NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

NUMBER

684

Interview with

ALEXANDER BATE

September 19, 1986

Place of Interview: Sherman, Texas

Interviewer: Donna Kumler

Terms of Use: Closed for five years from date of interview

Approved: Donna Kumler
(Signature)

Date: September 19, 1986

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Oral History Collection

Alexander Bate

Interviewer: Donna Kumler   Date of Interview: September 19, 1986

Place of Interview: Sherman, Texas

Mrs. Kumler: I am Donna Kumler, and I am interviewing Mr. Alexander Bate in Sherman on September 19, 1986. Okay, Mr. Bate, if you would, would you just give me some information about your family, where you were born, when you came to Sherman?

Mr. Bate: Personal information?

Mrs. Kumler: Yes. Give us some personal information about you.

Mr. Bate: Well, we came to Texas in November, 1909. We're from Tennessee. Castalian Spring, Tennessee, is where I was born. We are Bate. B-A-T-E. No "S."

Mrs. Kumler: I've been calling you Bates. I'm sorry (chuckle).

Mr. Bate: Ten years ago, there was only 500 families known to spell their name B-A-T-E--Bate. I originate from Tennessee. Its origin came out of England.

After coming to Texas, why, my father worked for a man that had been in Tennessee--J.O. Head. I had a great uncle and a great aunt who came to Texas in a covered wagon with the Heads. That was their masters, and they came on to Texas with them. After they were here, why--I don't know how long--we came. Papa worked there at that time for J.O. Head for

$5 a week, and he had six children and a wife. Of course, his wife worked, too, for $3.50 a week, cooking three meals a day.

Kumler: Now that's here in Sherman, right? Right here in Sherman?

Bate: That's right here in Sherman. She worked for some people named I.J. Kimler. They were ranchers out at Tioga, Texas, and he also had ranches in Montana. He was a rich man. After working there for a while, he started to work on the Interurban Electric Railway. It didn't pay very much, maybe $1.50 a day or $1.00 dollar a day--something like that. But it was very meager. He worked with that awhile. The thing that he didn't like...we were brought up as Christian people, and it was a sin to work on Sunday. He had a hook up on that Sunday work. But it was a matter of survival, so he had to work on Sunday.

Then he got on the railroad, and he worked there for a number of years.

Kumler: Where did your family settle here in Sherman? Where did your family locate here in Sherman?

Bate: Right down the street--607 North Montgomery. My father has always been a very conservative individual. If he made a dime, he saved part of that dime. I feel like we have a master's degree in economics because of the process we came up on. At that particular time, things were cheaper. A nickle would buy a whole lot at that time--five cents. You could buy

a five-cent loaf of bread, you know. We lived at this place where there was no water. We got water across the street. Everybody in my family worked. My job was--and I was a very little fellow--to feed the chickens for these Kimler people in the evening, and I got 25¢ a week for doing that. Then when I got a little larger, I could clean out the hen houses and could do other little errands, and I'd make 40¢ and 50¢ a week.

Kumler: This is about 1909 or 1910?

Bate: It was 1912. Something like that.

Kumler: Something like that, yes.

Bate: On Saturday night everybody would come in and ask, "Well, where is your money?" "I have a quarter!" Everybody had their banks--tin cans--to put their money in. He didn't tell you to put it in and leave it, but everybody would put it in so he could see you put it in. I'd have 10¢ for myself. I could spend a nickle and have a nickle for Sunday school. Of course, according to the amount you made, why, you got a nickle, a dime, 15¢ or whatever it was.

I had some other brothers. My older brother had lived for some time with a great aunt. I told you we came with J.O. Head. Well, they kind of wanted him to stay over there with him. He was a musician--a very good musician. He played and he sang. There weren't any Victrolas and things, and he played for dances and at people's parties and things.

And he always had money. Making $2 and $3 a night and $5 a night was a tremendous amount of money.

Kumler: A lot of money, yes.

Bate: He was on "easy street," you know. After he finished high school, why, he went to Prairie View. I'll tell you a little humorous part about it. He went to Prairie View College, and he had two other aunts over there with this great uncle of mine. Every week he'd write home, and say--he never would tell Papa--"Mama, I need some money for some more books." They'd search around and get him some money to send him for some books. The next week it'd be the same thing. Papa said, "Confound it, ain't nobody buying that many books!" (laughter)

Kumler: He was having a good time.

