

Informant # 1

Mr. A.L. Poole

Collector's Log

031

Informant: Mr. A.L. Poole

12 March 1970 Telephone

I arranged with Mr. A.L. Poole to interview him on Saturday, March 13 at 1:00 P.M. in his apartment in the Brewster-Douglas Housing Project.

13 March 1970 Taped Interview

Mr. Poole was contacted through Rev. A.A. Banks of the Second Baptist Church to which Mr. Poole has belonged for over fifty years. The collector called Mr. Poole on March 12th requesting the interview. Mr. Poole met me at the entrance to the apartment building. Several of the residents of the building were also in the entrance. We took the elevator to the fourteenth floor to apartment number 1681.

Present during the interview were the informant's wife and Sister Olimpia Diaz, a friend of the collector.

The interview took place in the central room of the two to three room apartment. The furnishings were plain, but very adequate for the two occupants.

During the actual interview, the informant appeared quite relaxed and didn't seem to mind the presence of the tape recorder. He remarked that he had not actually been involved in the riot and was not sure how helpful he would be. On a few occasions, he asked his wife for information which she might have remembered. The informant was hesitant to discuss black and white relationships during the riot, but indicated that much understanding was needed.

035Text of Interview (transcription of relevant sections)

Collector's tape number _____ WSUFA Accession Number:
 Collector's name: Recording Speed: 3 3/4
 Sister Joan Mumaw. I.H.M. Tracks: 2
 Informant's Name and Address: Length of tape 1200 ft.
 Mr. A.L. Poole Subject: The Race Riot of 1943:
 Apt. 1681 Negro point of view
 2701 Chrysler Drive
 Detroit, Michigan
 Date and time of interview:
 March 13, 1970 - 1:00 PM

Place:
 2701 Chrysler Drive

Circumstances of Interview:

Place: Central room of the apartment

Present: Present besides the informant and the collector were the informant's wife and Sister Olimpia Diaz, 1860 Warrington Drive, a friend of the collector.

Tape 1, Side 1 (1-330 ft.)

- Item #2 What did you remember about the riot? (Collector)
- AP - When that riot was, I was living out on the west side, 6337 30th Street, west of the Blvd. (West Grand Blvd.)
- #3 AP - I was in the mason contracting business. On Monday morning I went to my job...I noticed there wasn't much traffic... The builder informed me that there was a riot in the city. I went back home...
- #4 AP - A fellow that lived on the West side told me that when he was coming home on West Warren, he stopped for a red light. (Shift of microphone) A white man put his hands in the window attempting to get at him. He closed up the window and drove off even going through red lights. As he went on the fellow fell off. He didn't noticed if the man were killed or what happened to him. (Paraphrased)
- #5 AP - Then I had a helper...who lived over here.(East side) He told me there was an airplane. This was a colored neighborhood then. It seemed as if the airplane came so close that it was going to fall in.
- #10 MP - Where I lived the streets were filled with cars, honking horns, just driving... It was so frightening. (North Detroit on Bangor near Seven Mile.) The noise upset you... But they didn't do anything. They= black and white.)

Informants # 2 and 3

Mr. Gordon Hendrieth

Mrs. Lucille Hendrieth

Collector's Log

038

Informants # 2 and 3
Mr. Gordon Hendrieth
Mrs. Lucille Hendrieth

13 March 1970 Telephone

I telephoned Mr. Gordon Hendrieth to set up an appointment for the interview. He described hastily what he had experienced and we set the date for the interview, Saturday, March 14, 1970 at 10:30 A.M. in his home at 18911 Dequinder in Detroit, Michigan.

14 March 1970 Taped Interview

The collector was put in contact with the Hendrieth's by Rev. A.A. Banks of the Second Baptist Church, where Mr. Hendrieth is a deacon.

The Hendrieth home is located at 18911 Dequinder in an all Negro neighborhood just south of Seven Mile Road. Most of the homes in the area appear to be the same age, twelve to fifteen years old. The Hendrieth home is a one-story brick home which is well-furnished and well-cared for.

