

Oral History Collection

Rosie C. Sorrells

Interviewer: Malik H. Dulaney and Kay Hunter

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Place of Interview: Dallas, TX

Dr. Dulaney: Let's start it. Okay. Let's see--All right

[claps], we are live. This is October 6, 2011.

We are at the Innerscity Community Development Corporation. Mrs. Kay Hunter is interviewing Dr. Rosie Sorrells. Y'all are good to go.

Mrs. Hunter: Thank you so much Dr. Dulaney. Good afternoon Dr. Sorrells. How are you doing today?

Dr. Sorrells: Just fine, thank you.

Mrs. Hunter: Very good. You know, you've done so much throughout the years that you've been in Dallas, and we're just interested in finding out just what you've really done. First of all, where were you born?

Dr. Sorrells: I was born in Travis County. It was right on the edge of Travis County and, I believe, Bastrop County. It was in the rural-like area so we chose to call it Travis County, but I believe the birth certificate says Bastrop County. So, I was born right in that area right outside of Austin.

Hunter: Okay. What is your educational background? Where did you go to school when you were young? Elementary, high school, college? Just tell us a little bit about your educational background.

Sorrells: You know, it's an interesting thing. In Bastrop County, we had a grade one through eleven school. It was a one room school. While I wasn't enrolled in that school, my sister was enrolled in that school. My sister is three years older than I, so she attended the first grade, second grade, maybe third grade in that school. While she was attending that school, I'm sure I must have been about four or five, I was able to attend with her from time to time. So much so, until I think I sat in every one of her classes, maybe, for second or third

grade. We had one teacher there--I don't remember the name of the person right now. There was one teacher that taught the children from grades one through twelve. It's amazing, I don't know how she did, but she did. She met them by grade levels--you know, first grade, second grade, and that was repeated daily by subject area, and I was able to sit with that. My first experience in a school was that kind of experience, but when we moved to the city, to Austin, I attended school--LL Campbell, very new school. It was recently built. It was built, I think, the same year that I attended there. It was called LL Campbell. I was there one year, then the second year I attended Blackshear [Blackshear Elementary]. That school is still there, by the way. It's right across the street from Huston-Tillotson University.

Hunter: Oh, my.

Sorrells: Yes. After Blackshear, I moved to Washington, DC.

I attended Shaw Junior High School in Washington, DC. Then back to Austin, again. Let me tell you why there was so much movement

there. My mother, when I was three, passed away, and my father passed away in the same year. So, when I was three, I lost my mother and father. I had extended family who took care of me--mostly my grandmother took care of me. My aunt lives in Washington, DC, so they shared that responsibility. It was kind of her turn to share some of the responsibility, so we moved there, then back to Austin again. I ended up finishing high school, though, in Austin. I was at Cardozo High School in Washington, DC, then Anderson High School in Austin. After finishing Anderson, I was back in DC at Howard University for my first two years, then back to Austin, again, to finish Hustin-Tillotson University. So, that's kind of, in a nut shell the route I experienced.

Hunter: You had quite an experience at that time.

Sorrells: From Washington to Austin, Washington to Austin.

Hunter: I think it's wonderful that your family shared that kind of responsibility.

Sorrells: Yes.

Hunter: It kind of says something about the family structure, and how they helped each other out.

Sorrells: Right.

Hunter: So you've kind of told us about [clears throat] your family, you lost your parents when you were very, very young, and that might be one of the reasons why you feel so strongly about early education. What is your occupation now? What do you do now, Dr. Sorrells?