Bate: It was just a normal course at that time at Prairie View, so when he finished he brought eight boys and girls home with him, and they had a house party for a week. All the girls and boys stayed out in the neighborhood, you know. He had a big party going, and he had a big dance going down the street from where we lived on one occasion. They had something different going on every night. They had a Japanese night, with Japanese lanterns all over the yard with candles in them and all this incense and sticks burning. That was something everybody was just enjoying. Papa found out, and he didn't know what they were doing in there. They had him on the door taking tickets. So he looked in there and saw they were dancing, you know, and the Baptist people at that

time didn't believe in dancing. Papa threw that box and the tickets away and yelled, "Come on home!" (laughter)

Kumler: He threw all of them away.

Bate: Okay, there was four other boys, and successively my father was able to get us all through high school. Out of the five boys, four boys got a college education. We had two physicians in the family, and they finished at Meharry Medical College at the same time.

I finished at Roger Williams College in Nashville, Tennessee. It was a school that my mother and uncles on both sides of the family had attended. It's a very old school. It came right out of slavery. At that time, all the teachers and presidents were white. Of course, after a period of time, when I was there, they had a different setup. They had all-black faculties and presidents and so forth. But that was the process at that particular time. My brother and them finished in 1931, and I finished in 1928.

I came back home, and I couldn't find employment. I didn't particularly want to get into the teaching profession at all, so I started working in the domestic service. While I was in college, I spent three years in the summers going to Cody, Wyoming, and that's where I made the money to attend school. Tuition was very cheap to what it is now—$15.50 a month. That's room and board. It was $75 a semester for tuition. Well, you take a man working on a meager salary

...the only way that we could have ever accomplished what we had was because we had been taught to work and to conserve. I mean, we knew what to do when we got hold of a little bit of money. That was it because when they came out as doctors, they owed everybody. My daddy gave both of them a present of $50 a piece. That's what he could afford to give them at that particular time. That was some help, but it wasn't much help.

Anyway, in the meantime, after that, why, I got out of the domestic service. I used to do catering service--cooking, fixing fancy things, like that. I did fairly well with that, and then I got into insurance.

Kumler: Was this in Sherman that you did this?

Bate: Sherman, yes.

Kumler: So you came back to Sherman in 1928.

Bate: I came back to Sherman, yes. I sold insurance for maybe a year. Then my first school was in Van Alstyne, and then I went to Van Alstyne. That summer they had built a new school, but they had old books. You'd be surprised. We built a new school, and every book, desk, and everything was used when they put in the new school. There was nothing new in it, not even the teacher's desk. Some of the old doctors' and lawyers' names were cut on the desks, you know, that we had to use. Of course, earlier than that, you had to buy your own texts. Then Texas started giving the texts

free. I needed a little more time to kind of get the composition of this, I guess, but maybe you can decipher it out.

Kumler: Oh, I can. I'm following you. Let me focus, if we could... you said you came back to Sherman in 1928.

Bate: Yes.

Kumler: I'm interested in knowing if you could describe for me what specific schools were available here for black people. What churches? What do you remember? Businesses?

Bate: At that particular time, the earliest I can remember, we had two black doctors here--Dr. Porter and Dr. Prince. At that time, both of their offices were in downtown Sherman. Both of them was on Houston Street--one on East Houston Street and the other one on the east side. Right on the first block, each one of them was. We had a theater up the block from here. We had one colored store. We called it the "Colored Store." We had two barbershops and a restaurant. Of course, we had two undertakers (that's what we called them at that time). We had two of those that were here at that particular time. That's about the height of the business we had there.

Kumler: Do you remember a dentist?

Bate: Yes.

Kumler: Dr. Stinnett.

Bate: R.L. Stinnett, yes. He was from Van Alstyne. That was his home.

Kumler: And where was his office here?

Bate: His office was on Mulberry.

Kumler: Mulberry, yes.

Bate: Now they had a good Negro business. That was the man from Dallas who built a big building there called Andrews Auditorium. They had in that a grocery store, a pool hall, a restaurant, a barbershop, and a barbershop, and a barbershop. The barbershops had about three bathtubs, you know. We didn't have no modern conveniences, so people could go in there and take a bath in the bathtub. That was something they had. Then they had a pool hall in the bottom and a theater at the top. The big bands were in style at that time. They'd have big bands, and they'd have dances. We had two doctors. We had one doctor in there and a drugstore, also, in this building.

Kumler: Do you remember a gentleman who owned a shoe repair shop there? A Mr. Berrier.

Bate: Now he had a shoe shop--Berrier did--right up on Mulberry Street.

Kumler: In that general area was Mr. Walker with...

Bate: Walker had a tailorshop.

Kumler: Do you remember a life insurance office there? A man owned it by the name of J.S. Love.

Bate: J.S. Love? We had a homopathic doctor who was a doctor, Dr. Love.

Kumler: And this was a black man?

Bate: No.

Kumler: Oh, okay.

Bate: I don't remember a black man.

