

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29

Oral History Collection

La'Vette Lipscomb Dudley

Interviewers: W. Marvin Dulaney and Alfred L. Roberts

Date: September 27, 2011

Place of Interview: Dallas, TX

Dr. Dulaney: This is September 27, 2011 and we are with Miss La'Vette Lipscomb Dudley and we are in Dallas, Texas, again, on September 27, 2011 at ICDC [Innercity Community Development Corporation]. Miss Dudley, we are doing a project called "Documenting the History of the Civil Rights Movement in Dallas, Texas". It's a project that we've got a little funding from the Humanities Texas [to do] and so we're interviewing people who either participated in the Civil Rights Movement or who have knowledge of it. And we're looking at everything not just marches in the streets and lawsuits, but the whole gamut. Of course, we want to talk to you about your father whom we missed,

30 so with that I'm going to turn it over to Dr.
31 Roberts to do the questions.

32 Dr. Roberts: We're going to start with the easy material. We're
33 going to ask you about yourself. Were you born in
34 Dallas?

35 Ms. Dudley: Yes, I was born in Dallas in the 1950s [laughs]
36 actually not too far from here. We were living on
37 Metropolitan [Avenue] at the time. I was pretty
38 much raised on the other side of Fair Park off of
39 Haskell [Avenue] in east Dallas, what they call
40 south east Dallas.

41 Roberts: Can you tell us a little bit about your family, your
42 brothers and sisters if you have brothers and
43 sisters?

44 Dudley: Sixth child of eight. The youngest girl. We have five
45 girls and three boys. You want their names?
46 Jackie, Noel, Eyelette and Donette-we have a set
47 of twins, then Alva which you met, and myself and
48 Jesse and Jeffery. And they were all born in
49 Dallas and they're all still in Dallas.

50 Roberts: Even though this may seem like a senseless question,
51 who were your parents?

52 Dudley: My parents were Al Lipscomb-Albert Louis Lipscomb and
53 Lovey Marie Love Lipscomb. Albert Lipscomb was
54 born in Dallas, Texas. My mother was born in
55 Hammond, Texas-down in central Texas. She moved to
56 Dallas, I think, when she was in third grade. Her
57 mother had moved here. She was a domestic servant
58 and at that time they didn't allow the kids to
59 stay with them, so initially she was living with
60 my aunt in Hearne, Texas, I believe.

61 Roberts: Tell us about your educational background.

62 Dudley: I went to school in Dallas public schools. I started out
63 at--well, initially-kindergarten and first grade
64 at City Temple Academy Seventh Day Adventist
65 Church. We were Baptist, but they had a school
66 there. Went to school there and I went through
67 elementary school at Fannie C. Harris which is
68 right off Pacific Avenue and East Grand [Avenue].
69 After Fannie C. Harris I went to Pearl C. Anderson
70 the first year. Then during that time, that was
71 when they started bussing. So from there we were
72 bussed to Robert T. Hill [Middle School] over on
73 the other side of White Rock Lake. And from Robert
74 T. Hill went to Bryan Adams [High School]. I

75 attended Bishop College. Then went to mortuary
76 school because my aunt and uncle were in the
77 mortuary business so I went to mortuary school.

78 Roberts: Who was your aunt and uncle?

79 Dudley: Walter and [unclear] Wilson at Cedar Crest Funeral Home.

80 Roberts: You mentioned bussing, so you were at Bryan Adams
81 during the time that students were bussed from
82 south Dallas. Can you describe a little bit about
83 how that worked? Did you have any difficulties?
84 Did they receive you well or how did that go?

85 Dudley: We did have some difficulties and each year in the
86 spring or in the fall there were some
87 disturbances-what they called riots at the time-
88 school riots. But a lot of times--And that was
89 part of our growing up too. Rather than just
90 fighting or having riots we formed the Human
91 Relations Commission. My mother and our family we
92 were all a part of that to try to work through
93 some of the issues and get to know people because
94 a lot of it was just not knowing the other person.
95 (5:00) But yeah, we weren't received that well.
96 But it was a little better because the whole fight
97 before then was, in the desegregation thing, was

98 [that] the whites didn't want to be bussed here,
99 so we sacrificed because we didn't want to be
100 bussed either. We wanted to leave our schools.
101 Y'all are going to edit this right?