Sorrells: I'm told that I have such a passion for what I do and what I have been doing, until it's hard for me to not do it. So, I'm still involved with educational projects. I'm dealing with organizations and school districts, in a way, with education. For instance, I worked with the Can Academy. The academy that is giving kids--which I thought was a wonderful organization. Wonderful venture that Grant East went into, to give children--dropouts a second chance. This is all after I retired that I was doing this. I'm involved in projects and ventures such as that. At this time, though, I'm working with a group that we call CASE [Council for Advancement and Support of Education] that's working with trying to help find a new superintendent to hire for the

Dallas Independent School District. At the same time, I'm involved with a school that was named in my honor, this past year. I'm working with the young people there, on leadership. By the way, working them there, today they are celebrating their designation as a Blue Ribbon school. They're having an ice cream social--

Hunter: How wonderful! What is the name of this school, Dr. Sorrells?

Sorrells: That's the Rosie M. Sorrells Education and Social Services High School.

Hunter: That is located where?

Sorrells: That's located on 8<sup>th</sup> street in Dallas.

Hunter: Within the confines of--

Sorrells: Within the confines of the Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center.

Hunter: All right.

Sorrells: Which is interesting. Interesting and an honor to be there, for many, many reasons. We can talk about that later, maybe.

Hunter: I know that you knew Dr. Ewell.

Sorrells: Oh my goodness.

Hunter: What was your relationship to her?

Sorrells: Oh my goodness. You know, I couldn't believe when this school was named in my honor that we would be back together again. When I first started my work in the Dallas Independent School District, I met Dr. Ewell. She was a supervisor at the central office. I was first, second, third grade teacher at City Park. It was 1970 when I met her, I moved to the central office. We worked together in the central office until the desegregation court order came to be. Then I had the pleasure and privilege with working with her on that order. Through the years, we worked together until she was on the Dallas school board. Our relationship and our working together was many, many years. Then, in the end, the school was--the Townview center was named for her, and now my school lives within that Townview Center. It was a really interesting discovery.

Hunter: Doesn't it feel good to say "my school?"

Sorrells: Yes, my school.

Hunter: Yes, absolutely, that's wonderful.

Sorrells: She would be so pleased to know that that's happened in that way.

Hunter: Absolutely. Are you a member--you mentioned an organization a second ago, are you a member of any organizations other than CASE?

Sorrells: NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. I'm a member of that organization. The National Association of State Boards of Education. The early childhood organizations. That's the ones I can think of, right now.

Hunter: You mentioned the National Board--

Sorrells: National Association of State Boards of Education.

Hunter: I think you've had some relationship with that organization as a result of having been elected to a specific office state wide.

Sorrells: Right.

Hunter: What was that? Tell us about that.

Sorrells: When I retired from the Dallas Independent School District in 1993--at that same time, I believe Dr. Conrad [Emmett James Conrad], who was on the state board of education, who had been appointed to the state board of education, passed away. That seat became open, and I was encouraged to run for that position. So I did. There were three, I believe, other persons



running for it. I'm trying to think--another gentleman, who was also on the Dallas School Board, decided to run for the position, as well as someone from Fort Worth, and I don't remember the other names at the time. I ran for that position, and ended up in a runoff like situation. So, I was able to win that seat. I served in that position for eight years. The State Board of Education for eight years. Retired from that in 2002, I believe, or 2003. I started doing some consultant work.

Hunter: Tell us about some of your experiences on the state board.

Sorrells: The state board was a struggle. I don't know if I knew what I was really stepping into. It's a fifteen-member board that has the responsibility for managing and monitoring and creating rules and regulations to operate the school districts within Texas. Fifteen members--two were African Americans. One was from Houston, Dr. Alma Allen. Rosie Sorrells, of course. There were only two of the fifteen, always. I think it's still two people on that board. There were five democrats, so I could

only help for ever getting three or four of the people to vote with me on any kind of issue that we were interested in, particularly if it had anything to deal with low-income, minority African American students, for the most part. It was a struggle. Always a struggle, because it was so depressing to know that you're not going to get any support. No matter what you take to this board, you're just not going to get the support you need because--you know, it just wasn't there, for many reasons. A lot of it had to do with racism. A lot of it had to do with low-income, just being low-income, and the values--just experiences of those pick of people. We had, for instance, we had two people who were homeschoolers, who schooled their children at home, and yet they were on the state board to make decisions for people that went to public schools. It's just this all philosophical thing of what children should learn, what they should be taught, and what was important. For instance, early childhood wasn't very important because it was the belief and the