Kumler: I got this out of the old city directory, and I just wondered if you knew these individuals. Do you recall the Oriental Hotel or the Smith Hotel?

Bate: Oriental, yes.

Kumler: Where was that located?

Bate: That was on Mulberry and Walnut.

Kumler: So all of this was in that same general area.

Bate: Same area, yes. Here sometime not too long ago...but since integration they kept these railroad men...and we had a black engineer who came out of Kansas City during that time. He wanted to know where he could get someplace to stay, and they sent him up at this place where all the railroad people were, but they refused him. I was the chairman of the Human Relations Commission at that time. I went to the mayor at that time, and I told him that I was ready to make an appointment with these people down there because they refused him. Of course, it's not constitutional according to what's going on now. He told me that they'd done disbanded my group (laughter). I worked under three mayors.

Bate: Gillespie, Baker, and G.R. Stevens.

Kumler: Which one told you that they had disbanded your committee?

Bate: (Laughter) Gillespie.

Kumler: Oh! Ed Gillespie! That booger!

Bate: His secretary was his wife, I think, at that time. Then they said that they hadn't disbanded it. But, you know, whenever anything came up, Stevens and Baker was really on that ball, especially G.R. Stevens. He was really on the ball. He would go with me at different times when we had to make these appointments with these different people--the policemen, the sheriff, and the Democrat, and the TV, and the radio. But he'd never say anything unless I forgot something that he thought I should say. Then he'd say, "Alex, you forgot so-and-so," something like that. Then the last time, the order that he gave me...he said, "Now, Alex, everything is in pretty good shape, but they tell me there's this place down there--did you hear about it--in the west part of town that's got a Laundromat." He said, "You go down there, and you tell them that that's not constitutional; that you're not speaking for Alexander Bate, but you're the voice of the city of Sherman."

Kumler: What business was this?

Bate: G.R. Stevens.

Kumler: Was it a Laundromat? Did they have a sign there or something? Would they not allow blacks to use it?

Bate: We had two. That was one, and then we had another one out here on Lamar. Yes, it was at Lamar and Cleveland, I believe

it was. Anyway, those were the last two things that I know that we had. I never did have to make an appointment out there because they changed it. But they had a sign up--White Only.

Kumler: I remember something like that.

Bate: That hasn't been that long ago.

Kumler: Yes, because I remember something like that. Did they remove it?

Bate: Yes (chuckle). Yes, you could remember that.

Kumler: Okay, let me ask you this then. Do you remember in the 1920's and maybe somewhere between 1920 and 1930...do you remember a library that was established here?

Bate: Yes, a black library. It was up here on Kerr Street. It's a utility building for the city of Sherman now. They use it for that. I think they were going to name it after Dr. Prince. He donated some land for that.

Kumler: Is that right?

Bate: I think it was across the street, right behind there. Anyway, they had different black people...they'd come up and dig and work and give so much of a day's work to help get it started.

Kumler: Did you ever use that library?

Bate: Well, no, I never did particularly use it, but I gave a day or two of work on it.

Kumler: I was wondering if you could describe what the facilities

were like.

Bate: Well, no. I've been in there, and they had a goodly volume of books. Tim Milligan,who lives there on Maxey,was the librarian then.

Kumler: Oh, okay.

Bate: When they discarded it, she came up to this library and worked up until a few years, and then she retired.

Kumler: She lives in that long, grey house.

Bate: Yes.

Kumler: I know them. I had some of their family in school.

Bate: She can give you all the information you need on that.

Kumler: Okay, I may go and see her. I had some of the Milligan kids in school.

Bate: Yes, you did.

Kumler: I remember them.

Bate: Where did you teach?

Kumler: I taught at the high school here.

Bate: Oh, yes.

Kumler: Okay, let me ask you this. Do you remember the names of particular individuals in the black community here in Sherman in about the 1920's to the early 1930's that you might call leaders?

Bate: You mean besides the professional fields I told you about?

Kumler: Yes.

Bate: The outstanding leaders were strictly-raised people. They

had some issues to come up, and they stood by their guns.

Kumler: So a lot of this black professional class, then, was really the leader of the community.

Bate: Oh, yes. Of course, your ministers in the community also were your leaders. We had to look to those people. All your preachers used to be men. They were honest people, and they did their job well. We had a lot of people in the community that people respected a lot. Not too long ago, there was Eddie King and Will Walton and some of the other people around here in town. That was after the 1920's, but those are some.

Kumler: We talked about this business district then. Let me ask you this. What I'm trying to do is sort of create what life was like in that community in about 1930. Do you remember specific instances of how the Depression affected the black community here?

