

Oral History Collection

Julia Jordan

Interviewers: W. Marvin Dulaney and Robert L. Price
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Dr. Dulaney: This is part two with Mrs. Julia Jordan on

September 7, 2011 at the African-American Museum.

I want to ask you about two organizations you were in before we talk about civil rights. We want to talk about civil rights in this part of the interview. Tell me about the Priscilla Art Club and how it got started.

Mrs. Jordan: The Priscilla Art Club will be 100 years old this month. It started where some housewives who were doing handwork and embroidery and so forth after their husbands were gone to work and the children in school, they used to--a few ladies got together--a meeting and they named it Priscilla Art Club--from the bible. There's a Priscilla in the bible. Then they just enjoyed themselves and they

said they would stay together and take in other interested ladies. So they did. Miss Mattie Mansfield Chalmers started it. And then for some reason she withdrew and went to some other organization. But, the club stayed on. But she was the original member. And so many people who are well known and have gone on were members of the Priscilla Art Club. Mrs. Brashear-Jimmie Tyler Brashear who was the first black supervisor of schools here in Dallas, Texas--of elementary schools. She was here for years and very well known. Fannie Smith-A. Maceo Smith's wife was one. And lord, just about all the older doctor's wives were there. Then just a lot of--my mother-in-law was one. Mrs. Tyler-Dr. Jordan's mother was one. And crazy about it. That's how I got in it. She wanted me to get in it earlier, but I had the children and I said, "I can't be in too much." I was working with the medical wives, and you know, you can find yourself up a little too high in joining. I know some people now that have over joined. But, that's not my business. But, mama said, "No, you need to get in there while I can get you in because they look at the women." At one

time you had to be married to join. You had to be a Mrs. You could be a widow or something. They didn't throw out. Later we let that down because now that bar is not up because so many women now prefer to be single and have their own lives to live without that. So we didn't want to segregate anybody for that. Like I said, that was my club. We went to this hospital and gave these blankets out. We do something every year. One year we went to this other rest home over here on--I still call it Oakland [now Malcom X Boulevard] and Martin Luther King [Boulevard]. We gave them t-shirts. We would get a plain t-shirt and fix it and embroider something. Put the state of Texas on it or something. We have some men up there and they didn't want nothing too feminine. I'm not an artist, so I put on "I am a cowboy too". [Laughs] And the men wanted mine because they didn't want anything too fancy. But during World War I these women folded [bandages]--for the wounded soldiers. So they sent all kind of blankets and so forth over there for these men in the hospitals to take care of them. They have worked through all the wars, whatever they could do. And they stay

together. Not too many. They can only be twenty-four.

Dulaney: I was going to ask. There was this limit. Looking at the bylaws. You know, the records are at UTA [University of Texas at Arlington]. Looking at it, was it primarily--how did it come to be primarily doctor's wives?

Jordan: Well, I guess, I don't really know, but I imagine because so many doctor's wives at that time were not working. And when they started off they were meeting in the daytime. Later they would just look for ladies that they thought were outstanding women in the city. And when these women would tell somebody who was in the club, "I sure would like to belong". Then when there became an opening their names would come up. So you get your friend. They get their friends. When somebody dies they leave that place open for a year. You don't run and fill it. That's just one of the things.

Dulaney: Why was the limit twenty-four? Why did they establish a maximum number of twenty-four?

Jordan: To keep it from getting too big, I think. That's all I can say because it was there when I came. I kind

of like that because I have looked at a lot of other things-Greek letter organizations for men and women and a lot of other clubs and the minute you get started they get too big. And when they get too big they got people getting out--"Oh I used to be--. I don't do this." And somehow we haven't lost--only members we have lost are when they get too old and we allow them to go out. They don't have to hold the meetings anymore, but they can come whenever they are ready. But usually that member doesn't last too long. But they become something like emeritus.

Dulaney: Okay. Tell me about The Links. You were one of the founding members of The Links.

Jordan: [Laughs] I'm not really a founding member.

Dulaney: It was in the paper that you and Mrs. Fannie Smith and I think two other women were founders, started here in 1957.