feeling that parents should take care of children zero through six years old, five years old, themselves, and they should educate them and it was their responsibility to do that, and public schools should start with first grade, and that kind of thing. There was just any number of issues that we were dealing with. Then we were dealing with another fraction there, with Hispanics trying to get their share of the funding and what they believed, what they considered--and there were those there that fought charters, anything else. Textbooks was always the biggest issue, and what should be in those textbooks, and what children should learn, and what should they be taught. Certification became another issue, and how much certification was needed. Class size, the issue with sizes. Should the classes be--and the testing, another big thing. Who should be tested, what should be test, what should be the passing score, and what should be--support programs, and all that.

Hunter: Did you have any successes while you were there?

[Laughs]

Sorrells: Very, very few successes. I think one attempt for certification, I think that did win. But, I think since I've left, they've cut out early childhood certification, again, it's been combined with elementary. It's pre-K through six, or something now. So we don't have certification--I did fight for that. I'm very proud that I was able to get enough support to get it done. Not from the Board, but from teachers. Working with teacher groups around--teacher groups putting pressure. We were able to do it, but now that I'm not there and fighting for it, it's no longer in the childhood education. Early childhood has become four year old programs for fours. They've come out--raised the class size to 120, it's no longer 110. They've destroyed, in a sense, early childhood as you know it, and as we knew it.

Hunter: You came to DISD in what year?

Sorrells: 1969.

Hunter: What positions did you hold while you were in the  
DISD?

Sorrells: When I entered the DISD, that was an interesting situation, too. I worked in the Wilmer-Hutchins first--Wilmer-Hutchins School District, which does not exist any longer. When I heard that husband and wife could work in Dallas, my husband was already working in Dallas. I applied in Dallas in 1969, and I was hired in a very new program, probably the first teacher in that program because it was so new. It was called Multi-Age, and that came along with Nolan Estes, was a very creative and very interested in doing something for early childhood. He knew that building that foundation was something very important, so he put quite an investment of time and moneys into that program, and that program was called Multi-Age.

Hunter: What does that mean? What does that mean?

Sorrells: That means many grade levels together. Multiple grade levels. We had kindergarten, first, second, and third all in one room. The whole key to that, and I still think it's right, we

just haven't learned quite how to manage it-- the key to that is what Nolan believed, and what all the research says, is that when children enter school they enter at different learning levels. We are not able--we still group them, though, according to age. So we try to teach them that way. The Multi-Age program was determined to assessed--pre-assess children when they come in and then group them within that age range group, no matter how old they were, you teach them based on their needs. It worked very well as long as it was a small program, but when the program started growing, you couldn't do the training and monitoring and you couldn't keep people accountable as they should have been. So, that Multi-Age program, and that idea, I'm not sure if it's implemented in any place now, but it did work then, and I think it was right then, and it would be right now if we knew how to manage it.

Hunter: What did you do following that experience?

Sorrells: Well, following that experience, I think I had such a successful experience that year, I had

observers, including the director of the program, who encouraged me--not encouraged, assigned me to a central office position to be able to teach other teachers how to teach in a multiage setting. Following that experience, I became a supervisor. That's what it was, but they called us resource teachers. I think that was during the time that we were trying to deal with desegregation kind of issues. There were five, I think, people hired to go out and work in multiage classrooms and train teachers--one Hispanic, one African American, maybe two Anglos, or something like that, along with the director of the program. I worked in that position for maybe about four or five years, altogether--writing curriculum, training teachers, and working in general in the central office. During that time, that was 1969, 1970 through about 1972.1976, we were no longer writing curriculum but we were writing the desegregation court order programs to fulfill the mandates of the order. That's when I started working and writing programs with Dr. Ewell. I was writing the early childhood

portion, and she was the administrator in charge of the early childhood portion of the court order. I was one of the writers.

