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*The Daily Aesthetic: an oral history of a southern city’s black park system, 1916-1956*

oral history interviews

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Taylor Seals MAR 25, 1997
Harry Sykes APR 9, 1997
Lawrence Webb JUN 18, 1997

record ID: [last name]-[date of interview]

video history project:
*a douglass park documentary project* 20:00 minutes

The Daily Aesthetic project website:
http://www.uky.edu/Projects/TDA

Project Director: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.

sponsored by:
*Kentucky Oral History Commission*
*Lexington City Archives*
*University of Kentucky Department of Geography*
*University of Kentucky Special Collections*

primary archives:
*University of Kentucky Special Collections*
*Lexington City Archives*
interviewee: Mr. John Will Brown
former Director of Recreation; began in parks in 1941; retired 1983

date: April 2, 1997

length: 82m

location: Mr. Brown’s residence

interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.
Harold Barker, Director of Lexington City Archives

contents (times approximate)

0minutes Name and brief description of family
2m Programs Mr. Brown began in park system and philosophy of recreation
6m General description of park activities; Church Day
8m Baseball and Football programs
13m Condition of recreation across Lexington, KY
14m Booker T. Washington School in Douglass Park
16m Early Leisure recreation in Douglass Park; Bands in Lexington!
20m First recreation job in park system
25m (with map) description of individual parks in black park system
29m Participation between different parks facilities
33m Douglass Park programs for children and adults
38m Segregation and integration of parks and Dunbar High School
48m 1939 all-star basketball team from Dunbar High School
49m Special events in park system (Easter Egg Hunt, Penny Day, Fashionettes)
55m Story of experience refereeing (only black referee) in Knott County, Kentucky
58m Referring experience for Colored Sports Leagues
1:04h (with pictures) music in Spiegel Heights and Charles Young Community Center
   description of Mrs. Lucy Estill and Prall Town Playground
1:12 Passive recreation; music as beauty recreation
1:14 Personal philosophy
1:17 Festival in Charles Young Community Center
Mr. Julius Berry
former employee of park system; and first Africa-American
Citizen’s Advocate for Lexington, KY

September 24, 1997
80m
Lexington Government Center
Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.
Harold Barker, Director of Lexington City Archives

Experience growing up in neighborhood black park; Basketball between parks; integration of parks; experience as Lexington Citizen’s Advocate
The Daily Aesthetic: an oral history of a southern city’s black park system, 1916-1956

Record ID: Butler-092696

interviewee: Mr. Hansford Butler
date: September 26, 1996
length: 60 minutes
location: Lexington City Archives
interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.
Harold Barker, Director of Lexington City Archives

contents

History of leisure activities in Douglass Park; 4th of July in Douglass Park; other leisure activities in Lexington, KY
The Daily Aesthetic: an oral history of a southern city’s black park system, 1916-1956

Record ID: Cunnigham-031297

interviewee: Mr. Melvin B. Cunningham
Director of Charles Young Community Center
date: March 12, 1997
length: 35 minutes
location: Charles Young Community Center
interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.
Harold Barker, Director of Lexington City Archives

contents

i. general personal history
ii. history of working at Charles Young Community Center and Douglass Park
iii. Douglass Park as meeting place for local community and middle Bluegrass region; a certain brotherhood
iv. activities in Charles Young Community Center
v. winter activities; recognition by local leadership
vi. adult recreation and present day use
vii. historic use of Center
viii. concept of recreation: personal health and community welfare
ix. Dirt Bowl history and importance 25 years ago in Douglass Park; Mr. Cunningham’s role in getting the basketball tournament started
The Daily Aesthetic: an oral history of a southern city’s black park system, 1916-1956

Record ID: Delaney-052997

interviewee: Lillian Gillespie Delaney
  former Douglass High School teacher and playground director
date: May 29, 1997
length: 85m
location: Ms. Richardson’s residence
interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.

contents (times approximate)