Jordan: Fannie asked me--but I tell the truth. I was living on Cedar Springs Road and we had two bedrooms. And I had two children, Buck [?] and Kayrette. But I [?] when I found out they couldn't go into hotels then. When they started they couldn't go into

hotels. She was saying, "Julia, we're gonna have it and everybody will keep a national officer because we're not going to be many. We're going to start with about twelve or thirteen." And I said, "Fannie, where will the national officers--." And some will bring their husbands. Well, a lot of these women were [unclear]. Their husbands had been out a long time. I had been working--much older than me. They had lovely homes. Fannie lived up on Thomas Avenue. The L.L. Smith lived up on South Boulevard. [Laughs] Had this palatial brick home and with the winding stairway and everything. So I said, "Where will they sleep?" Buck [?], my son, was still sleeping in his high bed with the baby bed and Kayrette was sleeping in the little youth bed. I said, "Where will I put a national officer? In the bed Frank and myself?" I said, "I'm not going to be embarrassed." I said, "It's nowhere else. I don't have anywhere for them to stay in. I'm not going to be embarrassed." I said, "Frank and myself. Our children are young. I can't cut that." So, we became the first members in there. That's what they were saying. I know when Fannie did because I was at a national doctors

meeting-the National Medical Association. And the National was the black and the American [Medical Association] was the white. We were up there and everybody would really show out. The women in the daytime would play bridge and so forth. We had segregation there in Chicago. This was in Chicago. Frank would not do things on time. He was a last minute man. He said when he call and try to get a reservation they knew that the National Medicine was all--Medical was all black. They didn't intend to overcrowd this white hotel with these thousands of black doctors who were going to be coming in from everywhere. Because black doctors loved this convention. They told us, "Oh, we have a nice hotel right down the street." So Frank said, "I know those people got room. They don't ever sell out a hotel." I said, "Well Frank, where will we stay?" He said, "Just leave it to me." We got to Joplin, Missouri and he was still then with the National Guard. He called in from Joplin, Missouri and said, "This is Captain Jordan and I'm coming in with my wife. I'd like a suite." And [they said], "Oh, yes, Captain Jordan. We have room." So he made them confirm it and send it right back

through Joplin. We stopped there with my sister's in-laws. The next morning we got up and drove to Chicago. Everybody wanted to know, "Frank, how did you get up there?" They had certain levels for us. You know, all the black were on--I don't know what floor, but I'll just say the sixth and seventh floor. And we ended up on the tenth floor and they wanted to know, "Frank, how'd you get up here?" So Frank asked for this suite. I said, "Listen, I don't go nowhere I can't stay. We can stay only until it's over. Don't try to stay on no more because I'll go bankrupt. I'll be sweeping floors here." [Laughter] He said, "Well, while I'm here I can stay. Don't you worry about anything." So, they would come up to our room because these women knew Frank. So many black doctor's wives then went to Fisk [University] and finished Fisk because there's Meharry [Medical College], there's Fisk, and everybody get together. Frank's first wife was from Fisk. They knew Frank a lot of them. And doctors knew him and they would come [?]. He said, "Go on up there and play." We'd be up there playing bridge or doing whatever. [They said], "Julia, why don't you establish The Links down

there?" I said---I was thinking--I didn't tell them what I told Fannie-"I've got nowhere for the Links." And I didn't even feel like I knew enough people in Dallas at that time to get enough together. Now, Fannie could because Fannie Smith was very well known. Her husband was very well known. He'd been an outstanding man with the federal government for a long time. She said, "If we ever get to Dallas. Maybe I can get my husband--". One of the ladies who was a member then, she said, "Maybe I could get my husband to go to Mexico and that's as close as I'll ever get to Mexico." I said, "Don't depend on me because I can't do it." What I told them was, "My children were too young and I couldn't give up on no time." So, when Fannie came alone--they told Fannie they knew me. She wanted me and I told her the truth then. I didn't try to tell her Buck [?] and Kayrette were too young, I told her I didn't have room for them. So, then by the time we moved when they took in the new members--they took in the new members the next year. I said, "I can cut this." If you will let me use me use the slang. "I can cut this with the Dallas members, but not when

they start coming from all over the country." So, so many people got out or died. I became the only member that had been in there fifty years when we got the fifty year deal. Now, Miss Flowers had been in there from the beginning. She was an original member. Miss Annette Flowers. But she had at one time resigned to go to Houston and live. Then she came back to Dallas to live, so she never did come back when she came to Dallas. So I got this call one morning from the national president congratulating me, telling me I was a platinum member and I wouldn't have to pay any more dues or registration or nothing. And they wanted me to come to Philadelphia. We got up there and believe it or not--you know, they were young according to the other groups. The only other one at the meeting was my classmate in Wylie. It was just two of us that had stayed with it fifty years and we were both kind of young when we went in. So, the girls had been so nice to me. I have thought about leaving, but so many people think The Links are just social, social, but they are not. They work hard. I went over once--Mary Lois [?] Sweatt was over the Ebony Fashion Fair and that's when Iola