Hunter: Do you remember some of the contents of that order?

Sorrells: Oh gosh. Yes--

Hunter: You don't have to--

Sorrells: Yeah, I do. I guess the main one I remember was the individualized instruction. That one sticks--stands out in my mind because we were trying to make sure that individual--the individual needs of a child were met. We looked at every child as an individual and not to expect them to be at a certain level, but to accurately assess them, what level they were and to move them forward. The other part of it was the long-range goal of it. The goal of the program was to make sure--that particular program was to make sure that every child--I can get really passionate about that because I think it was right, and that it's still right now. By the end of three years--third grade, that's why we worked with children kindergarten, first, second, third, and you know--



Hunter: So you're saying this was written into the court order?

Sorrells: When we wrote the order and in order for them to evaluate the program, there was an evaluator assigned to the program and the goal was to make sure that every child could function at or above grade level by the end of three. That was part of the order and we were to prove that that could happen to that extent and to a great extent, it did happen. Individualized instruction was the key component of it, the second one was intensive parental involvement--keeping parents involved and informed. The way we kept them informed was having the objectives and then profiling the student progress by objectives and then talking and working with the parents. Let's see if I can think of--

Hunter: It's okay. Do you think that--its okay if you can't remember all of them, but do you think that desegregation was a success in DISD, based on your knowledge? I know you've been retired for a while, but I also know that you've kept your ear to the ground [laughs].

Sorrells: Oh, yes.

Hunter: To see what was going on. So, do you think that  
desegregation was successful in the Dallas  
Independent School District?

Sorrells: To some extent, I think it was, in the sense that  
I think--I believe that some of the programs  
that were designed to benefit African American  
children, I think they did and the two that  
really stand out in my mind was the Early  
Childhood program, was the main one, and the  
second one was the magnet programs. I think  
the configuration of the district made some of  
that possible--the vanguards, the academies,  
and the early childhood units, and again the  
magnets. All of those worked to some extent  
for a period of time. I think what really  
happened, though is--I think when the Anglo  
population started to move out, I think the  
schools started becoming more race kind of  
schools, as they are now. You know, all  
Hispanic, all African American. Almost all, a  
majority African American. I think it was like  
44-44-12 or something during that time. Now  
that's no longer true--far from that. I think

the twelve was the Hispanic population, as you know now it's up to sixty something percent. It's just a complete turnaround. In terms of education, I'm sad to say it but I think achievement was better then, than it is now because right now we have schools that are designated as low performance and I think they tell me the majority, in many instances. I'm sad to know that because I think--you know, we've lost a lot of ground. Now it's like starting over, lot of work to do. It's not about desegregation, it's about quality of education for children. So, your question was did it work--it did work then, but I think we lost, I don't know why but it's not working now. A lot of it had to do with the turnover of superintendents and then, you know, different leadership and different goals those leaders had.

Hunter: Did you participate in any of the Civil Rights Movement, per se?

Sorrells: You know, when I think about that, I think back to my church, more than anything else, and the leader that we had and the ministers that we

had in the church and the meetings that we had at the church with various groups and the NAACP in meetings in that way. I don't know the year--remember George W. Bush--George was a very active person in the Civil Rights Movement. It was back with pastor Zan Holmes and--who was a classmate of mine in high school and college--with activities that had to do with the BMCR [unclear] and NAACP, basically. Not any specific leadership role, on my own, but with the groups in the way of contributions and participating and planning and that kind of thing. That's probably the big piece--participation.

Hunter: All right.

Dulaney: Yes. I'd like to ask--why did you become a teacher?

