception of blacks began to change, and that was very good I believe.

EM: So after Michigan you moved to Atlanta?

RS: Well, we moved to Wisconsin. That was another Job Corps program where I had just moved up the ladder from a teacher to a Job Corps director and counselor. I held several positions in Job Corps during the time I was there.

EM: What is a counselor?

RS: Counselor is working with young youth, trying to change their behavior, directing them in terms of their academic trade, the field that they should go in based on their academic scores, ACT scores and what-have-you. That was my job to direct them into those various positions as a counselor. Also, if they had some problems on the side, it was my job to counsel with them, and also it was my job to discharge them if they did not change their behavior. I didn't want to do it, but oftentimes I had no other choice but to discharge them. I believe we were very successful in saving many of the young kids. Now, this is not only predominately black, it's also a mixture of blacks and whites in Job Corps. That was my job as a counselor.

MB: Did you run into any racial conflicts in Wisconsin at all?

RS: Not really. I don't recall any.

GS: I might say that in Michigan and in Wisconsin that the racial divide there was the American Indians; they were the ones who were going through the racial prejudices and whatnot. So when we came, it turned the tables for them, and they said, maybe these Indians are not so bad after all. Because the blacks aren't what they're saying they are on television. So I think we nullified the territory even for the American Indians who were there. I guess the ratio of the American Indians to whites were like maybe 5 or 6 percent.

But in the area of Michigan where we moved to we had Italians, Polish, Finnish, a lot of Italians, a lot of Polish people.

RS: This was the first time that these groups of people had been exposed to blacks for the most part, other than what they saw on TV. I guess we portrayed a different image, a positive image to them.

MB: Were you living in an urban area?

RS: It was a rural area.

EM: Did you run into any racial prejudices toward American Indians, racial slurs?

GS: Oh yes, that was prevalent all during that time. They were considered drunks, people that didn't want to work, uneducated—you have to remember during that time they came into Indian territory—that was basically Indian territory—and the Italians, the Polish, the Finnish, they moved in and they took over, and they were pushing them back. Of course, a lot of them didn't have jobs, and during that time this bill was passed where each Indian was paid so many hundreds of thousands of dollars. When they got this money, this also created a big turmoil.

MB: When did you move to Georgia?

RS: That was in 1980.

MB: When you moved to Georgia as that when you began your work with the National Park Service?

RS: Let's see. I moved from Washington, D.C., to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia . . .

GS: No, no, we had already been in Wisconsin and Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, and then we moved to D.C. We moved to D.C. from Harpers Ferry. During the time that he was working with the federal government on the Job Corps program and then when we moved to D.C., and he was working with the Department of the Interior, but transferred to the National Park Service. That's when they wanted him to go to school to learn management.

RS: In fact, the National Park Service had very few blacks if any, and this was a period of time that President Kennedy wanted to have more blacks in managerial positions. I just happened to be in the right spot at the right time, and they selected me as a trainee to learn park management because they did not have any park managers in the Park Service, and they sent me to school for two years. I was traveling all over the country along with other trainees. We had a class of thirty. There were five blacks, and I was one of the five blacks. We stayed in training for two years, and I was assigned to be the superintendent at the Tuskegee. That was my first managerial position as the superintendent at the historical site there in Tuskegee.

MB: So after you received your master's in sociology . . . ?

RS: I received my master's before Tuskegee.

MB: So when you moved to Atlanta was that quite a change from Michigan into Atlanta?

RS: Oh yes, it was a tremendous change.

GS: It wasn't bad. We're not saying anything was bad; there was nothing bad; but we just realized that we were back south.

EM: What kind of indicators did you see there?

GS: Well, as we were moving here we did run into some people indicating where we should move. It ended up being a stepping stone to me as where I was going to have my children live. I really didn't care what was put in front of me, telling me that certain areas would be good choices. We just selected a site, and we moved into it, and we never had any problems. And, of course, we moved here in Cobb County during that time there were many whites. You had some blacks in Cobb County; I'm not saying there were no blacks around here; but they were mostly in the City of Marietta. Few blacks were in the county. See, there's a difference in Marietta city and Cobb County. There is a difference and we moved into the county, into east Marietta.

RS: Another thing is salary wise we were able to move in the particular area that we wanted. I was doing pretty good.

GS: The main factor was probably the economic status of most blacks in the area at the time. And, of course you had some blacks that lived out in Cobb County, I'm not saying there were none, oh yes, they were either government workers or teachers or preachers who were economically able to buy a house in the county.

EM: So Cobb County seemed fine?