Mr. and Mrs. Hendrieth were most gracious and eager to share what they remembered about the riot. As Mr. Hendrieth seems to have difficulty keeping events straight, he had written out his recollections and read them. As I questioned him afterwards, he repeated essentially the same story from memory. On several occasions, his wife assisted him in clarifying his ideas or at least the wording of his ideas.

I had not intended to interview Mrs. Hendrieth, but she added details as the interview progressed. After the tape recorder was shut off, she volunteered several other items of information which have been summarized on a separate sheet. Both informants seemed more relaxed after the recorder was shut off.

Mr. and Mrs. Hendrieth are actively involved in their church. In some instances their strong religious convictions seem to lessen what could be bitterness toward their experiences in 1943.

Personal History of the Informant

Name of the Collector: Sr. Joan Mumaw, I.H.M.

Date of Interview: March 14, 1970

Name and Address of Informant:

Mr. Gordon Hendrieth
18911 Dequinder
Detroit, Michigan

Subject of Interview:

The Race Riot of 1943: A Negro Point of View

1. Place and date of birth: Bruten, Alabama, 1909
2. Places lived in:
 - 1932 - Moved to Detroit
Hamtramack, then to Kennelworth St. in Detroit
 - 1957 - 18911 Dequinder, Detroit, Michigan
3. Education:
 - High School - in Bruten, Alabama
School run by the Dutch Reformed Board of Domestic Missions
4. Occupations:
 - 1930's - maintenance at Chrysler Corp.
 - 1943 - Ford Motor Co.
 - Present- trucking division, Chrysler Motor Corp.
5. Marital Status:
 - Wife - Lucille Hendrieth
 - Children - none
 - Sisters - Two teaching in Alabama
 - Brothers- One
6. Description of Informant:

Mr. Hendrieth is a very light-skinned Negro, of medium height and a little over-weight. His most characteristic Negroid feature is his hair which is beginning to grey. The informant seemed to have difficulty remembering events in sequence and tended to be nervous about the interview.
7. Description of environment of the interview:

A modern one-story brick home about fifteen years old in an all Negro neighborhood just south of Seven Mile Road. The home is very well kept up and is well furnished.
8. Relationship of the Collector to the informant: None.
9. Other comments:
 - Religion - Mr. Hendrieth is actively involved in the Second Baptist Church located on 441 Monroe in Detroit. He is a deacon in the Church.
 - Ancestry - The informant's grand-father was a white, slave owner.

Name of the Collector: Sr. Joan Mumaw, I.H.M.

040

Date of the Interview: March 14, 1970

Name and address of the informant:
 Mrs. Lucille Hendreith
 18911 Dequinder
 Detroit, Michigan

Subject of the Interview:

The Race Riot of 1943: A Negro Point of View

1. Place and date of birth: Alabama, 1916
2. Places lived in: The informant came to Detroit in the 1930's
 1940's - Kennelworth St. in Detroit, Michigan
 1957 - 18911 Dequinder, Detroit, Michigan
3. Education: 1931 - Graduated from Eastern High School
 Secretarial school
4. Occupations: 1930's - Nisner's Department Store
 1942 - Federal Government Employment Service, statistical clerk
 Currently - Detroit Street and Railways (D.S.R.) " "
5. Marital Status:
 Husband - Gordon Hendrieth
 Children- None
6. Description of the Informant:
 The informant is quite quite tall and of medium build.
 She has very striking features and her hair is beginning to
 grey. She seemed very confident and recalled with accuracy
 events in the past. She frequently assisted her husband in
 recalling details.
7. Description of the environment of the interview:
 A modern one-story brick home about fifteen years old,
 situated just south of Seven Mile Road in an all Negro
 neighborhood. The home is very well kept and well furnished.
8. Relationship of the Collector to the Informant: None
9. Other comments:
 Religion: The informant is actively involved in the Second
 Baptist Church located at 441 Monroe St. on Detroit, Michigan
 I had not intended to interview Mrs. Hendrieth, but she
 seemed to have much information pertinent to this study.
 She was very eager to talk after I turned on the tape
 recorder. (Collector)

Tape Summary Index

041

Collector's Tape Number _____ WSUFA Accession Number _____

Name of Collector: Sr. Joan Mumaw, I.H.M. Recording Speed: 3 3/4

Name and address of Informant(s) Tracks: 2
 Gordon Hendrieth
 Lucille Hendrieth
 18911 Dequinder
 Detroit, Michigan

Length of tape: 1200 ft.