Sorrells: Why did I become a teacher? You know, I thought about that over and over. It certainly wasn't my intent when I entered college. I was not sure. I think I was just sure that--my parents expected me to go to college and so when I entered college, I think I was trying to find my way to a good career. I think my extended family had talked with me about business

education, accounting, and that, but after getting into some of the coursework in college--I think maybe about my sophomore year, I decided that everybody is going to be a teacher, I'm going to be a teacher. We were required--it wasn't a choice, but we were required to do student teaching. I'm not sure why, but we were required to do it, and I think I decided that once I was doing student teaching at the high school where I graduated, so that's what happened. The other thing that I think encouraged me after getting a teacher certification--which I think is good for most students should do that, whether you intend to teach or not, I think they should get a certification because you never know whether you're going to teach and end up teaching or not. I think the main thing was when I married my husband, who was a musician, he was employed in Luling, Texas. So, after moving to Luling, I needed to work, and I did have the certification. So that became available to me, so I started doing substitute teaching, and I became their permanent sub in the community. I

may have been the only person in the community not employed but had certification. After subbing for about a year, I was employed within that school and it was another one of those K-12, first grade through twelfth grade kind of schools. [Phone rings] Sorry, why would that go off? I should have turned it off, didn't think about it. I'm sorry.

Dulaney: It's alright [laughs].

Sorrells: After teaching there for--subbing for maybe one year, I was employed the next year, so I'd been teaching since that time. Taught there for about five years. The subbing experience was probably one of the best experiences I had because it gave me the opportunity to teach at all levels. To work with children of all levels. I didn't mind after that year, you know, working with children of all levels, but when I was employed, I was hired as a first grade teacher. So, naturally, I fell in love with that. After staying with first grade for about five years, that was the way to go, and it just became really a passion for me. I think those children--I think those children

really stole my heart in the sense that they were so eager to learn. They were so in love with their teacher until, I think, I fell in love with teaching at that point. So that's kind of why I became a teacher. Kind of like trying different grade levels, then marrying my husband and needing a job, teaching just became the way to go for me.

Dulaney: Okay. With that background then, would you say-- what was the difference between teaching pre-integration, and then afterwards?

Sorrells: Oh. That was quite an experience, because the pre-integration, I was teaching all African American children. In Luling, the schools were, naturally in the 1950s and the 1960s, where it was the Black school and the white school across town--after leaving Luling, I was hired in Wilmer-Hutchins in the 1965. It was still the same thing--the Black schools and the hite schools across the other side of the track. While I was there, the schools were--they changed. The schools were desegregated in a way that--it was a one room school at first--not one room, one campus.

Grades one through twelve were on one campus in [unclear] and when they desegregated the schools--no, it was before then--they decided to build a high school for the African American children and they built it in Bishop Heights. They built a high school in Bishop Heights so that left elementary school within Wilmer--you don't want in. At desegregation time--no, they didn't desegregate schools at all while I was at Wilmer, not at all. They built Kennedy-Curry--I'm trying to wrestle with this--Kennedy-Curry High School and Pearce [Joseph Jones Pearce] became an elementary school and then later they built Wilmer-Hutchins High School--but it was still a segregated high school--still an African American High School. Then out to Hutchins, there was a high school but for Whites only, as I understand it. I think the desegregation only came in 1970--maybe 1972--no, no, no. 1969 to 1970--they began to desegregate schools.

Hunter: That's when you came to Dallas, right?

Sorrells: That's when I came to Dallas. 1969 to 1970.



Dulaney: Okay.

Hunter: What was the difference in your explanation?

Sorrells: The difference--that was the question. The difference was that then it was a totally different experience. I think the district was wrestling with--not wresting with--the new superintendent, who was Dr. Estes at the time, you know--how to assign the African American teachers. That's what really happened. The way--the decision was to place some of the African American teachers, who they thought may be acceptable, into some of the old White schools. Some of the old White teachers into the African American schools.

Hunter: What did they call that?

Sorrells: A crossover. All right.