GS: Yes, Cobb County, that is, we were told that we should come to Cob County because Cobb County was a progressive county, the kind of county that we would want to bring our children for the schools.

EM: Who told you that?

GS: People from the D.C. area. They gave us tips as to where we should try to move to, what areas would be good. They didn't really want you to move into an area that would be a detriment to you. They want you to be happy where you go. We were told that Cobb County would be a good place to select a home when we got here.

RS: Cobb County, at that time, was one of the richest counties; as she mentioned not too many blacks lived in Cobb County at that time, but it has changed greatly since that time.

EM: So that was 1980? That was the same time the Marietta NAACP was having some election problems and they were just about to go into a Cobb County branch. Were you involved or did you know about it?

RS: Well, I tell you, my wife was one of the secretaries of the local NAACP, so she can tell you a little bit more about it. I worked with the NAACP at that time, but she was more involved with it than I was because she was a secretary.

MB: How did you all get involved with the NAACP?

GS: Just a small group, a small group, what we considered a social group. It was not supposed to be a social group, but when you come to a community and you don't have that many blacks in the community, you are sought out to come join and see what we're doing. That's how we got involved with the NAACP. I had never been involved with NAACP before. I really hadn't had any reason to, and at that point I was older and my children were teenagers. I wanted to make sure that they had everything available to them that was available to any body else in the county. I think that's how I hooked up. And coming back to the South you also wanted to feel that you were able to be protected if you needed it. So that's how I got involved. I just joined, and we started working, and, of course, at that time, we didn't have that many blacks in this community registered with the NAACP. So we had a registration drive to get people to sign up for the NAACP. At that time I was working as an assistant secretary at every meeting, and we went out to the community, and we encouraged people to join. We even had church drives. We set up in the churches, and we would get people to join from the church because we knew that's where the bulk of the people were.

MB: Zion?

GS: Any church. My church is Pleasant Grove, but we would go to the different churches, and we would have a registration Sunday and get people to sign up for membership right there. I think membership was ten dollars for the year. Most anybody could afford ten dollars, and that's how we got people to join the NAACP. During that time we did have some racial incidences going on in the community, and, of course, that's where they needed the NAACP because it had attorneys that would defend or support any kind of incident that came up. That's what NAACP was set up on. If you needed help, you had somebody to turn to. If you think about this community right here [on Lemon Street], most of them are on the same economic status. If they needed help they wouldn't have the money to go down town Marietta and get one of those attorneys down there. No, but where would they turn to? They would turn to NAACP because they know there's a person on staff there that is there to help you work out whatever problems you might run into and to assist you attorney-wise. So that's what we did as members of the NAACP. I was never president, neither was he, but we did work with him. We have had several presidents of the NAACP since my joining with them back in the 80s.

RS: We've had two who just recently died; Hugh Grogan and Oscar Freeman were presidents. We had James Dodd who was running for the city council. His brother Jerry Dodd became president of the Cobb NAACP.

MB: When you joined was Oscar Freeman president or was Dover Ferrell president when you joined?

GS: I am not sure. It's been a long time.

RS: But they were both giants really, and they really moved the local NAACP forward, especially people like Hugh Grogan. They really moved the NAACP in Cobb County and Marietta to great heights you might say.

MB: Were you involved with the NAACP at that time?

RS: No, my wife was more involved in it than I was, but I was involved in getting people out to vote and things of that sort.

GS: A person you might be interested in and would be a real instrument in giving you information on the NAACP would be Rosa Scott. I believe she's the second vice president now or the first vice president. Her name is Rosa Scott. Another person would be Gayle Walton. These are Cobb County residents. Rosa Scott is still active. Gayle Walton, I believe, is no longer active with the NAACP, but she's a person of interest that you may want to interview because they can give you a lot of information that you might need. And of course, the present president, Deane Bonner, can give you a lot.

RS: Yes, Rosa Scott is the first vice.

GS: She was there when I was there, so that's why I know she's got good information that can bring you through the ranks of the NAACP here in Cobb County.

MB: So during your initial involvement with the NAACP you were currently working at the Martin Luther King Historic Site? How did you end up working at Martin Luther King National Historic Site after moving here?

RS: I became involved in it when I saw a need to get the black people to vote along with my wife, we saw a need to get them out to vote. In fact, there was little voice; blacks did not have a voice in Marietta at that time; and my wife and I, especially my wife being the assistant secretary, got involved, and I got involved in helping her and helping the blacks to get out to vote.

MB: Was that what you guys were also trying to do with the membership drive, acquire members but also get people to register to vote at the same time?