Subject: The Race Riot of 1943:
 A Negro Point of View

Date and time of Interview:
 March 14, 1970 - 10:30A.M.

Place of Interview:
 18911 Dequinder
 Detroit, Michigan

Circumstances of the Interview:

The interview was conducted in the livingroom of the informants home, a modern one-story brick home in an all Negro neighborhood just south of Seven Mile Road. The collector had intended only to interview Mr. Gordon Hendrieth, but his wife Lucille was present and added pertinent information. For this reason both informants are indexed on this tape summary. The transcriptions will, however, be separated for each informant.

Tape 1, Side 1 (330 ft - end)

- Item # 28 - Introduction and setting of tape
- # 29 - GH relates how rioters overturned his car. (read)
- #30 - Questioning regarding the incident (Collector)
- #31 - GH, police mistake informant for a white man
- #32 - GH re-tells incident of overturned car. (from memory)
- #33 - GH cites the role of the police in the incident
- #34 - What were the causes of the riot? (Collector)
- #35 - GH, age of informant
- #36 - GH tells how riot affects labor at Ford Motor Co.
- #37 - Collector tries to determine age of rioters.
- #38 - LH recalls incident at the Forest Club
- #39 - LH recalls affect of riot on her neighborhood.
- #40 - LH describes lines of color in Detroit
- #41 - LH describes gangs on Woodward
- #42 - GH comments on the stopping of the riot

Tape Summary Index, con't
Gordon Hendrieth
Lucille Hendrieth

32A

042

Item # 43 - GH, After the riot

#44 - GH recalls work of Dr. Bradby of Second Baptist Church.

#45 - GH recalls sources of tension leading up to the riot.

#46 - GH says riot caused by "rough-ups."

GH= Gordon Hendrieth
LH= Lucille Hendrieth

Text of Interview (transcription of relevant sections)

043

Collector's Tape Number _____ WSUFA Accession Number _____

Name of Collector: Sr. Joan Mumaw, I.H.M. Recording Speed: 3 3/4

Name and Address of Informant: Tracks: 2
 Mr. Gordon Hendrieth
 18911 Dequinder Length of tape: 1200 ft.
 Detroit, Michigan

Date and time of interview: March 14, 1970 Subject: The Race Riot of 1943:
 10:30 A.M. A "egro Point of View

Place of interview:
 18911 Dequinder
 Detroit, Michigan

Circumstances of the Interview:

The collector had intended to interview Mr. Hendrieth only, however, his wife Lucille was present and she added pertinent information throughout the interview. The following transcription is of Mr. Hendrieth's comments as they have been selected from the tape.

Tape I, Side 1 (330 ft. - end)

Item # 29 - GH - Coming from work in the year of 1943, during the time of the riot...I was driving west on East Vernor with all intentions of turning north on Brush St. Upon arriving there, the street was blocked off and a policeman waved me on. I was able to turn right onto Woodward Avenue where I was sure I'd be safe. There were many people lining the street.

I was able to drive as far north as Elliot (?) before I was stopped by a traffic light. This is where I was in trouble with the people of the neighborhood. There was a youngster looking into the cars spotting Negroes, I assumed. When he detected who I was, he hollered in a loud voice, "Here's a nigger." Then some man approached the car, reached in and pulled off my hat. Satisfying themselves of my identity, I was struck on the back of the head with a bottle which broke leaving shattered glass in my skin.

I escaped from the car as the men were overturning it. When the man on one side jumped out of the way, I rolled out and ran toward the sidewalks hollering for help. When running, a metal object struck me on the side. When I reached the sidewalk, a policeman there told me to, "Get the hell out of the way if you know what's good for you." (Mrs. Hendrieth interrupts)...