Dulaney: [Laughs]

Sorrells: So they called that crossover. So, I was hired right in the middle of crossover. Right in the middle--the same year they were trying to make that crossover work, I was hired that year, so I was selected to be one of those to crossover. So, they placed me in a school where it was predominately white kids, but a

few Hispanics and maybe two or three Blacks. It was right in the center of town, which was City Park, in the middle of town, but they were low-income kids. So, my classroom of the multiage grouping--I had about one-third of most of each, because they were recruited from the community. You know, the young children were recruited from the community, particularly the five years olds--from the community. It was quite different. The children were okay, but the parents were uncomfortable, I would say. They pretty much hung around the school, in the neighborhood, to make sure that nothing would happen to the children. I'm sure the children were hearing some of that and knowing that their parents were uncomfortable because you could hear things from the teachers, from teachers talking to each other, particularly the White teachers, even to where the kids were trying to patronize and be kind to the African American children. You could tell that there was some--uncomfortableness with the situation. So that was my first experience in

teaching African American--I mean teaching white students.

Dulaney: Okay. You worked under at least three different superintendents. I'd say WT White, Nolan Estes, Linus Wright, and Martin Edwards. Out of those three or four, which do you think did the best job of managing the school district?

Sorrells: Hands down, Nolan Estes, hands down. No doubt about it. One reason was because it was during such a difficult time, such a tremendous change. So much of the community unrest that he had to deal with, so much program development and you know, personnel management, you know, trying to make sure that the right persons were in the right positions, and reorganizing the district, and his program--it was just tremendous--and being innovative and making that happen and I would just--he was an innovator. I can't say enough to him, he was just a master at what he did and I don't know how he did, but he did.

Hunter: I was going to ask you to kind of describe the characteristics that he had that made you feel that he was, hands down, perhaps the better--

Sorrells: First thing is, he was so knowledgeable about education and he made sure that the staff was knowledgeable about what is was they were supposed to do--if he assigned you a position, he made sure you received the training that you needed to do that. The other thing is his willingness to do the research necessary to find out what program was working all across the country and all over the world, in other countries. So much so, that he sent us on some of those tours, like a tour of Europe, to do that. First of all, he sent us to other urban school districts within the United States to see what was going on, to look and observe some of the programs, [then] come back together, and work together on making-- designing programs that you thought would work within Dallas. So that's the first thing that made him--then the other thing is that, I think, his people skills. You know, he was very comfortable with all kinds of people from all walks of life, from any community, from any neighborhood. The other thing is his willingness to get out into the community,

into the schools, and I just think that he led with--by example. He could talk to you about early childhood education, he could talk to you about secondary education. I don't know where his preparation was from, but I think his whole, overall personality was that of a leader. He just had a leader--he could just win people, and influence people to do things, and make sure you are accountable. You know, if you just didn't fit in that position, he didn't mind moving you to something else different, you know. We had higher respect for him, I would say.

Dulaney: You mentioned that you decided to run for the school board because Dr. Conrad had passed. I want to pin you down a bit--why did you run for the school board?

Sorrells: That wasn't the only reason, you're right! You're rights [laughter]. You are absolutely correct. The position became available, but let me tell you why I ran for the school board. It had a lot to do with how I felt like my job wasn't finished, okay? I became very--I retired before I thought I would retire because I

became very, I guess, disappointed with the direction of the district, and I felt like I was not being as effective as I had been and as I had wanted to be, and my whole outlook was to go forward--it was to continue always going forward in my job and I felt myself either standing still a little bit or losing a little bit of ground. When I saw that opportunity to run for that position, I said I really did think and believe that I could influence--be an influence at the state level, and have the opportunity to work with people around the country. That did happen, and I thought I could make some changes if I made changes at the state level by working with the people there then that would impact the programs back home. The main program that I wanted to make that change was early childhood, so I started with that certification, so I did make that change with that certification to make sure that they did--was able to influence the curriculum and the standards with that, and was able to leave some impact of that with the State Board of

Education where they're still working with some of those things now. I did go there with the intent of taking some of the program policies that we have within the district and make sure that district wide--I mean state wide that some of those were in place at the state level.