GS: Oh, yes. We always encouraged them to register to vote and also become an NAACP member. Of course, we encouraged life memberships, but not too many people were able to buy life memberships because they were quite expensive, but a yearly membership now is inexpensive. But in order to have a voice in case something should come up, one never knows when something is going to come up unexpectedly. Just in case you want to have a back up, that's what the NAACP is, a back up, and we try to keep it alive and active by being good participant, which I haven't been. [laughter]

RS: There came a time when people like me and my wife had to sit back and let the younger people move in and take over the reins and what-have-you. We're getting older; we're not getting any younger.

MB: How many members do you think there were when you first joined?

GS: I don't have any idea but I would just guess maybe 400 or 500. I don't know how active they were. You know, people will join, they'll give their ten dollars and they'll sign up, and then you don't see them or you don't hear from them any more, but I would imagine 400 or 500. I don't have any idea what the membership is now.

RS: The only time that people really become active is when there is an issue, a racial issue which involves them in the community, and that is when the NAACP will rally behind the issue, whatever the issue might be. That's when the NAACP became a rallying point.

EM: Were there any big issues when you were involved?

GS: Well, we were still trying to get the schools to integrate, and, even so, right now, you know, we still have racism, but kids now are more open-minded, and they don't have a lot of hang ups like they used to. Most of that was due to the parents; it wasn't the kid it was the parent. So you're parent thinks, so will the children react.

RS: I don't know whether it happened in Cobb County, but one of the big issues that we had in Virginia, and I'm quite sure it happened here too, is the unequal pay between black and white teachers. I'm quite sure it happened here too, but that man right there [pointing to a picture], Thurgood Marshall, was a good example of that. I remember when he first brought this up before the Supreme Court. First it was brought up before the local court, and it failed. Then he took it before the federal [district] court, and it failed. Then he finally took it to the Supreme Court, and they ruled saying that black teachers and white teachers having the same training and same education must get equal pay. I'm quite sure it happened in Virginia. I'm sure it happened in Georgia as well. But that was a big issue at that time mainly because of that man there that we see.

MB: Did you ever encounter that personally?

RS: Oh, yes, during the time I was teaching. I was a history teacher at Northumberland High School, and white teachers were getting more pay than I was.

MB: When did you decide to become a reverend? Is it while you were working with Job Corps, working at the Martin Luther King Historic Site?

RS: Working with Martin Luther King. During that time God called me to a higher calling, to serve his people, and that was during the time I was superintendent of the Martin Luther King Historic Site. God called me to do His work.

EM: You said you were a superintendent at Tuskegee Institute?

RS: I was there from 1980 to 1982, for two years, and then from 1982 I went to Martin Luther King and stayed there until I retired in 1990. So I was there about nine years.

MB: Did you see a difference between Atlanta's, Cobb County's sentiment with racial conflicts and that of Tuskegee Institute or that area surrounding it?

RS: There weren't too many—Tuskegee Institute in that community was basically a historical town, a town where George Washington Carver grew up and in fact, he was the president of the institute at one time. It was more of a historical town for the most part.

GS: And mostly black; it was predominately a black town. Tuskegee University, which is there, brought an influx of blacks into the community, and some of them stayed, so they became predominately a black town. At that time they had a black mayor.

RS: Mayor Johnny L. Ford was the first black mayor that Tuskegee had.

GS: And I think he remained there for quite some time. By being a predominately black town, he had a good following, good support, so that means he stayed there until he was ready to leave. I think he became a Congressman or something, a Senator or something, I don't know. [Ed. Note: Ford was elected to six four-year terms as mayor of Tuskegee between 1972 and 1996, served as an Alabama state representative from 1999-2004, and was elected to a seventh term as mayor of Tuskegee between 2004 and 2008.]

MB: Were you guys active in the NAACP around '96 or '97?

RS: I know I wasn't.

GS: Not that active.

END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A
START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

GS: The NAACP banquet which is the Freedom Fund banquet.

MB: Which they renamed in memory of Oscar Freeman?

RS: Oscar Freeman, right.

MB: Did you guys go to the banquet?

RS: No, we didn't.

GS: The weather was too bad; we didn't want to get out in it.

MB: Were there any incidences that you recall while Donnie Perry was an attorney when you were initially active, that could have benefited from his counsel?

GS: There was some incident. I can't recall.

RS: We really didn't get involved in that. We were not involved in that at all.

EM: But did you hear about it?

RS: Oh, yes, we heard about it.

GS: As I told you, Gayle Walton and Rosa Scott have a lot of information. They were quite up on everything from the time we came into it and even after we weren't. I know another one, Edith Moore, who now is in Tennessee. I can give you her phone number.