My car was a total loss. The picture appeared in the morning paper with the license plate very plain. I later went to the police morgue on East Jefferson Ave. where it had been towed and saw that the interior had been completely gutted with an empty gallon gasoline can still inside. The tires were melted like gun.

Text of Interview - Gordon Hendrieth, con't.

Item # 29 con't

I did file some type of claim, but nothing ever came of it.

30 When you turned onto Woodward were most of the people white? (Collector)

#31 GH - Yes, Hastings to Woodward was black. For some reason the policeman said, "Rush, rush, go on." They didn't think I was a member of the black group. I'm inclined to believe they were putting me on Woodward for my own safety. They were searching every car as it came to a stop.

32 Didn't anyone come to your help? (Collector)

GH - They rushed there, I believe, to kill me...When the door jammed... The weight of the door kept the car from turning flat. It was enough room left for me to roll out from beneath the car.

33 Then I turned to my right...It was roped off. When I jumped the rope, I was struck in the side with a piece of iron. Then I began to holler. The whites were after me. There was a walking policeman who said, "You'd better get the hell on if you know what's good for you."

When I reached my first destination, I saw a mounted policeman and he told me I'd better get going. That's all the assistance I got.

Later on (after he was taken to the hospital by an unknown person) some samaritans brought me home from the hospital. They brought me home in an open car... They told me to "pull your hat on^{so} you'll be easily identified.

34 Do you remember what caused the riot? (Collector)

GH - I heard it happened out to Belle Isle. Someone claimed that a child had been thrown into the water.

36 Were the factories affected by the riot? (Collector) (490 ft.)

GH - The plant almost closed because of the attendance of the people. (Few were there) The line almost closed.

Were there outbreaks of violence at the factory? (Collector)

GH - Everyone stayed clam, cool, and collected...attentively watching. Seemed like they were brother and sisters waiting to see what would happen outside.

37 What were the ages of the rioters? (Collector)

When it started, they were young people there. When it hit the streets, all ages-from all accounts. There were all ages encountered on this side of Belle Isle. Age didn't have anything to do with it.

42 How did the riot get stopped? (Collector)

Item # 42 - GH - The riot was practically stopped by main force.

045

43 - Do you think things got back to normal after the riot? (Collector)
GH - I do believe it was just a flare up. Everything went back to normal as it has happened through the years since.

45 - Were there tensions between blacks and whites prior to the riot?

GH - There could have been some type of element. I don't think there was anything out of the ordinary that caused it. It was an uncalled for thing.

#46 GH - I still say it was caused by the "rough-ups in both groups.

Informants # 4 and 5

Mrs. Everlee Watson

and

Mr. Julius B. Watson

Collector's Log

048

Informants: Mrs. Everlee Watson
Mr. Julius B. Watson

The Collector received the name of Mrs. Everlee Watson from Rev. A.A. Banks of the Second Baptist Church on March 9, 1970. Mrs. Watson had volunteered through her church to give any information which she had regarding the riot of 1943.

13 March 1970 Telephone

I called Mrs. Watson to establish a date for the interview. We agreed to meet at her home on March 17, 1970 at 8:00 P.M.

17 March 1970 Interview-taped

The interview took place in the living room of the informant's home at 6544 Scotten in Detroit. Present for the 8:00 P.M. interview were the husband of the informant, Julius B. Watson and Sister Barbara Parpart, 18603 Warrington, Detroit, Michigan, a friend of the collector.

The informants home is a two-story frame house which is very well furnished and well-cared for. It is situated in an all-Negro neighborhood on the West side of the city. The occupants of the house have lived in the area ever since they came to Detroit.

I had not intended to interview Mr. Watson, but he had much information dealing with the labor movement at the time of the riot. Because of this I permitted him to add to Mrs. Watson's testimony and even questioned him directly regarding certain events.

During the interview, the informants seemed very relaxed and glad to share their information with us. Mrs. Watson appeared nervous on two occasions when her husband digressed far from the topic. She was very gracious and open despite the presence of the tape recorder.