Johnson was a member. Her work pulled her away from--she did that because she wanted to. She got us a hearing. We got on the television. We had to do it in Fort Worth. When we got there--that's why I thought about you this morning. I didn't want you to ask me questions that would be too delicate for me to try to answer. This fellow started on us and Mary Lois [?] and myself are sitting here. They tell me you can't join The Links unless you have a long mink coat. And Mary Lois [?] said, "Miss Jordan's been there longer than me. She can tell you something about that." And I had to elaborate and say, "No." And then he [said], "Well, what about a Cadillac? Don't you have to drive a Cadillac?" [Mary said], "Miss Jordan, do you want to answer that question?" [Laughter] I laughed after it was over. I said, "Mary Lois [?], I should have whipped you when we went to school." Because here this man is throwing these questions at us and they're all negative. But we managed to climb out of it and tell him, "No, you didn't have to have a Cadillac, you didn't have to have a mink coat." So, we had the Ebony Fashion Fair. [?] You know, we have given over \$1 million in

scholarships in Dallas. Well, not really in scholarships, but in other things. So many things people don't know about. I remember when Miss Flowers and Billy Burke's wife--[Laughs] she would kill me. Rose Burke. When they went out and gave parties at Halloween and other little--Valentine's Day for the little children where--I don't know if--they do have a name, but I can't think of it now. But, like they would arrest the couple tonight and they got little children. They got to have some place to take them if nobody can take them in. Or if they have children-twelve or thirteen, they got to have somewhere to go. They went to that home and gave the children a party. Then there was a woman in west Dallas who took in children. And we went out there once. Rose went with me out there. I forget her name, her home, but we gave the Christmas tree and all the toys to all the children she took in. And we didn't try to get a lot of publicity about that. Just do what you think something needs doing. We bought one of these huge containers where you--Salvation Army--where you throw your things because we saw so much on the sidewalk that people could use and there

was not a container in south Dallas. I have a picture of Fannie and myself giving 'em that thing and it cost quite a bit because it's a huge thing. Then we took women who had children but no education in some of these projects and re-tooled them to go to school, get your GED, and learn to do something. You can be an aid in a nursing home or something. You don't have to sit up here and let your child grow up and be just like you. So we had a meeting out to--what is now Yvonne Ewell school and brought in all The Links--the one's that are the new chapters and talked to them about that. And we kept ours over in Oak Cliff and we bring the ladies over there. [They would ask], "Well, what can I do with my baby?" Bring the baby too. We had a free nursery and everything. But that's the kind of work they do and they working now with two or three different projects. Helping children and giving these old--I tell you another thing we worked with that I had to work with--children over here where their parents are homeless and they have this school now. They named the school after Friday [?]. I told Friday [?] school over there--well those children over there--

-we went over there. We gave--we would have story hour with them and reading. These were the little children. They were not high school. And helping get their homework. And at the end we gave them the backpack with all the little school supplies in it. Then we worked with something else I didn't know about till one of the girls got with it. Girls when they get eighteen keep them when they get eighteen when they have nowhere to go and then at eighteen they are given rent or something for about three months and then they're on their own. And so many of these children--the pimps and so forth and the crack people are just waiting on them. We had those children-boys and girls. It was so nice. One of the girls--we taught them how to cook. She used to be the nutritionist for Dallas Independent School District.

Dr. Roberts: Craft

Jordan: Craft. That's who it was. Miss Craft would help them with recipes and so forth. And she got containers that they would have the crock pot and everything. In fact they had some things I wish I had in my kitchen. But when these girls got ready to go this

year they were ready a little more than to just get out there where the people were waiting on them. And they were so nice. They were nice girls. These girls were all races. Black, white, and Mexican-American. And the boys too. And we had the men to come in--not just the Link men, but other men who were in different walks of life to come in talk about what you boys can do. You're not through when you get eighteen and nineteen and get out of here. So they work you. We'll have a project this year that everybody will have to be all hands on deck. And every Christmas before the holiday we go up to the Martin Luther King and take the elderly people. We give everybody up there--when I say a gift they get things like soap and a toothbrush and a toothpaste and all of this. Then we have a sing-song with them and we sing all the Christmas songs. Then we give away things. We might give something extra--some perfume or something. They look forward to that every year. I never miss that. I always enjoy it because I say, "I ought to be with them." I mean, I ought to be there with the older people because I'm an older person. But I'm there with The Links just singing

with them. I told them if they have anything left over give to me because I'm at the age group that ought to be sitting there. [Laughter]

Dulaney: Shifting gears. Let's talk about civil rights. You mentioned to me in April that you and Dr. Jordan participated in some of the sit-ins and the testing downtown. So tell me, how did you and your husband participate in the Civil Rights Movement?