Bate: Yes. At that time they was getting what they call old-age assistance. You couldn't get a job. My daddy had been turned completely out of the railroad. They cut him down to three weeks out of the month, then two weeks on down to two or three days, one day. And then they laid him off. The lady that I was telling you that my stepmother went to work for...she worked for her daughter's people, and she wanted Papa to work at that time for 15¢ an hour. Papa said, "Miss Fielder, I'm a full-grown man. I got a family. I can't work

for no 15¢." But he did work for 15¢ an hour.

The people that were suffering most were people who couldn't get work, and they had to...and they was terrible on the black people as far as that old-age assistance was concerned. You take this old couple down there (gesture). Both of them were of age to get old-age assistance. And you know what they gave two of them? Eight dollars a month together. Two of them got $8 a month. We had a lawyer here named J.D. Buster...don't know...you might have heard...

Kumler: What was the name?

Bate: J.D. Buster. He was a lawyer.

Kumler: I knew about Mr. Durham, but I didn't know about...

Bate: He's not black. This man I'm talking about is not black.

Kumler: Oh, okay.

Bate: And they said his father was getting $200 a month. You see, that's how it was. I mean, that's what the effect was. Then they had these...I guess you'd call them soup kitchens and things for people that wanted to eat. They didn't make them work. They'd give them a day's or two days' work. I was working in domestic service, and this lady I worked with remarked...an old man came up there, and he wanted something to eat, and we took him out to the wood pile. So she went out there and got hold of him and said, "Now you're not going to make that old man work." You know, chop that wood. She said, "You come on in here. I'm going to feed you."

She went out there and got him. But she was a Jew. They were Jews.

Kumler: They understood a little bit about that, didn't they?

Bate: Yes, they understood about that.

Kumler: I was going to ask you if you remembered the Grayson Hotel.

Bate: Yes.

Kumler: Do you remember when they used to employ all black bellboys?

Bate: Yes. They had a lot of black boys. The entire kitchen crew and waiters were black. I could go there with the Boy Scouts. I've been in the Boy Scouts for forty or fifty years, nearly. We'd have a breakfast early in the morning--7:00. But to go in and eat otherwise, you couldn't do it. You couldn't go in there at all for anything. But they had black cooks and black waiters and bellhops.

Kumler: Do you remember when they dismissed all those bellhops and replaced them with white boys?

Bate: Well, I don't recall too much about just how that came about, but I know they did that.

Kumler: I came across this in a book, is the reason I was asking, and apparently this happened in about February, before the courthouse situation in May of 1930. It apparently really added to unrest in the black community. I wondered if you remembered anything.

Bate: That night in Sherman was something else. Of course, you had a whole lot of people in Sherman that participated in it.

A whole lot of people came from Mississippi, Alabama, and all around when they heard about it. They passed the street right here, and it was level from one side to the other. Pregnant women were following this man they were dragging down the street.

Kumler: Did you see that?

Bate: No. I was back here on top of the house with a bucket of water and a shotgun. My dad was walking in front of the house, and he had a pistol. Everybody on that street left but me and Papa. I guess we didn't go because we had no transportation. We could have walked, but my stepmother had an artificial leg. One leg had been amputated. So he said, "Son, we're going to stay here and protect what we got."

Kumler: How did you know these people were coming to this area?

Bate: What?

Kumler: The mob.

Bate: Well, nobody knew anything about the man.

Kumler: Did you not know George Hughes?

Bate: No, no. Somebody had brought him out of New Orleans. They had some of the awfulest tales in the paper about it. I don't recall. They had a man named Bob...what is his name? Anyway, he shot through the windshield--shooting at him and all that kind of stuff. When they put him in the courthouse...they took him out of the jail and put him in the courthouse. They put him in a vault, and they say they gave him a gun. They blew

up that vault, and they think the jolt killed him. They got him out of there. A guy took a torch and cut the steel and got in there and got him, and they dragged him right down this street here. They went down there. They had this Williams Hotel down on the other end that belonged to Dr. Goodson and his brother. There was a tree out there, and they hung him up in the tree; and they cut off his sexual organ and put it in his mouth. There were pregnant white women standing out there shouting and going on. People got so afraid. I know of some families on this street that did. They were so afraid that they went out and got in the hog pen with the hogs. They thought they were going to kill them.

Kumler: That's horrible.

Mrs. Bate: We lived on the north end, out near Old Settlers Park. More people came there to kind of get away from it.

Kumler: Did any of this...you said your father and you...

Bate: We were the only ones on the street. You see, this is Montgomery right down there (gesture), and on that block everybody else left. They were going out maybe to somebody else's house. Maybe they were getting in pig pens or under the house or somewhere. I don't know what, but those were some of the things that actually happened. I had a bucket of water on there because they set the building on fire, and them great, big pieces of flaming material was falling, and I had to put them out, Papa said.