Personal History of Informant

049

Name of the Collector: Sr. Joan Mumaw

Date of the Interview: March 17, 1970, 8:00 P.M.

Name and address of the informant:

Mrs. Everlee Watson
6544 Scotten
Detroit, Michigan

Subject:

The Detroit Race Riot of 1943: A Negro Point of View

1. Date and place of birth: Georgia, April 16, 1911
2. Places lived in: Came to Detroit from Georgia in 1935
1935 - 1956 Milford St. Westside of Detroit, Michigan
3. Education: Elementary and Secondary school in Georgia
4. Occupation: Housewife and domestic servant
5. Marital and family status:
Three children by a previous marriage
Husband - Julius B. Watson (1956)
Thirteen grandchildren

6. Description of the informant:

Mrs. Watson is a very attractive Negro woman of medium height and build. She is very active in Church affairs and also works. She enjoys people and seemed most at home during the interview. She was most willing to share whatever information she had and seemed able to recall details quite well.

7. The description of the place of interview:

The interview took place in the two-story frame home owned by the informant. It is in an old Negro neighborhood. The house was very well kept up and the furnishings were those of an upper middle class home.

8. Relationship of the collector to the informant:

None

9. Other comments:

The Watsons are eager to meet people and to spread understanding among the races. They frequently entertain foreign students in their home.

Religion: Active involvement in the Second Baptist Church.

050

Personal History of the Informant

Name of the Collector: Sr. Joan Mumaw, I.H.M.

Date of the Interview: March 17, 1970

Name and address of the informant:

Mr. Julius B. Watson
6544 Scotten
Detroit, Michigan

Subject of the Interview:

The Race Riot of 1943: A Negro Point of View

1. Place and date of birth: Texas, May 18, 1905
2. Places lived in: Ann Arbor 1926-27
Detroit since 1927
6544 Scotten, Detroit - since 1941
3. Education: Texas - elementary and secondary school
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor - 2 years of college
Ford Motor Co.- training as an engineer until
laid off in the 1930's.
4. Occupation: With Ford Motor Co until 1956
Presently with the Detroit City Government,
in capacity of director of the removal of
abandoned cars in the city.
5. Marital and family status: 1921 - married to first wife
1 son
1956 - married to present Mrs. Watson
several grand children
6. Description of the informant:

The informant is quite tall and lanky with very dark skin and hair that is beginning to turn grey. While he was very good at telling details, Mr. Watson often digressed in the conversation. He was most eager to volunteer information and seemed eager to overcome the prejudice between the races.
7. The interview took place in the living room of the Watson home. It is a well furnished home in an all Negro district on the West side.
8. Relationship of the collector to the informant:

None
9. Other comments:
Ancestry: Parents lived in the integrated state of Texas. Mr. Watson grew up with white as his mother was a domestic.
Religion: Active in the Second Baptist Church

Tape Summary Index

Collectors Tape Number _____

WSUFA Accession Number _____

Name of the Collector:

Sister Joan Mumaw, I.H.M.

Recording speed: 3 3/4

Name and address of the informants:

Mrs. Everlee Watson
Mr. Julius B. Watson
6544 Scotten
Detroit, Michigan

Tracks: 2

Length of tape: 1200 ft.

Subject: The Race Riot of 1943:
A Negro Point of view

Date and time of the interview:

March 17, 1970
8:00 P.M.

Place of the interview:

6544 Scotten
Detroit, Michigan

Circumstances of the interview:

Place: The living room of the comfortable two-story frame house belonging to the informants. The furnishings are representative of upper middle class homes.