0m personal history
4m first teaching experience
9m first experience working in parks, 1943
11m park matrons
14m parks in system
15m 4th of July in Douglass
20m other activities in parks
21m games for adults
22m boundball
23m differences between recreation for girls and boys
25m Douglass High School, county high school
26m beginning in county park system and segregation
27m county park locations
29m differences between Douglass Park and Douglass High School Playground
31m carnivals
35m dances at Douglass High
40m Dunbar High School compared to Douglass High
41m Lucy Estill
43m recreation certificates
49m important people in county park system
51m John Will Brown at Spiegel Heights
54m Smoke Richardson and Charles Young Community Center
57m Apex Club
57m women clubs, i.e., Copper Dime
61m parks across city and surrounding neighborhoods
66m golf at Douglass Park
71m dog shows and doll shows
72m Douglass Park swimming pool
73m Taylor Seals
75m bands in Douglass Park
76m County Recreation Scrapbook, 1954
79m staff of county parks
82m William Goodwin
The Daily Aesthetic: an oral history of a southern city’s black park system, 1916-1956

Record ID: Gentry-060397

interviewee: George Gentry
Lexington Jazz Musician and played at Douglass Park
date: June 3, 1997
length: 90m
location: Mr. Gentry’s residence
interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.

contents (times approximate)

0m family history
5m first job because not liking school
7m first involvement in music
11m Stormy Weather, the movie
12m Gentry plays Stormy Weather on trumpet
16m playing music at Douglass High School
18m opportunity to play in parks
20m talent shows at Douglass Park
25m neighborhood around Douglass Park
29m 4th of July at Douglass Park
32m Mammoth Life Insurance Company sponsored events at parks
33m first DJ in Lexington, Lawrence Webb
36m formal dances for teenagers
39m Duke Madison, local jazz musician
40m Omnicron dances
44m Bands playing at Charles Young Community Center
50m Smoke Richardson Orchestra and Circle H Club
54m Gentry plays Smoke’s signature piece, Trees, on saxophone
62m music and segregation in Lexington
68m American Federation of Musicians
71m black bands playing in Lexington
73m sports vs. music
75m personal philosophy on music
79m Lyric Theater
82m who played at Lyric
86m Lyric closes
90m personal recommendations for music in parks
The Daily Aesthetic: an oral history of a southern city’s black park system, 1916-1956

Record ID: Grevious-042397

interviewee: Mrs. Audrey Grevious
former Charles Young Playground Director and school teacher

date: April 23, 1997

length: 80m

location: Mrs. Grevious’s residence

interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.
Harold Barker, Director of Lexington City Archives

Contents (times approximate)

0 minutes Name and brief description of family
3 m Charles Young Community Center (CYCC)
women in parks; Smoke Richardson; Socialization of children
6 m Ball room dances and other dances
8 m plays on CYCC’s
9 m library in CYCC
11 m women leaders and programs for girls
12 m women role models
13 m always something going on in CYCC
14 m Douglass Park
17 m Difference between then and now
18 m couldn’t wait to get to CYCC after school
20 m a true community center
21 m extended family through CYCC
23 m neighborhood closeness promotes stability
26 m people crossing town to get to CYCC
28 m Douglass Park vs. CYCC
30 m boy-watching in the park
33 m 4th of July
36 m individual benefits of recreation
39 m ...community benefits
40 m Colored Fair
42 m personal history of working park
45 m sports not everything in a park
46 m expressing yourself through parks and plays
51 m women in parks
53 m other playgrounds across city
54 m changes in Douglass Park
57 m Aspendale park and history
60 m the Spider Web restaurant
1:05 h coda: Personal history
1:08 Dog Show in parks
1:12 what is needed in recreation and benefits from arts and crafts
1:15 building character through parks
1:16 lack of pictures of parks, why?
1:19 East end neighborhood around CYCC
interviewee: Mr. James O. Jones
former member of Board of Park Commissioners (Colored)
date: December 19, 1996
length: 90 minutes
location: Resident of Mr. Jones
interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.
Harold Barker, Director of Lexington City Archives

contents
side one:

i. Personal history of Mr. Jones
ii. Park Board of black park system in 1940’s when Mr. Jones was member of Board
   a. personal experience in becoming involved in Park Board
   b. money issues of the Board; money was better handled in black community for black community
   c. common activities of Park Board
   d. connection of local black schools with Park Board
   e. employees of Board

side two:

iii. Park system
    a. Douglass Park
    b. business and activities associated with parks
    c. festivals and parades in park
    d. other parks across town

iv. Colored Fair
    a. dance halls during Colored Fair

v. Personal notes and summary
    a. names of individuals associated with park
interviewee: Mr. James O. Jones
  former Board of Park Commissioner (Colored)
date: May 27, 1997
length: 65m
location: Mr. Jones’ residence
interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.