Papa had that big pistol, and he walked out in front. Some guys came down in an ol' Chevrolet and jumped out in front of the Masonic Hall with a gasoline can. Papa told them to get the hell out of there. They saw that big pistol, and they jumped in that Chevrolet, and I guess they broke every spring in it. There wasn't no paved road—just an old gravel road and ditches.

Kumler: Did you know who any of these white people were?

Bate: Who they were?

Kumler: In the mob.

Bate: Oh, there was too many of them, but some of them we knew who they were. So they claim. I couldn't identify them because I couldn't see that far away.

Mrs. Bate: You know, they had rumors about who various ones were. Maybe something would happen to somebody, and they'd say, "He was in the mob."

Bate: Yes. Something drastic would happen. A lot of people, they said, had a violent death, you know, more or less. They said something like that. One guy went out there swimming. He was a real smart guy in town, and he was kind of an engineer or mechanic. He's the one that took charge and cut him out of there, and so they had to drag...

Kumler: Is that Mr. McCastland?

Bate: No. I can't think of his name. He got drowned.

Kumler: You were talking about the different ones who had been involved

in the mob.

Bate: Oh, yes. A lot of them had violent deaths. They say they were in it. That ol' boy...one of these Syrians...we call them Dagos. They was racing all up and down the street, next street over there.

Kumler: The Saffa's. Sofey's?

Bate: They were brothers, but one spelled their name Saffa and the other spelled their name Sofey. But they were supposed to have been brothers. This was one of the Sofey boys. This was George's brother. You knew George.

Kumler: I knew George.

Bate: It was one of his brothers. He's supposed to have a part in that. He was in it, ol' Bill. I don't know...it was just a miracle that a lot more people weren't killed. We really suffered for it.

Kumler: Did you actually see the mob come by your house there?

Bate: No, just up here.

Kumler: Just up here?

Bate: They didn't vent it off there because they was following the crowd.

Kumler: But you and your father did see the men who had the gasoline can?

Bate: Oh, yes. I was up there on that thing with my shotgun. I didn't have but about four shells, but we had plenty of shells for the pistol. We've always had some type of protection

in the house. That was one of the main things. We always had protection for the house. So we had that. We used the shotgun for hunting, but during those times we didn't have money to buy shells with to hunt. I'd get two or three shells to go hunting with.

Kumler: Now in the period of time right before this incident, do you remember anti-black organizations here? I know that in the early 1920's, the Klan was here just a little bit. But do you remember people in the community that were actually what you might call "race baiters" or people who were involved in the Klan? What I'm trying to say is, as far as you know, was there some real anti-black feeling here before that incident?

Bate: No. I don't know actually of any big things happening. Of course, they had the Klan, like you said. One night there was a preacher here. He married Miss King. Do you remember Miss King that had the kitchen out here?

Kumler: Yes.

Bate: I think he passed away not too long ago. He was the pastor of a church here.

Kumler: What church was that? Do you remember?

Bate: It was the Baptist church, I believe. In the meantime, you know, in the horse-and-buggy days, they'd go riding. This boy in Dallas wrote this here article not very long ago on integration. He's a big wheel working in Dallas on integration. He said his father and his mother would get in the surrey in the evening, and they'd go riding. So they came

by the church and thought he'd stop. He saw buggies and things around. It wasn't no regular meeting, so he got out to go in, and one of them hoods met him at the door. He said, "Brother Pastor, sorry, but you can't come in here."

Kumler: And this is a black pastor?

Bate: No! This is white folks!

Kumler: Oh, okay.

Bate: The white church! And the Klan was in the church! Yes, that's what I'm talking about. He saw all those buggies and things, and he knew it wasn't supposed to be. They said, "Sorry, Brother Pastor, but you can't come in here."

Kumler: So they were having a meeting there.

Bate: Yes. That's what I'm talking about. You figure that the best people in the world—if we have any—are the church people. But what are you going to do when you got the corruption already in the church? That's it. I met with a group of people from the Grayson County Minister's Association, and I said, "Brother Pastor, this is the thing I can't understand. You all are supposed to be the better class, the best thinking people, the Christian people. Why hadn't somebody taken an interest in this before now? Of course, I knew the answer. If he wanted to stay there, he had to please the members. Just like one said, "If I got 300 members, I got 300 people to please." That's just the

way it is.

Kumler: So you remember the Klan, but you don't remember it in the period of...

Bate: I don't know of any people in the Klan or nothing like that.

Kumler: Would you have described the relations between black and white as pretty good before this incident?