Present: Sister Barbara Parpart; 18603 Warrington, Detroit,
(a friend of the collector)

This tape includes both testimony of Mr. Watson and Mrs. Watson. The collector was unsure of Mr. Watson's role during the riot until he began to add to his wife's testimony. In order to elicit the information, the collector allowed him to volunteer information as it was recalled by Mr. Watson

Tape I, Side 2

Item # 47 EW recalls the events on Belle Isle

48 EW recalls events on Hastings St.

#49 EW relates the reaction of the mobs near the Forest Club

50 EW recalls the closing of the schools

#51 EW recalls incident of police brutality to a Negro (32 ft)

52 EW - children and school

#53 EW recalls how she heard the riot started

54 EW and JW cite tension prior to the riot

55 EW cites causes of tension

56 JW - what kind of changes were needed

#57 JW - related Mayor Jefferies relationship to the Ku Klux Klan (100 ft)

#58 JW relates what he heard from the mail man regarding whites

Tape summary index, con't - Watson

- Item # 59 JW recalls conditions at the city morgue
- # 60 JW recalls incident involving the driver of a streetcar
- # 61 JW relates incident about mail man and the Negro possession of high powered rifles
- # 62 EW, JW compare riot of 1943 with 1967 riot
- # 63 EW recalls death on the West side
- # 64 JW and situation at the morgue
- # 65 JW Mayor Jefferies and racist pamphlet (174)
- # 66 JW relates the fighting between youths prior to the riot
- # 67 JW digression on basketball
- # 68 JW international students
- # 69 EW hostility among today's youth
- # 70 JW Why of racism in 1943
- # 71 EW Job opportunities for Negroes after riot and war
- # 72 EW Negro status at Receiving Hospital
- # 73 JW Negro jobs at Hudson Co.
- # 74 JW Negroes in city government
- # 75 JW Situation at Ford Motor Co. (348 ft.)
- # 76 JW Incident of light- skinned Negro at Ford
- # 77 JW Union at Ford
- # 78 JW Negro in office at Ford
- # 79 JW,EW Work status during the riot
- # 80 EW City effort during the riot, state troops
- # 81 JW Attitude of police toward Negroes
- # 82 JW Experience of false arrest
- # 83 EW Attitude of the police
- # 84 EW After the riot
- # 85 JW Mr. Edwards as police commissioner
- # 86 EW Housing in the 1940's
- # 87 JW Housing in the 1920's

EW = Everlee Watson JW= Julius Watson

Text of Interview, con't - Watson

Item # 51 EW - All that we saw was a policeman beat up a man (Negro). They called curfew for 6:30 or 7:00 P.M., but this man was walking along the street coming home from work. Down the street was a barber shop. This man came to the door and talked to him. The police pulled up with four policemen in the car, said a dirty word and cursed him and told him to get off the street. He didn't realize that they were talking to them. The man said, "Are you speaking to me?" By this time three policemen slipped out. One had a machine gun or riot gun, one had a club and one had his pistol. The one with the club started beating him all over his head. He tried to cover up and then ran.

We were afraid. When the children saw this they began to cry. They were afraid that the police wouldn't protect them. They said, "Mother, the police are beating up people, what are we going to do?" This was the only mean part that we saw. (The incident occurred at Milford and Stanford on the West side.)

This was an unusual occurrence because because there was no fighting actually taking place on this side of town.

Did the man get help? (Collector)

EW - The man ran and after he ran, they (police) got in their car and went.

52 EW - Did anything happen in the schools? (Collector)

EW - They just closed the schools, because they were afraid of what might happen.

53 How did the riot get started? (Collector)

EW - Well, I heard...but then you really never know. I heard someone said that this fellow came into the club, where they had this dance and said that a white man had just thrown a Negro woman and her baby into the Detroit River. Everybody filed out and it started.

54 Were there any tensions in Detroit at the time of the riot? (Collector)

Just from the way things were going in the city, you knew something was going to happen.. You were afraid that if you touched someone, they would just explode. They were so "up-tight" as they say today. It was different from the 1967 riot. I didn't expect it (1967) the atmosphere was so different. No comparison with the way people acted at this time. (1943)

55 What were the causes of the tension? (Collector)

No particular thing. You just knew something was going to happen. People were getting pushed around. People were getting tired (of it.) The newspapers had been writing that trouble was on the way if the system...if changes weren't made.

What kind of changes? (Collector)

EW - jobs...

