

(DELTA INTERVIEWS)
(VERSION 2.0 - 2nd REVISION NOVEMBER 1991)

(Cecil McFadden) When I became president, I was elected in '41 and served on the the planning committee for the convention, but actually took office in January the following year of '42. Those were the war years. And we started doing things that were very important to the war. Contributing money to the USO to entertain soldiers, sending gifts to soldiers so they would get things at Christmas and on Holidays. We also had always given scholarships to other young women.

We gave a play, or it was a series of acts and plays, to raise money called the "Jabberwock" taken from the word in Alice in Wonderland. And all these different clubs would participate and compete, and the "Jabberwock" raised money to give scholarships to high school students, girls who wanted to go to college.

And then the war years had sororities doing even more things. And I looked at the presidents coming behind me deal with the Delta Home for Girls and things like that. So, the Graduate chapter was engaged in civic responsibility. Sometimes it was difficult during the war years because you had to contend with gas shortage, being rationed, and had to go to meetings and double-up in cars and things. You had to deal with the black-outs. If you met at someone's house you had to draw the drapes. We still carried on services of a community organization. We considered ourselves as leaders in the community, setting the tone.

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The opportunities for Black women college graduates were limited but we did have social workers. We had nurses. We had a lot of teachers because that was one of opportunities.

They discouraged you in school from taking anything that they felt you could not get a job as. And there were many jobs because I remember..... I was a business administration major. And I tried to get a job at Hudson's in the office, in advertising, and was told very bluntly the only openings were either a maid in the lavatories or elevator operator, which I thought was an insult to somebody with a college degree because of the color of their skin. We all had that problem.

(Dr. Carol Sayers Puryear) We started off with 22 founders and with one chapter. We now have 800 chapters. We are international, and have 185,000 women. In Detroit, we have approximately 1,600 with a financial roster of about 700. So, that tells you how we have grown.

(Jerrylee Johnson) Of course I was one of the first ones when they had us all out for voter registration. I came here and registered because they asked us to register at the Urban League.

We worked in the rain. We drove people to the polls, we picked them up and took them back and forth. And one of our presidents, who's now deceased, Ester Lamont, is the one who chaired it. We had our cars and we furnished them. And whether we babysat for the mothers to go so they could vote, that was one of the things that we did. We didn't worry about

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it. And I have been chairman of "Jabberwock" and worked with it. And when we had our golden anniversary in Washington, I was one of the persons who did attend. And we had audience with the, then, President, Lady Bird and Lyndon Johnson.
(Inaudible)

We had a luncheon when President John Kennedy spoke and they said, "No one touches him," as he went out. And I just stuck my hand through the (borders?).....

(Cecil McFadden) We had many fund raisers trying to raise enough money to get the down payment and then also furnishings for the home. And someone came up with the idea of having a poker party where you'd cut the pot and.....

It was supposed to be people that you knew, friends. And what they contributed was to go toward the home. And you served food and drinks that were complimentary. It was at a very prominent lawyer's home. And someone, we suspected it was someone who was having some problems with someone else, had tipped off the police that there was gonna be an illegal gambling session. And plainclothesmen entered. And the people on the door assumed that they were guests 'cause they were in plainclothes.

I remember I was busy playing cards and gambling (the pot was in the middle). And they positioned themselves, one behind each table. And all of a sudden they said, "Freeze! This is a raid!" And they reached for the money. And insensibly I reached for my money, somebody was supposed to

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grab my money. Then when they said, "This is a raid," I backed off. And they started taking names and said they were going to call for the patrolwagon. And the attorney, who's home it was in, said, "No. This is a private home. There's no law being broken here. The people can't go down." And my brother was there, he was in uniform. He wasn't a lawyer yet. He was in uniform, but he eventually ended up as a lawyer. I don't know if he had some law or what. But the thing that really saved us, one of the plainclothesmen had attempted to buy a drink at the bar. And the person behind the bar said, "We're not selling any drinks. This is a private party and if you'd like a drink you can have one, or if you'd like some food, here's some food. Now if we had been selling it it would have really gone hard, selling the liquor unauthorized, after hours, without a license. But we did not sell any liquor. So, some people were very upset when they started taking names because they could just see the headlines, "Delta hit!"

I thought I saw God. I'm going downtown in the patrolwagon. But the lawyer, whose home it was in, convinced them that they did not have a case. So, they said, "Well okay, we won't take you down but everybody go on home." He said, "No. They don't have to go home. This is a private home, these are my guests and we will stay." So, they left and the party continued.

But I remember a couple of people, who shall remain

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nameless, went upstairs. They refused to play any more cards because it made them kinda nervous and they had lost. And as the party went on, I don't know how much we made, but we did make. That was for the Delta home.

(Dr. Roberta McGuire Pichett) Another project that we had to raise money for the Delta home was having chitlin dinners. We sold chitlin dinners with Francis Owens, and sweet potato pies and made quite a lot of money.

(Rose Swanson) I'd like to mention my undergraduate activities. I remember the sorority as a base, a hub of the Black social life on campus. It really provided that kind of platform for us and I think it enabled us to grow as young people, mingling with others. I was sharing this picture, I believe this was 1956, when our sorority won first place in the Panhellenic sing. And that was with all the groups, Black and White, Fraternities and sororities. And we were talking about, we're putting together these makeshift outfits and I remember that for costuming, they gave us 100% plus. And we were talking about, I think it was Delta Chi, this very wealthy White female sorority, and we said, "Oh, we know they're gonna be decked-out. They've got money, they've got this....." And we could not believe that we..... 'cause we had put those outfits together. The sorors who were shorter, they were the little girls in this skit, so, they made the pink pinafores and they wore the socks. And those that were tall, like myself, we were like the college students and then

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we had a high school group. And it was really something. And we got a hundred pluses straight down for everything. We won... we didn't win first again, but we placed for the rest of my college years. We placed in the Panhellenic sing because we really did have good voices.

And we have many public service projects that we did as undergraduates. We serviced the Delta Home for Girls. I remember when we did the hygiene packs that we gave out at Christmas time. We had parties for Children's Hospital and we'd give food baskets for the needy.

(Jerrylee Johnson) And remember that we had Delta Choir. We used to go to the hospitals and sing Christmas carols. We had performances, choral groups that we were at various churches.