Bate: Yes, pretty good. We had an incident one time...I'll just show you what influential people can do. A man lived up the street there, and he had bad eyes--just batting his eyes all the time. He went in the drugstore--that's Reverend Carl Wall--and got a pack of cigarettes. One of the girls on the fountain said, "That nigger winked his eye at me!" Of course, there was some youngsters in there, and they got him down. Carl came out there and said, "What's all that ruckus going on?" They said, "That nigger bought a pack of cigarettes and winked his eye at her." He said, "You tell them damn boys to come back and let that man alone! That nigger's always had bad eyes!" That's all there was to it.

Judge Hare said if he hadn't been sick, he'd have gone up there at that courthouse and stopped it himself. He was a real respectable judge in this town--Silas Hare.

Kumler: I remember reading about Mr. Hare. You mentioned awhile ago that your people had really suffered afterwards as a result of that particular incident in 1930. How did you suffer? Can you give me some specifics?

Bate: The specifics during the riot?

Kumler: Yes.

Bate: Like I said, people went and got in hog pens with the hogs, and people left their homes and ran off in the bushes and under the creek beds and whatnot. They were afraid to go to town.

They had a curfew. Captain Lyons was an ex-soldier, and they put him over the curfew. He was supposed to have been a great influence. He could do this and that and stuff.

But Allred was the governor at that time, and they called for him. He said, "You go up there, but don't shed no blood." He went in as one of the most popular young governors that there was, and he went out as the most unpopular.

Kumler: Do you recall a group of people that fled that night and went east of Sherman and established the Blue Creek community? I've heard that, but I wondered if that was the truth or not.

Bate: No, I don't remember that Blue Creek community. I think that Blue Creek community has been there. "Peachy," that Blue Creek community was already established before the riot, wasn't it? It wasn't caused by the riot, was it? [Questions to his wife]

Mrs. Bates: No, it's been there ever since I can remember.

Bate: Yes.

Kumler: It was there before that, then.

Bate: Yes, before that time.

Kumler: So my information is not correct on that.

Bate: No, it's not correct.

Mrs. Bate: No. Those people who are there have been there a lifetime--older folks.

Kumler: Well, do you recall the lady that Mr. Hughes allegedly assaulted? Did you know anything about her?

Bate: No, I didn't know anything about her, nor him. But they said it wasn't true. They said he was just kind of a local man coming through town. I don't know. She and her husband had been having some problems. She brought this big scare up, and they got out there and found him down there, and they brought him to town. They shot at him and that kind of thing and got him. They said he chewed on her breast and all that--anything to arouse the mob rule, you know. Everybody who heard those things just went on. They didn't try to get the specifics of it.

Kumler: Right, get that truth.

Bate: It was a mob rule, you know. It was just all running together. We didn't know anything. Nobody in Sherman knew. I mean, black folks didn't know anything about it. He was somebody just drifting through, as I understood it.

Kumler: When this happened, I think, they arrested him, like, on a Saturday, and so during the week he was in the jail, and his trial was set for Friday. Do you remember racial tensions increasing during that week?

Bate: Yes. You was afraid to go to town. You was afraid to go anywhere. As I told you, I was working in domestic service. I worked for a Jew, and I brought him to town every morning to the store and came in in the evening and picked him up.

A lot of the white families took these black families --where they'd worked for them or they knew them--into their home during this crucial time. It was really something to behold. They told me I could bring my family out there to the Marks house if I wanted to, but we elected to stay home. I figured I'd come back home because they were there, you know, and I'd be there along with them. Of course, we had that problem at home--my stepmother not having a leg.

So we came round by the courthouse that day, and, boy, they was just going around that courthouse with sticks and marching around and hollering and going on. It was just something to behold. Of course, I wouldn't have been up there in the car by myself, you know, because I didn't have no car, but I was driving for them Jews.

Kumler: So everybody just stayed away.

Bate: Yes, they stayed away. They didn't go toward town. They didn't go toward town--no. They stayed away.

Kumler: In the period of time right after this, what type of reactions do you remember in the black community? You said several of them left.

Bate: Well, yes. A lot of people left Sherman completely, and then

some of them came back.

Kumler: About how long was it before they came back?

Bate: Oh, I don't know. Three or four years. I had a cousin... you might know him. He worked at the Methodist church. An old-timer named Will Bate.

Kumler: No.

Bate: You don't belong to the Methodist church.

Kumler: No.

Bate: Well, anyway, he worked up there. When he died they buried him up there--the new church where they are now. He was there at the old church, and he was indispensable as far as they were concerned. He had a lot of talent. All those new classrooms for the kids and things, he made cabinets and desks and all those things, and they're still in there. They just thought the world of him. A lot of those older people there now were babies when he went there, you know. He just grew up with them. He had to keep them a lot of times in the nursery before they started to hire somebody. Then they hired his wife Correen to see after the little children. He came right on up with them, so he was just a part of the church. Yes, he was just a part of the church, and they recognized that. I don't know of any other black who had been like that. Of course, it's a common thing now. They do it a lot now.