Text of Interview, con't - Mrs. Everlee Watson

Item # 62 EW - It was really a race riot in 1943... 1967 was not racial... white and colored on the street together rioting. ... people looking. In 1943 it was different.

63 EW - On the West side only one person was killed, a Wilson milk man. Someone threw a brick and killed him. That't the only one I knew of. (157 ft)

69 EW - Hostility today is more between the young. It was different then.

71 Was the tension relieved after the riot? (Collector)

EW - In those days there were many places where black people didn't work. They just weren't hired. After that, (riot) with the war and everything, things began to open up. People began to get jobs where they were qualified. This did a lot to alleviate the situation.

72 EW - People began to get jobs where Negroes never worked before, banks, stores, hospitals. In some hospitals, like Receiving, there was one Negro nurse in the hospital.

80 What did the city do about the riot? (Collector)

EW - Nothing. When the state troops came in, that's when I felt safe.

83 EW The police were very discourteous at all times. We had very few Negro policemen...After they beat up this man on the street for no reason...we thought that if they did that to him, they would do the same to us. They were just as mad at everybody as they could be. When the state troops came in Monday night, then I could sleep. I didn't think it was necessary, but the man...I don't know if the man even knew they had called curfew during the day. This man was coming home from work. It was not necessary to beat him with a pistol and riot gun.

84 What were the differences after the riot? (Collector)

EW - There were things done. A lot of jobs opened up. People began to get things to do. The city fathers tried to corral the law enforcement officers to get them to treat the people more like citizens, instead of animals. So they began to try to work out the problems.

86 What was housing like in 1943? (Collector)

EW - A lot of people roomed which made for crowded conditions. Three or four families lived in one home.

Text of Interview (relevant sections)

Collectors tape number _____ WSUFA Accession Number _____

Name of the Collector: Sr. Joan Mumaw, I.H.M. Recording speed: 3 3/4

Name and address of the informant: Tracks: 2
 Mr. Julius B. Watson
 6544 Scotten Length of the tape: 1200 ft.
 Detroit, Michigan

Date and time of the interview: Subject: The Detroit Race
 March 17, 1970 Riot of 1943: A Negro
 8:00 P.M. point of view.

Place of the interview: 6544 Scotten
 Detroit, Michigan

Circumstances of the Interview:

The interview was conducted in the living room of the informant's home. Present during the interview was the wife of the informant, Mrs. Everlee Watson and Sister Barbara Parpart, 18603 Warrington, Detroit (a friend of the collector.) While the collector had intended to interview Mrs. Watson only, Mr. Watson had much pertinent information.

Tape I, Side 2

Item # 56 What kind of changes were needed? (Collector)

- JW - Administrative changes. Just before the riot, one commentator came on the air and said that there was going to be trouble in
- # 57 Detroit. The Mayor who was Jefferies at this time, knew that there was an organization, the Ku Klux Klan...office in the Penobscot Building. He knew it and could see it from his office. There was a pamphlet put out at this time of the election by the mayor or his council saying that there were in Cooley High School two Negro people. If he were elected, they would not be there. This helped to promote such an attitude.
- # 58 There was a man who lived just next door and he came home from the post office.. As he got off the bus at night, he saw three men over on the other side of the Blvd. (North of West Grand Blvd.) with rifles. That neighborhood across the Blvd. was all white at the time. They were out with their rifles saying, " If we see any Niggers, we'll get them." (105 ft)
 The man who picked up mail, said it was something dreadful the way
- # 59 they were killing off people across Woodward. (East side of Woodward)
- # 59 There were so many down at the morgue, that they wouldn't let you see them. They are keeping it covered. (Reported to the informant by the mail man.)
- # 60 I have a friend, almost white, he's about your color. They didn't know he was colored. He was a motorman on the D.S.R. His conductor was a colored girl. As soon as they heard about the disturbance, they went to the barn and parked their streetcar. He had his own car to come home. And this is the way they got home. When they got to a white neighborhood, he would drive, and as they came to a black neighborhood, he would lie down and she would drive. And that way they got home safely.