MB: One thing that I wanted to ask you about which I'm not sure if you're up to date with what's going on with the Martin Luther King National Historic Site, but helping to coordinate getting all the memorabilia and everything displayed, have you been keeping up with the dispute amongst the children about possession of the articles?

RS: Yes.

MB: What do you think about that?

RS: I think it's a shame. I believe that Mom and Daddy, Coretta and Martin Luther King, Jr., would not have liked to see that. In fact, it wouldn't have gone on had they been living, and even if Coretta were living, she would not have allowed that to happen. Mainly because of the money. All about that almighty dollar. But I think right now, according to what I've heard in the paper, they have come to a settlement.

MB: You don't think they'll lose any of the artifacts they have on display?

RS: Oh, no.

GS: It has nothing to do with the artifacts; it has to do with the money. And the artifacts, I don't think there's interest there. They're proud to have it displayed.

RS: When I was there, that's government; they can't touch that. In fact, when it comes down to the birth home, which I was in charge of, there was nothing they could do with that.

They haven't turned the house over to us [the National Park Service] as of yet; we wanted to get that house lock, stock and barrel; but we do have control over it in terms of the rehabilitation of it, refurbishing and what-have-you. The National Park Service is still responsible for that in terms of giving the tour and things of this sort. But the other building, for the benefit of the birth home that we were referring you to, we're still in charge of that.

MB: When you were there did you head up the rehabilitation of all those homes on Auburn Avenue?

RS: Oh, yes.

MB: Can you talk about that a little bit? I've been there; I love walking through that whole area.

RS: In fact, when I was there, the birth home was still inhabited by some of the people. As they moved out, we did not let other people move in until they found another place to stay. But as they died or they moved out, we kept them up. Now, once they moved out, then we revamped and restored them back to what they were during the late 1930s; we restored them.

MB: Did you help with the restoration of Martin Luther King's birth home?

RS: Oh, yes.

MB: What condition was it in when you guys acquired the house?

RS: Oh, boy, it was in terrible shape. We had to go in and do the whole house over, in other words, restore it—the windows and everything, the flooring; we tried to maintain the original as much as possible. That which we could not, we had to remove and duplicate it as much as possible.

MB: You guys have done a great job on the house.

RS: You've been through it?

MB: Yes.

RS: Good.

MB: Did the NAACP help out or was the whole Martin Luther King National Historic Site government funded?

RS: All was government funded by the National Park Service. Money was earmarked from Congress and given to the National Park Service. I would talk with the director of the National Park Service and discuss much money was needed. I would sit down with my

staff, and they would let me know what we needed. I would submit it and get the money to be appropriated to restore the birth home and also the shotgun homes.

GS: In fact, all of those houses in the block, including the Fire Station, and all houses including the birth home were restored. Like he said, as people moved out, the National Park Service tried to purchase all of those homes from the homeowners. As they moved out they would restore them and try to get them back to the original status of how the houses looked during the time of Dr. King growing up and his parents living in the area. They did a number one job, and even some of the homes in the back on the next street, they did those too. They were trying to restore it, to make it look like it used to.

RS: When Dr. King was living there.

GS: They did a great job.

EM: Was there any opposition in acquiring any of the homes?

RS: Not that I recall.

MB: There are people living in them now, correct?

RS: No, no. We purchased the homes as they moved out, and once we got the money to restore it, we did that. What we wanted to do, we wanted to restore the homes back to the way they looked when Dr. King was living there, and that is what we did.

MB: Did you receive any training in preservation?

RS: Me? No. I hired a staff that had that training. I didn't know anything about rehabilitation at all. I hired people that had that training.

MB: Well, is there anything else that you guys would like to add about the NAACP or the National Park Service or anything like that?

GS: No. With the NAACP I think it's still a constant struggle for them trying to be able to help people in the community who need help and who need some type of assistance, and I think they are there and ready to aid in whatever way they can. As I said, I'm not active, so I really don't know what they're doing now, but I haven't heard any complaints, so I think they're doing a very good job.

MB: During your involvement did you see it grow quite a bit?

GS: I sure did. One thing we saw, the youth department took hold. When I first started there was not a youth organization, let me put it that way. We had youth working, but it hadn't been organized into a youth division or whatever it's called now. That has grown. The youth are encouraged to work in the NAACP doing whatever projects are necessary for the young folks.

MB: Did you utilize any of your Job Corps training working with the youth in the NAACP?