Dulaney: You also mentioned the turmoil that you confronted on the state school board, which of course continues. After you had decided to run and got elected, were you sorry or have second thoughts? Of course you went to stay two terms, so--

Sorrells: Yes, I did. I sure did. I stayed two terms and was really thinking about staying a third term and thought that I probably--my husband was probably my reason for not taking a third term. I think he wanted me to spend some time at home and he said, "You're always on the road. Either you're going to the national office for something or you're on different other committees on the state level, so you're gone all the time. And when you're here, you're constantly working on state material."

So, I think I decided not to because it was consuming, you know, just about all of my time. You can serve on that and could have stayed, and not consumed so much time, but I firmly believe if you're going to accept--if the people elect you in a position, you're going to accept the responsibility for doing what needs to be done to be effective in that position, and that means doing your homework. So, that's a lot of study, it is a lot of work, it consumes a lot of time--talking and responding to constituents, traveling different places, and I decided that you have to make a decision between the family and the job. I thought at that point, I just need to listen to him and spend some time at home, and I'm glad that I did. I'm glad that I did.

Dulaney: Okay. Let me ask you about some of your students.

Lena Ellis, for example, who was in the article that was in the *Dallas Morning News*--chief financial officer in Fort Worth when it was published last year. Who are some of your successful students, beyond Ms. Ellis?



Sorrells: Oh, you know, I have several students that are teaching at the college level. One is in Austin, Cheryl Richard is teaching at the community college there. But, Lena is, I guess, the one that I've really kept in touch with. Some of the others are successful doing various things. One is an owner of a business in San Antonio, where they've been doing real well. Matter of fact, it's two of them, they married, and they went into business for themselves. A number of them who completed college at college level, who did enter college and did complete college. But, Lena, I guess, was my prize because she was such a brilliant student. She was a first grader. In first grade, I was able to follow her through the years. I don't know--I can't remember why and how I followed with her, but we kind of kept in touch during the years. She has been director of finance, which I just thought, for a woman, I thought was a very--really an honor. In Oregon--I believe, some place in Oregon, and then another state, and then San Antonio. She was recruited from San Antonio by

Fort Worth and Fort Worth was looking for a manager of finance for the city of Fort Worth. I just thought that was such an honor. So, out in their recruiting, they recruited her. So, she called to tell me, she said, "You now, I'm in another dilemma now. I don't know what I wanna come--I may be near you. Fort Worth has offered me a position there and it's quite a bit more than they're paying me in San Antonio." It was one of the suburbs of San Antonio, it wasn't San Antonio--it's the city of San Antonio suburb. I said, "You know, think about it." So, anyway, she decided to take that position. So, when she accepted the position in Fort Worth, then we started communicating a little bit more. Naturally, I was excited and proud to tell everybody that I knew that this was a young lady that I had taught in the first grade. So, apparently, it did work. So, maybe I did know how to teach the Science, and the Math, and the Social Studies, and all, because she was interested-- I had no idea she was interested in

Mathematics, but that was her major in college.

Dulaney: Do you have anything you want to add?

Sorrells: Well, maybe just a couple of things that I might-- still thinking. Oh! Texas A&M--the scholarship at Texas A&M that's in my honor. I think that was one of the proudest things of my life. Might want to back up even from that. Because it's in teacher education, and it's being awarded now to teachers and so, naturally, that's something that I'm very proud of, and it can be undergraduates as well for graduates, too.

Dulaney: Well, let's just back up, let's talk about all this. I hesitated to ask because I said didn't want to put you on the spot. How does it feel, basically, to have all these honors and awards for you? You know, one at North Texas State, or Texas Woman's, the Townview Center, and of course this one here. How does that make you feel that you, as they say, get to smell your roses? While you're here.