102 Roberts: No, what we're going to do is a fifty minute DVD and
103 the part that's on the DVD--we'll certainly edit
104 that part if there's a portion that goes on the
105 DVD.

106 Dudley: Okay. [Laughs]

107 Roberts: Let's switch to--I always call them councilman--
108 Councilman Al Lipscomb. Let's switch to talking
109 about him a little bit. How was it for you growing
110 up in household where Mr. Lipscomb was so involved
111 in politics and always in the spotlight? Can you
112 remember how that was?

113 Dudley: It's kind of one of the reasons why I don't like
114 cameras. [Laughter] As you can imagine it was
115 rough. In the later years it may have been a
116 little better, but growing up we had to be
117 informed or involved, but at the same time he was--
118 --when he was at home he was enlightening us or
119 keeping us involved. But at the same time, a lot
120 of times people would call and say ugly things. A

121 couple of times--well, one time they shot at the
122 house and another time they shot through the
123 house, so--

124 Roberts: How old were you at the time?

125 Dudley: It was the summer before I went to--I think I was
126 fifteen. That was the time they shot in the house--
127 actually shot in the house. So it had to be like--

128 Roberts: Were you home at the time?

129 Dudley: Yes. It was late at night and we were in bed. So
130 everybody kind of hit the floor. [Laughs]
131 Thankfully it was that late and nobody was hurt.
132 You just kind of lived constantly under the
133 threats. At the same time the students at school
134 they didn't understand. All they showed on TV was
135 him getting thrown out of city council meetings.
136 He was down there fighting for an issues or
137 whatever. We had to be tough, you know, because
138 the kids would tease you about it. And that was up
139 to us to explain to them. Because a lot of times
140 if you had friends--if they were going to be our
141 friends they had to be involved in the issues too
142 because [laughs]--I don't know if you see
143 sometimes, but the grownups didn't show up a lot

144 of times for the protests or the pickets. It would
145 be us, his little army, [laughter] with our
146 friends.

147 Roberts: Looking back over his career, can you identify some of
148 the things that maybe he was the proudest of or
149 the things he talked about the most in terms of
150 his accomplishments?

151 Dudley: Civic accomplishments? You know, personal
152 accomplishments--I guess he was proud of his
153 family and his church. He loved his church, his
154 family.

155 Roberts: What church was that?

156 Dudley: Saint Mark Baptist Church. His grandparents and his
157 uncle, I think, they own a cornerstone at the
158 church. But, I know one of the things was the
159 single-member district lawsuit-Lipscomb versus
160 Wise that gave us the eight-three council
161 districts [eight district based seats and three
162 citywide seats]. Council members were elected from
163 single-member district rather than at large. You
164 know, for a long time we were at the South Dallas
165 Information Center. So sometimes you have to find
166 your own successes and victories.

167 Roberts: Can you tell us a little bit about the South Dallas
168 Information Center? Where was it and do you
169 remember--in fact, I remember going there when I
170 worked for the Dallas school district delivering
171 pamphlets or some kind of brochures or something.

172 Dudley: It was an information center [unclear] "Be informed and
173 be involved". It was on Pennsylvania Avenue. I
174 think it was 2808 Pennsylvania. It was between, at
175 that time, Oakland--now today it's Malcolm X
176 Boulevard and Pennsylvania. It was the South
177 Dallas Information Center. It was run pretty much
178 by donations and volunteers. (10:00) There it was
179 just whatever the issue was. He would try to solve
180 it from police brutality to simple things--maybe,
181 getting a school crossing guard or traffic lights
182 for some of the students. Bringing information to
183 the community. Bringing information in and taking
184 the issues back to the powers that be at the time.

185 Roberts: Who were some of his key supporters in terms of leaders
186 in African-American community? Who were some of
187 the persons you feel supported him in his efforts
188 to get single-member districts, just basic human
189 rights? I know he worked some with desegregation

190 area. Who were some of the persons that worked
191 alongside of him that he could count on?