contents (times approximate)

0m family history
4m childhood home and neighborhood
6m play activities as child
8m Douglass Park dog show
9m importance of Douglass Park
13m trolley stop in front of park
15m looking through Douglass Park’s front gates
21m street showers before pools
26m Dunbar High School Band
29m Smoke Richardson’s Orchestra
34m Charles Young Community Center opening
35m Mrs. Audrey Grevious
39m differences between parks in system
40m Apex Club and Parks
45m Lucy Estill
49m her community recreation certificate
51m Lucy Estill and women recreation directors
53m Hattie Rowe, former recreation director
61m Charles Young Community Center
interviewee: Mr. Norman L. Passmore
former Dunbar High School teacher and basketball coach

date: May 16, 1997
length: 81m
location: Mr. Passmore’s residence

interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.
Harold Barker, Director of Lexington City Archives

contents (times approximate)

0:30mm:ss personal history / academic history: born, April 1, 1915 Columbia, Georgia
2:00 academic Achievements
2:30 athletic achievements
3:00 Frankfort flood, 1937
4:25 graduation from KSU, 1928
5:50 Dunbar High School
6:55 head football coach, 1950-1960
9:28 assistant principal at Dunbar, 1964
12:30 elected to board of Kentucky Athletic Association, 1974
13:45 teaching at Dunbar
14:50 vice-president of KAA
15:18 Religious experience
16:10 1942 experience at St. Paul
12:28 1950-1976 pastor in Midway
17:00 1976 to present pastor in Wilmore
17:30 Awards received
19:20 own children
22:00 connection between Dunbar High School and Douglass Park
23:00 old Heber Field off Rose and Limestone
24:00 trade school beside Dunbar
26:00 Dunbar High School Band
30:00 playing Kentucky Appalachia teams after integration
35:45 John Will Brown
39:20 Mr. Brown as referee
44:22 Dunbar recreation
52:30 Douglass Park
55:50 integration and competition
58:30 parks help children
1:00:00 segregated parks in Lexington
1:05:00 segregation in school and parks
1:08:00 decline of park
1:10:30 neighborhood around Douglass Park in the 1990’s
1:15:25 Churches were “brighter” in the 1930’s and 1940’s
1:17:00 Mr. Taylor Seals
1:20:00 Other individuals related to Dunbar history
interviewee: Charles Quillings
former Dunbar High School Band Instructor and Douglass Park Musician

date: July 21, 1997
length: 65m
location: Lexington City Archives
interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.

contents (times approximate)

0m family history
5m first job because not liking school
7m first involvement in music
11m Stormy Weather, the movie
12m Gentry plays Stormy Weather on trumpet
16m playing music at Douglass High School
18m opportunity to play in parks
20m talent shows at Douglass Park
25m neighborhood around Douglass Park
29m 4th of July at Douglass Park
32m Mammoth Life Insurance Company sponsored events at parks
33m first DJ in Lexington, Lawrence Webb
36m formal dances for teenagers
39m Duke Madison, local jazz musician
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44m Bands playing at Charles Young Community Center
50m Smoke Richardson Orchestra and Circle H Club
54m Gentry plays Smoke’s signature piece, Trees, on saxophone
62m music and segregation in Lexington
68m American Federation of Musicians
71m black bands playing in Lexington
73m sports vs. music
75m personal philosophy on music
79m Lyric Theater
82m who played at Lyric
86m Lyric closes
90m personal recommendations for music in parks
The Daily Aesthetic: an oral history of a southern city’s black park system, 1916-1956