Kumler: Do you remember a large colored Methodist church in that

area up there in 1930?

Bate: A colored church?

Kumler: Yes. Was there one up there?

Bate: No. The colored church...the two churches was the C.M.E. (Colored Methodist Episcopal), St. John's, which was down on Houston Street and Lincoln Street, and Harmony Baptist Church was on the hill where the Presbyterian Church is. That was Harmony. Those were the two largest black churches in Sherman at that time.

Kumler: And they moved here.

Bate: Harmony's up here, and C.M.E. is right over here (gestures). They're still two of the largest churches--largest membership--for black folks.

Kumler: Do you recall people within the black community who had ideas about why this happened? Do you recall definite feelings within the black community about why they burned the business district or why the lynching happened? Do you recall anyone voicing opinions about that?

Bate: They just wanted to burn anything that belonged to the black people. It was just a mob rule, you see. We had nothing to do with all that that was going on. It was none of our folks. I don't tbink any black people knew this George Hughes.

Mrs. Bate: If you were black, you were into it.

Bate: Yes, that's it.

Kumler: So it was purely to you a racial thing.

Bate: That's what I had to go see the Democrat and also the police department and the sheriff's department about. They put in there [the newspaper] that he was a big, black Negro--200 pounds. That's all they did. Anybody who weighed 200 pounds--if he was black--he'd fall victim to circumstances. So I had to get that straightened out. "Why do you always say a black? Why don't you say a man? A woman? Whatever it is." That's a human being. That was the way we worked it.

Kumler: So you just interpreted that whole thing as being the fact that you were black.

Bate: That's right.

Kumler: Do you think there was any, oh, I don't know if jealousy is the right word, but do you think that there was any feeling in the white community that there was district of "uppity blacks up here and we needed to get rid of them."

Bate: Well, it's really a number of things. As long as I'd come to your back door, you would give me anything I wanted; and if I'd put my hat under my arm in talking to you, I'd get what I wanted. But if I'd get to the point where I could go to the store and buy a suit of clothes and pay for it, well, "that nigger's getting too big around here." Those are the kind of things that happened. I've heard the expression: "That nigger's getting big. He's getting too big for his britches. He can buy a hat. He can buy a

watchamacallit." That always figured in. Then even with some people in the community, in your own group, why, if you'd get something just a little better, you'd have some of that same process.

Kumler: Yes, that's true. You think it was just a mob out of control?

Bate: Oh, yes. That's right. A mob is not ever in control--never.

Kumler: True. Do you know of specific people now that are still alive that remember that incident--other people within the black community?

Bate: Oh, yes, a lot of people remember it.

Kumler: Who is that?

Bate: Well, just right offhand, let's see. Money was here. Gosh, he's ninety-some years old.

Mrs. Bate: I'm not near old as Money. Of course, I was in school. That was just in 1929.

Bate: I'm trying to figure out somebody that you...yes, you and all your classmates were here at that time. Y'all was in Prairie View at that time, in 1929, when that happened. There are a number of people here that can remember that incident.

Kumler: I'm interested in finding out names and if they would be willing to talk to me.

Bate: Well, you can put Ruth Bate down (chuckle).

Kumler: (Chuckle) Do you call her "Peachy?"

Bate: Yes. You can put down William Bate (chuckle).

Mrs. Bate: She knows Billy.

Bate: Yes, she knows Billy. Billy was here at that time.

Kumler: He was here.

Bate: Q.D.'s sister, too.

Kumler: Q.D. told me that Mr. Hill and...

Mrs. Bate: Q.D. came here.

Kumler: Yes, but he knows who was here. He told me. I haven't contacted your brother yet. I intend to. I'm really interested in that group of professionals, you know.

Bate: I think you got most of the professionals that we had—doctors and dentists.

Kumler: And there just haven't been any.

Bate: Yes. We had tailor shops, and, of course, you got the names of those, and the restaurants.

Kumler: Well, I wanted to establish that because sometimes you can look in these city directories, and there are errors. I got the names from the directories, and I wanted to see if you remembered them. So you do.

Bate: Oh, yes.

Kumler: That should be helpful. I understand Mr. Durham left here and went to Dallas.

Bate: Yes. They gave him $50,000 to come to Dallas—interest in an insurance company. He lived right on the next corner here (gesture), on this same side of the street. He was a coming lawyer, and he was smart. They had this big insurance company down there, and they was going to make him a part of it.