Jordan: Well now, Frank took off from his office and he walked down in front of what used to be H.L. Green's [Department Store]. It's not H.L. Green's anymore. [?] was on the other side. And that's where he walked and took the plaque. Rhett James--I want to give Reverend James--Dr. James credit. Reverend James has not received the credit he really needs. He's deceased now. He didn't have a lot of support. But he set up the first and only long march and protest that started up at Good Street and went all the way down to where the trains-- Union Terminal Station used to be. My son was going to walk. He said he'd walk that [?] and I took him up there. This strange thing happened to me. Mostly high school children and you know

children did a lot in this. They don't get credit. Older people didn't want to lose their jobs. And Frank went because he felt like his job was with the black people anyway. He didn't have to depend on anybody firing him. And if they let him out of Saint Paul [Hospital] he right back where he was.

Dulaney: What was the purpose of the march?

Jordan: Just to let them know--Reverend James wanted them to know that Dallas, Texas was not going to be the only big city that got the results of integration that never protested. And I thought that was beautiful because children were getting killed and beat up and everything--burn up all across the country. And Dallas was just sitting tight because we had what we called "powers that be" had gotten tied up with some of our best ministers and they were keeping a great big lid on Dallas. They thought it would never be a march here. That's why I say Reverend James didn't have any support for this. He got this march together anyway and we marched down there [unclear]. Nobody bothered us. And what I was telling you happened to me. I'm sitting at my car and they started marching and

singing and just something happened to me. I went crazy. I got out of my car and joined them. Bucky didn't know I was in it. He was way down the street. I just couldn't let that go by. I thought about Kayrette down there in jail when I had to go get my daughter out of jail three different times. I said, "I'm not going to let this go by me." They'll just have to fire me or whatever Dr. White wants to do because I'm gone. I got in that march too and we marched on down and they sent help for us to get back. But now, Reverend Zan Holmes was one of the patrons when Dr. Martin Luther King came here. That's another thing Dr. James brought here. Dr. Rhett James. He didn't have any support. He brought Dr. King to Fair Park and we had--a choir was supposed to be made of different choirs from the big churches here in Dallas. We were going to have a big thing. At the door there was no charge. All you had to have was to register to vote. The poll tax I think then had been knocked out and you registered to vote. And lo and behold the news got out that everybody who was connected with DISD [Dallas Independent School District] who was going to sing that night would be fired and

that whoever was on the door would be fired. I remember my brother was so disgusted because he had some good voices in his choir and some of them [said], "Oh, we can't do it. Dr. White's going to fire all of us." I went home and got TV table. We were going to have TV tables. They didn't show up with the tables. I got my TV tables and put them at the door and I manned one and Frank got on the other one till somebody else, I don't know who, somebody took his place there to let the people in. They got volunteers from the audience who were not connected with the school district to come on up and sing, so they ended up with a good choir anyway. That was Martin Luther King's one trip to Dallas, Texas. Dr. Zan Holmes was one of the few-- I don't know any other preacher other than Dr. James [and] Dr. Holmes who showed up. But, everything went off because we had a big crowd out there. And then they did protest at several stores. I don't know who all protested, but I know Frank was down there at H.L. Green's.

Dulaney: Let's go back. After the school desegregation case in 1954 they passed the law in the state legislature that said public employees-school teachers could

not belong to the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People].