Sorrells: You know, I'll tell you I'm humbled. You know, I do very fulfilled by having those kind of

honors, because I think I put my heart and soul into whatever it is I'm going to do, and I try my best, and I think it's kind of like a reward for doing that. So, I just feel, you know like my worth--my work was worth it, and here's something that shows that I really did try and somebody believe that I was really trying, because I rewarded with this. I think the distinguished alumni award at Texas Woman's University, I think was basically based upon my work in early childhood education, as well as state board work. I think that's kind of how that happened. I think the--I believe, the scholarship honor, I'm sure that came from basically all of the teachers and the specialists, like Ms. Hunter, and those who worked to get that scholarship established once I retired, they surprised me with that. I'm sure she knew that [gestures to Ms. Hunter]. They worked on that and established--I had no idea that could be done, and would be done, but that was established there. So, I felt very good. Now, the school name--I cannot believe that that's one of the

things that I just--I'm still in awe by that because it's a school of education, and that's what I've done all my life. How could that have happened! You know, it was just a blessing, a blessing for that to happen. I don't know how that happened. Again, it was teachers, administrators, who did appreciate some of the work that I've done, and decided that, you know, that she deserves some kind of honor. I'm just glad that all of these honors, you know, I've received, like being in the Hall of Fame for Archives and History Program, I'm glad it's happened while I'm living. So often, a lot of the honors and you honor people, but it's after they're gone. I've just been delighted with that. I'm still working, because I believe that it's important.

Dulaney: Reflect a bit for us--if you had to go back and change anything you did over the forty years, or forty plus years in education, what would you change? What would you do better?

Sorrells: I'm not sure that I could have done--I may do some things differently, but I don't know that I could have worked any harder than I worked.

I'm still working now, because I'm very unhappy with what's going on in education of children, particularly in Dallas and the school district. I think I'll do that until my last day, it's just hard for me to not--stand by and not do anything and see what is happening to our children. So, I think, someone will always hear from me, and be bothered with me about the education of children, because I just there's absolutely no excuse for us not doing more, doing better, you know, for our children. I am just baffled and concerned and angry that we have people sitting around, saying, "I don't have anything to do", "I'm bored" or "don't see anything to be done", and I don't know how you put the fire under them, but I'm very disturbed and angry about that. People that can do something to help us with our children, and I'm very persistent, and so I'm going to hang in there until I just--just, you know, be--pissed. That's the best way to say it [laughs].

Dulaney: Okay. Ms. Hunter, anything else?

Hunter: No--I just know that it's been my honor to serve as the interviewer of you. We go back a long ways.

Sorrells: A long ways.

Hunter: I appreciate everything you've done, and I know that Dr. Dulaney and those persons who know you appreciate everything that you've done.

Dulaney: I first heard about you, believe it or not, just before--as you were running for the state school board. Robert Price came to me and said, "Rosie Sorrell is running for the state school board! I want you to go out and vote for her!" and I think he even asked me for some money! [Laughter]

Hunter: He probably did!

Sorrell: I bet he did! I bet he did. I'm sure he did.

Dulaney: It was such a pleasure, though, to do this interview now. I sit in awe, too, of all of this. Thank you for all you've done to represent children in this state.

Hunter: Absolutely.

Sorrells: Still trying. You all don't know how much I appreciate you all thinking that and believing in me, and thinking that I can, you know, do

some things. Maybe that's what keeps me going, because I'll say something, "I just have to, I don't feel like it", and I ended up most of the time saying "yes" when I need to say "no." You just don't feel like it, you're tired, you do have some other things you need to be doing, but I just can't think of anything more important than working for kids who are our future.

Dulaney: Yes, absolutely.

Sorrells: I mean, what else could you do that's more important? I don't understand, and we're not taping now--oh, I don't know--

Dulaney: Oh, I'll--

[End of interview]