Record ID: Richardson-030597

interviewee: Ms. Sandra Richardson
great-niece of Lucy Estill (deceased) who was member of Board of Park Commissioners (Colored)
date: March 5, 1997
length: 30 minutes
location: Resident of Ms. Richardson
interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.
Harold Barker, Director of Lexington City Archives

contents
side one:

i. Introduction

ii. Description of Ms. Richardson’s great aunt, Lucy Estill, who was Colored Park Board member in 1940’s

iii. Description of family while looking at photographs

iv. Mrs. Richardson reads Lucy Estill’s awards and recreation notes
   a. reading of play script written by Lucy Estill similar to 1920’s play, “Milestones of Our Race.”
Record ID: Richardson-052897

interviewee: Ms. Saunda Richardson
daughter of Saunders “Smoke” Richardson, Charles Young Community Center Musician
date: May 28, 1997
length: 30m
location: Ms. Richardson’s residence
interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.

contents (times approximate)

0m introduction of Father, Smoke Richardson
4m nickname of “Smoke”
7m Smoke Richardson’s Orchestra
10m places Smoke played (from picture)
11m Smoke Richardson’s Orchestra
13m Duke Madison
14m Smoke meeting Saunda’s mother
15m Lucy Estill and Smoke
22m courtship of Smoke and wife
23m John Estill’s playing experience
The Daily Aesthetic: an oral history of a southern city’s black park system, 1916-1956

Record ID: Seals-032597

interviewee: Mr. Wilfred Tay Seals
1950’s employee of the county park, Douglass Playground

date: March 25, 1997

length: 65 minutes

location: Lexington City Archives

interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.
Harold Barker, Director of Lexington City Archives

contents (times approximate)

0 minutes general personal history
2m first experience working in county park system, 1953; activities in and between parks
9m context of working in park system
11m playground carnivals in Spiegel Heights
17m segregated communities using public facilities
21m neighborhood pride as seen in Prall Town and traditional black neighborhoods
25m Douglass Park as meeting place for the community
38m differences between county and city park system
43m Douglass High School, county black high school
45m personal reflections and contributions to park programs
52m Douglass Park and Charles Young Community Center
55m John Will “Scoop” Brown, former Director of Recreation
57m pre-Dirt Bowl Basketball; the now-famous annual basketball tournament
1:00h Mr. Brown
The Daily Aesthetic: an oral history of a southern city's black park system, 1916-1956

Record ID: Sykes-040997

interviewee: Mr. Harry Sykes
former City Commissioner and Dunbar Teacher

date: April 9, 1997

length: 90m

location: Lexington City Archives

interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.
Harold Barker, Director of Lexington City Archives

contents (times approximate)

0 minutes Name and brief description of family
2m mathematics teacher at Dunbar
3m Starting at Douglass Park
4m Prall Town Park
5m Lou Johnson in Brooklyn Dodgers
7m Year stating in Douglass Park
8m activities in park
11m segregation philosophy
13m organizing Dunbar junior high basketball league and integration
19m games in parks and state tournaments
23m integration vs. segregation in sports
25m ...in parks
27m Working with John Will Brown
29m merger of city and county governments
30m experience as first black commissioner
36m Open-housing law contribution to segregated housing
44m advancement of parks while on boards
46m Green Acres Subdivision park
47m Oakwood Development as housing for black middle-class
51m black access to recreation
53m discussion of photographs of parks
60m problem with of UK and Adolph Rupp
65m Charles Young Community Center and Basketball
70m-90m excursion into Mr. Sykes' history of playing with the Globetrotters in 1950’s
The Daily Aesthetic: an oral history of a southern city’s black park system, 1916-1956

Record ID: Webb-061897

interviewee:  Mr. Lawrence Webb
former DJ at Charles Young Community Center
date:        June 18, 1997
length:      60m
location:    Lexington City Archives
interviewers: Boyd Landerson Shearer Jr.

contents (times approximate)

0m            family history
3m            mother’s radio experience
7m            early family memories
10m           mother’s fan club
13m           first memory of Charles Young Community Center
14m           dances at Center that he Djed
27m           Douglass Park and the Lyric Theater
29m           Lyric activities
32m           what did dances at Center mean to black communities
34m           the importance of Douglass Park
37m           type of music played at Center and stereotypes
41m           equipment used at Center
44m           requested songs at Center dances
46m           local entertainment personalities
48m           Webb’s grandfather and broommaking
50m           James O. Jones
51m           Taylor Seals