Jordan: [Laughs] They started that a long--Dallas got that before they passed the law. I'm going to tell you something that's little know about my husband--the daredevil. They said back then--I wasn't even here. This happened before we married. I guess I must have been in high school or college--That they were going to fire everybody who belonged to the NAACP in Dallas. I don't care where you were working. You could be the [?] here, the cook here. Everybody was going to lose their job. All they wanted was the book showing the members. Nobody wanted to keep the book because they had a bad sheriff here then and he was going to kick in doors and find the book. Frank Jordan accepted the books and put 'em in his office. And the people met in his office in the evening, in the night like patients. They came by his office in the day and paid their dues. He would get the books out of his safe and make the little notation. I said, "What were you going to do when mama--". His mother--I was just scared to death. I just knew if they ever found those books they were going to

kill Frank. He said, "Well, I was going to kill me at least one or two because I kept my .38 right in the desk drawer. [Laughter] I told my nurse who ever came in there--if a white person came in there or the sheriff to let me know right away. So they kept it and when that went down they got in on them about that and everything cleared up. But, what I think was beautiful--not one black person in Dallas let those white people know where those books were. Now, that's unusual. They tried and tried to find where were the books and nobody ever told that Frank had the books in his office. Because it would have been terrible. We would have had--I probably would have [?] because it would have been a big deal if they had come there after those books. But nobody told. That's how tight--you know Martin Luther King had it that tight down there when he was marching. Everybody was together. You didn't have any stool pigeon. Well, these people were right there and money or nothing made anybody tell where the books were. So that was what happened with that.

Dulaney: Did you know Mrs. Richardson--Thelma Page [Richardson]?

Jordan: Yes, I knew Thelma. Thelma, now, taught here with my sister. Very pretty girl. [?] plump like Oprah Winfrey. But, she was from Denver and when they were trying to make--see when I came it was supposed to be even salaries, but then white people got one salary for teaching and black people got another one. They were going to sue. The NAACP was going to sue and the way they did that [was] when they got ready to get money you gave your principle \$1. They asked every teacher for every \$1 a month. And you had teachers that wouldn't pay it. He said, "No, no names just every teacher would be \$1." I think [B.F.] Darrell [Elementary School] had about forty-two teachers then. You had big schools. And some teachers wouldn't pay, but most of them paid the \$1. Then they had to get someone to make the suit and Thelma was the person that picked up the deal and made the lawsuit. They said, "Surely you'll lose your job." She said, "Well if I do I'll go back to Denver and do whatever I can find." And she was one. And I wondered--it took so long. Thelma is the one who should have a school named after her. I want to meet that [?]. I always thought that.

Roberts: She has one.

Jordan: Is there on now? But it took so long.

Roberts: It took a long time.

Jordan: Yes, it did. And I wondered why some of these people who had not done anything would draw a check had schools named after them and Thelma who had really put her life on the line. But she did. I'm glad you verified that because she did that and she won. I heard my principle say—it was J.B. Richard then. He was my first principle—the late J.B. Richard. He said, "One teacher in my school who wouldn't pay her dollar. And do you know when we got spoiled the next year—got the even checks, she was the first one who brought her check to me [saying], "Mr. Richard, do you think this check is right. I thought I was going to more."" [Laughter] She never gave a penny. He'd say that in faculty meeting because he was very outspoken man. [Laughs] But, that's the way they did that. You didn't give a name you gave your principle \$1 and they kept that thing down and then went to court with this child—Page and she won. She lived not far from me and then she went with her—where I

live now. We live very close to together. And she went to California with her son. My sister saw her out there. That's where she passed.

Dulaney: Were you a member of the Progressive Voters League?

Jordan: Yes, I remember it, but I don't know that much about it.

Now, Maceo would tell me things about it later on. Because Maceo was a good friend mine. And sometimes my husband would tell him--grab the phone and tell him, "Get off the phone with my wife." And he said, "Tell your husband to go on and make somebody well and leave us alone." But he always said he was going to make a politician out of me, but I stuck with education. The Progressive Voters League--Maceo was a part of that. But, I can't give you too much info--in my past the man that did so much for New Hope Church-Maynard Jackson Sr.-Reverend Jackson Sr. He was a part of that. They set up so much here, you know. Because that's where New Hope [Baptist Church]--Lord, you'd be surprised. The first black school in Dallas was set up by New Hope [Baptist Church]. Not by Dallas. Not by the state of Texas. They set it up and finally they took it from house to house

and this woman gave a little shotgun house over in north Dallas—over there off of Hall Street. And that's where there was the first school. Then they made the schools. That's where Darrell and [?] started. But this came long before that. And they started the first newspaper right at the church. That's why I know they started the newspaper, the church and he worked with the Progressive Voters League. Then Reverend Jackson was a part of getting Latin. The Negroes didn't have a foreign language which meant they--Dr.'s had to know Latin then. And you didn't get no doctors out of Dallas. See, you had little things with segregation. You couldn't have no doctors come out of Dallas because they hadn't had no foreign language unless they paid extra to get it in college. [?] made them put a foreign language in Dallas. And I said one other thing because I sometimes speak on the anniversary of New Hope. He even noticed that the school yards--when they got more than one were completely bare. Just like the wall behind you there. All the school yards for the white children had flowers around the building and trees. And the black children out there playing in the sun and

dirt. So he saw to it that trees were first planted. That's little things on the school yards and flowers.