192 Dudley: J.B. Jackson. Who were some of the other people? Bill
193 Forest, Bill [unclear], all those people there.
194 Gone from here now. But mostly there was J.B.
195 Jackson, [unclear], Elsie Faye Heggins. A lot of
196 people I don't know, were they called leaders?
197 [Unclear] A lot of it was everyday people. I'm
198 trying to remember some of the names. I need to
199 write some of them down.

200 Roberts: What about Diane Ragsdale?

201 Dudley: Yes, Diane was there. Diane was actually was in a class
202 with my sister and brother. They graduated. They
203 were in class. They still have a little group that
204 gets together every year now. But yes, Diane and
205 Marvin Crenshaw. I think Marvin came from—I think
206 he was there at El Centro. There was a group of
207 people that would come up from El Centro College.
208 [Unclear]--Paul--I think it was John Paul
209 [unclear].

210 Roberts: And what do you do today? I know you're with ICDC--and
211 is it housing?

212 Dudley: Business development.

213 Roberts: Can you tell us what you do in that role?

214 Dudley: I manage our Business Assistance Center. We have a
215 business incubator also. What we try to do is
216 provide services and resources and technical
217 assistance to people that want to start a business
218 or go into business. We try to assist even
219 existing businesses in the community.

220 Roberts: What about your incubator program?

221 Dudley: The incubator program-what we do is provide--well they
222 have their own private office, but they have
223 shared space such as conference rooms, a computer
224 lab. We provide internet-high speed internet
225 access.

226 Roberts: Can you list some of the businesses that are here now
227 and some that you have provided the incubator
228 opportunity for and now have moved on and become
229 successful?

230 Dudley: Well those that I remember that have moved on is Wise
231 Business Service. She had a service were she did
232 document management. She started here as
233 incubator. And we have Fred Meyers. He's actually

234 up at King of Cuts now because that shopping
235 center up there. But he came through.

236 Roberts: That's my barber. I'm glad you gave his name. I've
237 never known--I just know Fred.

238 Dudley: Fred Meyers. Actually, he's trying to expand now and
239 maybe do a barber school-barber college. I think
240 we have a black business directory. I don't know
241 if you know Shane Hefner [?]. He's actually
242 graduated the program, but he started as
243 incubator. He started here as incubator, but he
244 still has office space here as a retail. Then we
245 have Teamwork In Service. That's a security patrol
246 service. [Unclear]-she's a family practitioner.
247 Then we have a mobile respiratory service-Infinity
248 Pulmonary Service.

249 Roberts: I've seen the washateria.

250 Dudley: The laundromat downstairs, yes. That was actually
251 started as a lab for our Young Entrepreneurship
252 Program. (15:00) We have the program at [James]
253 Madison High School. And that was their lab where
254 they would come and do the day to day hands on
255 with running a business. Doing the advertising,

256 learning how to set up [unclear], bookkeeping and
257 accounting and record keeping.

258 Roberts: Can you talk a little bit more about the
259 entrepreneurship program. I know that it was
260 started a few years ago, but I didn't know if it
261 still existed. [Laughter]

262 Dudley: Well actually, this year it's not. This is the second
263 year because of funding and stuff, but we still
264 keep it as one of our programs and help to get it
265 started back. Right now this year it's not.

266 Roberts: Okay.

267 Dulaney: Let me ask you some questions. Did you graduate from
268 Bishop College?

269 Dudley: No, I didn't graduate from Bishop College.

270 Dulaney: When you left Bishop what did you do? What type of
271 jobs? In fact, could you give us your occupational
272 history from Bishop up to now? Is that okay to ask
273 that question? [Laughter] I know that it's a lot.
274 I'm just curious about how, in terms of activism,
275 of your father affected your own life career.

276 Dudley: I went to Bishop maybe two or three years and after that
277 I went to work at the City of Dallas at the Police

278 Department for a little while. At the same time I
279 started working part-time with my aunt and uncle
280 at Cedar Crest Funeral Home. Because of the
281 involvement, certain places, if you had to be on
282 the picket line or whatever, a lot of times you
283 couldn't keep a job, so that was the benefit of
284 being able to have someone in the family or have a
285 job where could have the freedom to do those
286 things. So I worked at Cedar Crest Funeral Home
287 from 1978 and then in 1984 I went to school-
288 mortuary school and I was a mortician probably for
289 twenty years or so. I was at Cedar Crest Funeral
290 Home from 1978 to 1995, I believe. So that was
291 pretty much my career from there. And after that I
292 didn't work for a couple of years. I thought was
293 too [unclear]. [Laughs] That's what I thought
294 anyway. Then I worked for different home-health
295 agencies after that. Then I actually worked with
296 John [unclear]. I don't know if you know Helen
297 [unclear] drug rehab and AIDS service programs.
298 Then I think the next stop was here.