RS: It came in handy whenever I had an opportunity to work with the NAACP; it came in handy. Again, my wife did a great deal of that, but I gave advice to many of the presidents from my experience and background, to Oscar Freeman, for instance. In fact, we didn't live too far from him, and we talked quite a bit about some of the issues that were involved, social issues, political issues at that time. So I gave some advice.

MB: You gave Oscar Freeman advice?

RS: Oh, yes.

MB: So did you know Oscar Freeman well?

GS: They conversed with each other on issues, and I'm sure some of his expertise was helpful in helping Oscar as president and whatnot.

RS: I worked more closely with him than with other presidents.

MB: So after Oscar Freeman . . .

RS: I think after he left the position of president, over the years we began to drift apart for the most part, and he just died recently.

GS: He was quite active.

RS: Yes, very active.

MB: What are your thoughts on Oscar Freeman? Do you think he was big in developing the Cobb NAACP?

RS: Let me put it this way: during the time that Oscar Freeman was president you did not have the conflict then that you have now; you just didn't have it. There was more cohesiveness during that time; there was more cooperation during that time. I'm not saying that what's going on now is not beneficial, but during that time you had more cohesiveness.

EM: Why do you think that is?

RS: I don't know.

MB: We've heard that from nearly everyone that we've interviewed.

GS: Maybe it could have been age. It could have been a group of people who were more or less the same age working together during that period, where now you've probably got an

influx of everybody in there, and maybe their minds are meeting sometimes. Maybe that could be it; I don't know. But as far as I know they're running pretty smoothly. I haven't really heard of any conflicts, but it just that, and too it could be a woman president, I don't know. There are all kinds of possibilities if there is anything going on. It could be that. Sometimes men have a problem with a female being in charge. And as it is, the president and the first and second vice are all female.

RS: I do feel that maybe there are no issues that have come to the forefront; it could be a lack of political issues at the front. Could be.

MB: How do you feel about the recent election of Barack Obama? Do you feel like a goal has been accomplished or maybe not? How did it make you feel?

RS: Oh, my goodness, I think that's the best thing that could have happened. I think he's doing a fabulous job, I really do. He's young, and time will tell, but right now I think he's doing a fabulous job.

MB: I guess this will conclude the interview.

END OF INTERVIEW

INDEX

- Atlanta University, 1
Andersonville Baptist Seminary, 1
- Bonner, Deane, 10
- Carver, George Washington, 12
Central High School (Heathsville, VA), 2
Civil Rights Movement
 In Virginia, 2
 NAACP, 5, 9-12, 14-16
 NAACP, Marietta and Cobb branches, 9-12
- Dodd, James, 10
Dodd, Jerry, 10
- Ferrell, Dover, 10
Ford, Johnny L., 12
Freeman, Oscar, 10, 12, 16
- Grogan, Hugh, 10
- Kennedy, John F., 7
King, Coretta Scott, 3, 13
King, Martin Luther, Jr., 3, 5, 12-15
- Marshall, Thurgood, 11
Moore, Edith, 13
- National Park Service, 7, 14
Nobel Peace Prize, 3
Norfolk State University, 1
Northumberland High School, 2, 11
- Obama, Barack, 17
- Perry, Donnie, 13
Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Marietta, Georgia, 9
- Scott, Geraldine, 2-13, 15-16
 Cobb County branch, NAACP, assistant secretary, 9
Scott, Randolph
 Background, 1
 Education, 1-2

Employment

Norfolk High School, 1

Job Corps Program, 1-2, 4-7, 12, 15

Martin Luther King National Historic Site, 1, 3, 10, 12-14

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, 1

On Crime, 1

Parents, 1, 3-4

On Education, 3-4

On Voting Rights for African Americans, 4-5

On Living in Michigan, 5-7

On Counseling in Wisconsin, 6

On American Indians, 6-7

On Cobb County, 8-9

On Restoration of Auburn Avenue, 14-15

Scott, Rosa, 10, 12

Segregation and unequal pay in Virginia Schools, 2, 11

Tuskegee Institute Job Corps Program, 2, 7-8, 12

This item is part of the following collection:
Thomas Allan Scott, 1943-
Kennesaw State University Oral history project, 1978-
KSU/45/05/001

The collection is held by:
Kennesaw State University
Dept. of Archives, Special Collections, & Records Management
1000 Chastain Rd
Sturgis Library Rooms 215-226
Kennesaw, Georgia 30144
(770) 423-6289
archives@kennesaw.edu

To request permission to publish, reproduce, publicly display, broadcast, or distribute this material in any format, you must contact the Dept. of Archives, Special Collections, and Records Management.