Dulaney: So you were a member of New Hope then?

Jordan: I was a member of New Hope.

Dulaney: You joined in 19--

Jordan: Oh, now let me tell you--I'm a good Christian. I think I'm a good Christian, but this is my story. I first father and his folks were AMEs [African Methodist Episcopal]. They helped to set up Joshua Chapel Church in Waxahachie, [Texas]. That's one of the places built by Booker T. Washington's son-in-law. He was the first architect. Dr. [Roberts], you might could give me his name. You know the first architect? Booker T. Washington's son-in-law--that built this building downtown? This building here downtown.

Dulaney: I know who you're talking about.

Jordan: You know who I'm talking about. Alright. He built Joshua Chapel. But, the first was just a little thing my grandparents set up with corn stalks to keep the

sun of them, you know. But that ended up Joshua Chapel.

Dulaney: William Sidney Pittman.

Jordan: Pittman was the one! He build Joshua Chapel too. I

joined AME Church as a child about nine years old because my father was born in that church. My mother was Methodist-ME [Methodist Episcopal] Methodist, but she joined too. Then when I got in high school the preacher there said, "I understand your daughter's pretty smart." He knew my mother because she knew all the ME preachers. [He] said, "If she'll come down there and play for me she'll get a scholarship if she comes out with an honor." So I started playing for the ME church there in Waxahachie. [?] in the church. And then I did, I got--\$50 was my scholarship. When I went to Wylie [College ?] the gates went on a slant when you left Wylie. We were kind of on a terrace. And as you went down the hill you passed a Catholic church. There was a young lady there that--going to Wylie in the dormitory. She was a very good musician. Much better than I considered my--much better. She was playing for this Catholic church,

but her boyfriend was a member of the Wylie Collegiates [?] and he got a job for guitar and a drum and his trumpet and he wanted a piano player. He said, "I got this job--". And this place was kind of rough then. I don't know how it is now and I don't want to insult anybody. But it was called Sunny South. And it was just like west Dallas used to be. You know, anything might happen there. So he said, "If you can get out the dormitory we'll make \$3 a piece." That was big money. [Laughter] So, she sneaked out the dormitory that night and played the piano. And coming back in the night watchman caught her. She got sent home. And she came to me and said, "Julia, I knew your brother." She was a class ahead of me. Said, "I believe you'll give me my job back and I'm going to come back and finish my education. I'm going to come to summer school and I'll be here. I'm gone for this semester, but I will be back." She said, "Will you take my job and give it back to me when I get back?" I said, "Yes." So, she took me down there and introduced me to the priest. And that was alright. The school didn't mind that. And they let you play for them. [?] daytime stuff. You had the

choir practice and everything in the day. So I started playing at the Catholic church. And I found out that the priest had a housekeeper. She was a nice lady. She said, "What don't you come down here and have breakfast." Breakfast at Wylie was grits and [laughs]--grits and ground meat. She said, "Oh, we have bacon and eggs and whatever you want I'll fix." So the matron knew I was going down there to church, so I started going down there and having breakfast. I also found out that he told me I could have the funny pages. He didn't read them. We couldn't get the paper until Monday when it was in the library. The library was closed on Sunday. So, I'd go down to the Catholic church early and eat breakfast and read the funny pages big time. And he got to talking to me about it would be so much more easy if you would take instructions. You don't have to join. Take instructions. So, I started taking--I told mother. And my mother was a very thoughtful woman. She told some of her friends that I had this little job and they said, "Don't let her go there. She going to be a Catholic the rest of her life. No, sister Gipson don't do that". [Laughter] Mama told

me and I told them what I'm going to tell you,
"All roads are supposed to go to heaven. You take
any road you want just so you don't get off of
that road. If you get off of that road you'd
better get on another one leading that same way. I
don't want you on no road leading to hell."