299 Dulaney: How long have you been here?

300 Dudley: Since 2003.

301 Dulaney: What is the funding for ICDC? How does it get it's
302 funding?

303 Dudley: It's different sources of funding, but the BAC [Business
304 Assistance Center] Program is predominantly funded
305 through HUD [Housing and Urban Development] or
306 CDBG funding from the City of Dallas and other
307 funding is private.

308 Dulaney: CDBG is Community Development Block Grants from the
309 City of Dallas?

310 Dudley: Yes. They administer the program as for the BAC.

311 Dulaney: How did you feel last summer when your father passed
312 and there was all these honors and accolades?
313 Given what had gone before, you know. I'm sorry if
314 I'm touching a raw nerve here or some emotion. I
315 actually thought [unclear] very special, but
316 that's my opinion. What did you think about
317 everything that happened? Elated state and
318 everything. It was beautiful.

319 Dudley: It was an honor. It really was beautiful. I just can't
320 talk--you know it's difficult.

321 Dulaney: Okay, I'm sorry.

322 Dudley: A lot of us is working through that still. But it really
323 was, it was an honor. I was glad to see. And I
324 think the city really gave him his due.

325 Dulaney: Can you talk about before? The house arrests and all
326 the charges. Can you talk about that and what you
327 thought about all of those things?

328 Dudley: Well, I thought about what I think about it now the same
329 thing is going on. [Laughter] It's just the new--
330 what do they say--the new Jim Crow. The whole
331 lynching, you know. It's just another way for them
332 to keep anybody that's trying to bring about
333 parity and equity. They don't want a shift in the
334 power or to share any power really. Doesn't have
335 to be a power shift, but to share it-the power, so
336 they use what they use. (20:00) And in my heart I
337 know he's not guilty because always from the time
338 back from the South Dallas Information Center
339 there have been people that have supported him.
340 [Unclear] He was sick-had illnesses-had medication
341 and stuff. And somebody, if you, wanted to help
342 out but that did not compromise what he was going
343 to do as far as what he felt was right. That did
344 not influence anything that he would do. I think

345 it was an opportunity for us to share and spend
346 time with him as a family, the house arrest, so we
347 always had to take the positive out of it.

348 Dulaney: What was your father's occupation officially?

349 Dudley: Officially? [Laughs] Lobbyist for justice.

350 Dulaney: Alright. Okay.

351 Roberts: But he did work as a waiter.

352 Dudley: A head waiter.

353 Roberts: Do you remember where?

354 Dudley: It was the First National Bank [executive dining room].

355 Then I remember--And then he would always do these
356 other jobs and stuff. Work for other--La Tunisia,
357 Chateaubriand. [Unclear] was a family. I think
358 they had a restaurant. I can't remember the name
359 of it. But I remember he worked--and actually
360 that's where he and my mother met--at the Baker
361 Hotel. They always tease [laughs] because he--of
362 course, he knew how to do it but he'd always like
363 he want her to debone the fish for him. [Laughter]
364 So that was a way in. He'd play like he couldn't
365 debone the fish, so he'd always want her to debone

366 the fish. But she said she didn't mind anyway
367 because he shared his tips well. [Laughter]

368 Roberts: I wanted to ask, how do you feel about the involvement
369 of our youth today? Do you think the things that
370 Al and Miss Ragsdale, and Miss Heggins, J.B.
371 Jackson-just to go down the list--the things that
372 they fought for, do you think our youth appreciate
373 the separate accommodations-helping to get that--
374 Housing, for example-housing development. They can
375 live wherever they want to.