Text of Interview, con't - Julius Watson

Item # 61 JW - The driver of the mail truck took his chances because he thought that they wouldn't attack a government vehicle. He reported that there were so many high-powered rifles and machine guns on both sides. He was surprised that so many black people had machine guns. He warned us not to go up by Woodward. The bulk of the fighting was six blocks east of Woodward.

64 JW - Number killed? He (neighbor) didn't say how many. He said, "Down at the morgue there were rows and rows. The ordinary citizen... they wouldn't even raise them to let you see who they were, white or colored. This was for the best, that it wasn't known. This would have stirred up more animosity among the people, no matter what side.

65 JW - The 1943 riot was something that was brewing much longer than the one in 1967. The mayor knew about the animosity between the races. The mayor said that he wanted to ameliorate the situation, but he added to the hostility. I don't know if he was directly responsible for the leaflets that were given out. (Item # 57) He must have known about the leaflet and would have condoned it. It was found out by the domestics who worked in the neighborhood (white) and picked them up. People tried to put them where Blacks wouldn't see them, but the people who worked...got them. This is how it got to the black people.

66 JW - There was fighting among youngsters in games of basketball... The championships used to be played at Olympia. There were fights afterwards (between black and white) and that was the beginning of the hostility... The group I dispersed was black.

The white group would form from the other side and attack. It depended on who had the best team where the hostility began.

70 Why of racism - There was an attitude of superiority among whites. There was also a feeling of inferiority among the blacks that does not exist now. This was, of course, because it was handed down through parents. (380 ft.)

73 JW - At J.L. Hudson Co. the elevator operators had to look white... they had maids, but no (black) personnel in the office or as clerks.

74 JW - No Negroes in the banks. In city and county government... I remember coming home and saying, "There's another Negro in the city hall, that makes two." Only two blacks were on the D.S.R until the war. After the war, there was a shortage of help, a lot of work going...needed people to operate transportation.

75 JW - At that time there were certain jobs that were black man's jobs and certain jobs for white men. (Ford Motor Co.)

76 JW There was an incident...of course you know about the mixture in our race...two blocks down on the corner there was a pool hall... A large group of men hung out there. I was in there one day and I remember that one of the young men, very light - unless you knew him you'd think he was white - He had been hired at Ford's very recently. He was laughing about an experience he had. The foreman on the job where he was working, came through and saw him taking some cores off the line. He was the general foreman. He said, "Who put you on this job... Come with me...This ain't no job for a white man."

Text of Interview, con't - Mr. Julius Watson

Item # 77 JW The union at Ford was very young..It started to help some. The union was there at the time of the riot...There was not as much pressure. I have seen on a job that was a black job, a molding job, the big boss would come in and press down on the mold and maybe he found a soft spot or any little flaw. He would get up on the line and walk on them. (the molds) This, of course, meant that these men had to work hard enough to make up for what he had ruined. They^{were} working hard enough that there tongues hung out. When the union came in they didn't attempt to do anything like this. But the jobs remained in the same classification, pouring of iron, handling of big heavy ladels, and molding machines. These were all black jobs. In machine repairs, there were two blacks in the foundry out of twelve or fifteen ...they repaired breakdowns in the line. This was my work. Most of these were white men. It was a skilled trade and a higher paying job.

78 JW - We had one (Negro) man in the office and he served principally the black people. Any difficulties you had you went to see him. He did have some power. This lasted until around 1945 when another man was added. (At this time 4000 blacks were employed at Ford.)

81 What was the attitude of the police? (Collector)

JW - From the reaction of the local police...the attitude of the police you knew before this happened. You'd be driving down the street and if you had a violation, the police would say, "Black so and so, where the hell you think you're going. " And in some cases they hadn't done anything.

82 JW - On two occasions I was arrested, once I was locked up. The police swore I was driving recklessly. Driving down McGraw, I passed the policeman and he pulled me over... They took everything I had, locked me up and sent me downtown to jail. The most I could have been charged with was speeding.. (Rest of testimony relates incidents on this arrest and his release when they had no charges to keep him.)