[Laughter] So I said, "Well, Mama." So I took
instruction with the Catholic church. And when I
married that first time he was Catholic. The
people don't know this, but Kayrette was baptized
in the Catholic Church. The Catholic's in
Waxahachie found out we were down there and they
gave them--they got me and the baby and baptized
the baby. She had a Catholic name. You know, they
give you another name. Mary something. But anyway,
those two now, AME, ME, Catholic. I said, "Well".
I stayed and I came back to the ME church and then
when I was pregnant I got this job in Waxahachie
Wyatt Street Christian Church. I played for Wyatt
Street Christian Church. [Laughs] That was another
road leading on. So all the while I was pregnant
that's where I was saving my money. They fed me.
Mama would walk with me. We couldn't get gas then.
You know you had gas cards. We'd go to choir

practice and service. They had an evening service, so people could get off the streets some. AME, ME, and the Catholic, and the Christian Church. Now, I marry a Baptist. [Laughter] And Mama [?] kept hinting and hinting. We'd go to church one Sunday and Reverend Booker was--. Did you ever remember him-Reverend Booker? Anyway, that's when New Hope was in north Dallas. That brick church that was built by black brick layers. He talked to me and I just fell in love with Reverend Booker because I believed him as a very devout person. And his wife and he had two children near the ages of my children. And I said, "I'm going to join." The way I felt about New Hope--there was one person in New Hope that taught with me that was very crude and she would--she makes me sick. You know, I'd walk by, "Hello. Good morning." Don't say anything. I asked Frank, I said, "Did you ever go with that woman?" He said, "No, I never did go out--I don't know what's wrong with her." [Laughter] So, I said, "I want to love everybody in the church and be able to say this is my Christian sister or brother." And this couple divorced and this woman went to California and I said, "Well, the Lord has

spoken." So then I went right on and joined New Hope and that's where I've been ever since. I've been in New Hope now nearly fifty years. Oh, I have been in fifty years because I was with the Fifty Year Group.

Dulaney: Okay. That gets us back to civil rights again with Reverend Rhett James becoming the pastor of New Hope. He got involved in the OIC [Opportunities Industrial Center]. He started the OIC here--what late 1960s, early 1970s. And you were involved in that.

Jordan: I was a councilor down at OIC. I volunteered down there long time before I even knew that it would be paying me a salary. I said, "You put me on salary." I didn't know I was doing all this volunteer work. But, that was a good program. And that took a lot of people off the streets and brought them in. My daughter started working there. Because I give Reverend James Credit. Most of the people down there were his church members, but he had some that were not. He had a good math teacher down there that I worked with that wasn't with us. We brought--they had what they call

street counselors. Now, I didn't have to go down on the street. And you didn't have to have credentials for that. They'd meet these people at night and tell them about OIC. We got women off the street and men and everything. That they decided--When I would council with these people it was amazing. It's not to me because I have been counseling a long time. I know what happens to people's lives and I've read a lot and seen a lot. But when these people would tell me what happened to them--and one lovely, attractive girl was just about to go into prostitution. I think she had been in a little while. Her mother had run off and left her father and she was the oldest child and she looked like her mother. On an Arkansas farm where the white men had told them--they dropped out of school in the seventh grade. They don't go no higher than that. It's time to go to work then. Some men came there picking cotton--these cotton pickers going through the country. She ran off with one of them and came to Dallas. She told me that when she was eighteen years old she had been this man--she had two children. I think she married him at sixteen. Her father was so mean to

her and would call her names and say, "You're just like your so-and-so mother." She said, "I was sitting out in a rain with one child at my knee and one child in my lap and everything I had in the world was in two cardboard boxes. I'd been evicted. Night was coming on and this family called me in and I started staying with them." She said, "They told me 'You've got to find a job.'" She found this job with a--Did she have two children? Yes. And she found a job with some people that were associated with Majestic Theater. This woman told her, "I want to travel with my husband. He's always on the road and I have a baby. [?]. I want him to live in." She said, "Well I have two babies and I'll be glad to live in." So she started living in at this place. They had a place for her and she'd take care of this white baby too. And that's what she was doing off and on when I met her. She said, "That's not no future." That girl came in there and studied and got her GED and ended up a teacher's aide. When her children came up--oh, she finally got on teaching because you could get your degree. But she was a little rough with the way she talked to her

children, "I'll slap so-and-so. I'll beat your--". And so one of the white principles turned her in and said she was not [unclear]. So she went on and go another job. But she had another job clerking a drug store--something I think. But it got her off of the streets. That was a case I never forgot. I cannot think of a child at fourteen being left to cook and take care of a father and brothers and then be abused and cursed at because she looks like her mother. Then being told, "You can't go to school anymore. Your job is here in the kitchen and the field." No wonder you'd run off. So, that's what OIC did. They did a lot of good with those people. They taught upholstery [?]. They taught GED and got those people in all kind of legal works. Where they were just down on the street, you know, grabbing what they could.