376 Dudley: Some do and some don't and I don't know if they know or
377 are exposed to enough of what it used to be, as
378 far as I think they need to be taught more of the
379 history to appreciate it. I don't think that's
380 being done. Then somewhere, I don't know where it
381 happened or how it happened. I know one of the
382 biggest problems was crack coming into our
383 communities just destroying a lot of the things-
384 the progress. But, I think it is a gap from where
385 it was, when my dad--him bringing the Marvin
386 Crenshaws, the Diane Ragsdales-reaching out. They
387 would be all ages at the South Dallas Information
388 Center, so I think that's kind of where we need to

389 make a connection with the youth, the seniors, or-
390 -I don't want to say seniors, but [laughs] the
391 experienced ones to get them involved. And then we
392 do need to share, just be sharing with the younger
393 ones, all the sacrifices that other people have
394 made-the things that they do take for granted.
395 They need to know, so they can appreciate it. And
396 I don't think--they just exposed to so much other
397 junk.

398 Roberts: Do you see a way to get to the--right now for example
399 Miss Ragsdale talks about the NAACP Youth Council
400 a lot. That was one of the main vehicles for
401 training and getting information to the youth
402 back--

403 Dudley: I wasn't a part of the Youth Council, but then we had
404 SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference]
405 which was Operation Bread Basket and every
406 Saturday morning that's where we were. And it was
407 something that we were doing and just learning
408 about the things that were going on and just the
409 fellowship. So maybe things like that if it has to
410 be on an organized level.

411 Roberts: Who was in charge of the Operation Bread Basket at that
412 time?

413 Dudley: Actually my dad and--was it Peter Johnson? Yeah, they
414 were like cofounders founders of--And different
415 people. Each would actually run the meetings.

416 (25:00)

417 Roberts: We're about to wrap it up, but is there anything else
418 you would like to share with us we have not
419 covered?

420 Dudley: Probably, but--[Laughter].

421 Roberts: We'll be here all this week, so if you think of
422 something just knock on the door and tell us.

423 Dulaney: Come on in. [Laughter] You see how painless this is.

424 Dudley: I'm just getting my voice back. Yesterday I had
425 laryngitis. I was trying to get my sister here,
426 but we weren't thinking. Tuesdays and Thursdays
427 are kind of hectic.

428 Roberts: We appreciate it.

429 Dulaney: Yes, we appreciate your time. But we'll be here, like I
430 said, tomorrow, Thursday and Friday, so if you

431 feel like there's some other things you want to
432 share please feel free to come in.

433 Dudley: And I guess I didn't understand where we were going or
434 what you were really trying to do, so maybe I
435 will.

436 Dulaney: We're trying to tell the story. We're getting the
437 second-hand story specifically about your father
438 from you. Of course we want to see indeed how his
439 activism affected you. And we thought that would
440 be a good story to include with our eventual DVD.
441 Like I said, we missed him. That's just mind
442 boggling that we no one sat down and talked to
443 your father. Do you know of anyone who did sit
444 down and interview him extensively?

445 Dudley: The library did in, like, 2000, but it I think it was
446 around the Cross Roads Community Center. What was
447 the lady's name? Bonnie [Lovell]--. I'll find it
448 because I think I have either the transcript or a
449 tape, but it is in the library.

450 Dulaney: It is in the Dallas Public Library. Downtown or the one
451 on [Martin Luther] King?

452 Dudley: I think it's in Central Library.

453 Dulaney: Good. That's good to know. We'll look that up.

454 Dudley: And then Marilyn Clark had in her youth program a young-

455 -. His nickname was "Dizzy Dean". [Laughter] I
456 can't think of his real name. She probably knows
457 it. But he did a short video onetime too.

458 Roberts: That's two good sources. And we're not certainly going
459 to convey that you have not done an excellent job.
460 You have done an excellent job. But if you have
461 anything else you'd like to add we'd like to get
462 it.

463 Dulaney: And it happens all the time where after we talk to
464 people they'll come back. [Laughter]

465 Dudley: Maybe next time I'll sit in with someone else. I should
466 have sat in with John Fullinwider.

467 Roberts: You were great.

468 Dulaney: Yes. Well, thank you very much. We'll end it right
469 here.

470 Roberts: Thanks again.

471 [End of Interview]

472

473

474