Dulaney: How did the desegregation case affect you as a teacher or counselor?

Jordan: For the first time that we had white children coming in--just a few white children coming into Oliver Wendell Holmes [Middle School]--and I taught with some of the teachers out there--that we had to

drop our animosity and just give everybody an education and talk to the children. Because at that time Mr. [?] was my principle I believe and he would let me have faculty meetings and home-room meetings--Friday's started with home-room meetings--and tell these children we are all trying to get the same thing. It's not any time to make fun or fight. I said, "Big bunch of me kill one man. That's not for you. You're not that type of person." And I never said nothing about the lynch mobs, but that's what I was talking about. I said, "It's not brave when a bunch of people grab one person and a bunch of boys grabbing one boy because he's white." [Laughs] And these little kids got to be close friends of mine because I told them, "If you have any trouble come to me." But one thing that I noticed--when I taught ninth grade I taught what they call HAG [Highly Academically Gifted] children--High Aptitude. These children were supposed to be up ahead of everybody. Then when I started counseling these high aptitude children--we had the dead day. Because that was junior high and it was just like high school. We'd have dead day. You get your test

that you go out and--. Climbing up my window standing on each other's shoulders because the grades had been turned in. They were trying to get the early [unclear]. The one word that I heard that stayed with me [was] "Miss Jordan, Did I pass? Did I pass?" Now, these are high aptitude children wanting to know "Did I pass?" [Laughter] One kid weaseled her way in the building. I don't know who let her in. A little fat white girl. Real fat, just like a little barrel walking. She said, "Miss Jordan, did I make an A?" She wasn't even in the high aptitude class. I said--and I won't call her name, but she was named after a big city. Her folks were rodeo folks and she was named after a rodeo city. I said, "What makes you think you made an A?" [She said], "Oh, I want to grow and be the best in my whole group and I studied so hard for my test and I want to make an A. I hope I made all As." I said, "Well, I hope you did too, but I'm not giving out the grades now." Now, this was for midterm. When I called those classes in again I called in that high aptitude class and I said, "This hurt me because you are supposed to be up above your IQ. You're in here because of your high

IQ and all you want to do is pass." I threw out these examples. I said, "If your mother had a heart attack would you want the doctor to operate on her who passed or the one who made an A? Do you want that doctor who, 'Did I pass? That's all I want to get my diploma and get out and heal folk.'" I said, "I'll bring it home. You got a brand new car and it stopped and somebody say, 'You going to have to have a mechanic.' Do you want that mechanic who just passed or you want the real mechanic?" I said, "Where do you children get the idea 'just let me pass'?" I told them, I said, "A certain little girl came to me. Not one of your friends. She was determined. She wanted an A. And you wanted to pass. This disgusts me." I know another thing I had in one of my classes. I just thought up this one. I said, "We going to have a test." And I asked them. I said, "I want you to write down every street you pass on the way home and spell it. Most of you walk to school." [They complained, "I can't--." You've been going to the school for two years and can't call the name of the street. Can't spell the name of the street. I said, "I want to know the superintendent of Dallas

schools." We didn't have a [?] superintendent. We didn't have all these others. Dr. E.D. Walter [?] and the assistant superintendent. Do you know I didn't have a child in that room who knew the superintendent's name and when I got to this other class with these other mixed children in it [they said], "I know the superintendent's name! I can spell his name." I couldn't believe all those little white children knew the superintendent's name and not a black child in this HAG group knew the superintendent's name. I said, "Well you know, we are not either teaching or parents are not pushing these children to give--let them look and try to find the reason for things. Don't just, 'I go to school every day. I don't care who the superintendent is.' You need to know these things." And I said, "That's a joke with people." They told the joke about one old man wanted to know why do we pay taxes. What's the good of taxes? And they say the president buys his cigars and tobacco with tax money. And say he says, "Abraham Lincoln ought to be ashamed." [Laughter] Years since Abraham Lincoln was president. You don't know the president. So I said, "You need to

know these things." And pushed them. So, integration was fine with me. Now, I think it has degenerated a lot because one thing they did--I got a notice before I went to the building--the administration building. Call me one morning, "You going to be--they putting you--". And I can't think of the name of that school--Hillcrest. "You going to be one of the counselors at Hillcrest next year." This...

[End of Interview]