Dallas didn't have any lawyer at that particular time that was outstanding, and so they wanted to get him down there. So a doctor had this big interest in Universal Life Insurance. They gave him stock in that that was worth a lot of money. I think that was supposed to amount to $50,000, and that's how they got him away from Sherman.

But he opened up the avenues in Sherman for a lot of things. He also stopped...see, they had the county farm, and they put you on the road, and you had to work.

Mrs. Bate: He came here from Greenville, I think.

Bate: Yes, he came from Greenville.

Kumler: Q.D. told me, I think, that his second wife has just moved back here. Doesn't she live here?

Bate: Yes.

Kumler: I know B.J. Walton real well...

Mrs. Bate: She knows Billy--Billy Walton. And Angela.

Bate: Who?

Mrs. Bate: Angela Runnels.

Kumler: Angie Runnels, she's my friend.

Mrs. Bate: Sweety, what's your name?

Kumler: Donna Kumler. My husband's family is from east of Sherman. They've lived out there for years and years. Angie will remember me (chuckle).

Okay, well let me see here. I know one thing I was going to ask you. Someone has suggested to me--and I wanted

to get your feeling on this--that one of the reasons why Sherman was able to go through integration in the 1960's without any large number of incidents was because the courthouse burning and all that was still fresh on everybody's mind. How would you respond to that? What do you think about that?

Mrs. Bate: Let me start off. The biggest and greatest thing that helped, I think, was the Human Relations Committee.

Bate: That was not organized by the city of Sherman. It was Austin College and the ministers. That's where we started at first...

Mrs. Bate: Mostly, it was affiliated with instructors at Austin College. We had a good time with them. We'd meet and discuss various issues.

Bate: We'd have covered dishes.

Mrs. Bate: It happened previously.

Bate: Anyway, that was the first thing. There was Dr. Frank Edwards...

Kumler: ...oh, I remember him!

Bate: ...and Dr. Nussbaum. We hear from him regularly. Every Christmas they send a Christmas letter and tell us about everybody in the family and what they're doing and so forth and so on. He has retired twice and is now going back to work.

Mrs. Bate: Dr. Nussbaum just loved us. When he'd come here, I'd say, "Come in, Dr. Nussbaum." He'd say, "'Peachy,' if you don't

call me Leo, I'm going to call you Mrs. Bate." (chuckle)

Bate: So the first giant step that was made was to get somebody in Johnson and Johnson. We got a boy there. He had a degree in sociology, and he fit in well. He worked there for about six months. They liked him because he was able to do the job and whatnot. His name was Clarence Franklin. Then he decided he wanted to preach, and that just threw a monkey wrench into it. We didn't want him to quit because that was the first white collar job we had gotten anybody.

Kumler: When was this? About when?

Bate: "Peachy," what year did we start this here with Austin College? I don't know. I still got some of the records that I just kept.

Mrs. Bate: Around 1966.

Bate: This was before then, honey.

Kumler: This is first time?

Mrs. Bate: Late 1960's.

Kumler: This is the first time since 1930, then, that there have been real efforts to place black people in specific jobs.

Bate: Yes.

Mrs. Bate: The integration act was passed, but before then we were meeting.

Bate: Yes, before integration we started off there.

Mrs. Bate: And we would discuss incidents that had happened.

Bate: And how we could deal with them. We started right off, and

we talked to these different groups.

Let me tell you something else that happened that was very important. They had the Minister's Alliance. The black and white ministers got together sometimes. We had a Sunday school conference come in here. They were coming from all parts of the United States. It was kind of an executive board of some type. These were all the big preachers that the black people had--most of them were. There wasn't any little fellows in it. Their wives came. The Grayson Hotel wouldn't take them, and the Tradewinds Inn or whatever we had wouldn't, either. So they called in the white ministers and said, "We're in trouble. We got these people coming in, and we don't have sufficient black homes for these people. They said, "They won't let us have rooms, so you've got to make them open up these avenues." I don't know what they did, but they didn't open them up. But do you know what they did? These doctors and professors at Austin College and the people in town took those Negro ministers and their wives in their homes. They said they enjoyed it and had a real good time with them.

Kumler: So that was a real positive thing--some good contact there.

Bate: Yes, that was something. I mean, they squared it off. So all those things happened.

Here's another thing that happened. One individual--I don't know how long they'd been talking about it--called us

to the Chamber of Commerce. This was a group of men, people they kind of, I guess, thought of as leaders. There were some teachers and preachers. I happened to be in that group. They said, "We've been thinking that we don't want happening here what's happening down Mississippi and around--sit-ins, and slayings and killings and marching." They said, "We've decided we want to do what would break this color barrier with our own people." They said, "This is what we plan. We want you and your wife to go to the drugstores, and you go in and you sit down. By the time you sit down, we're going to have two of our men sit on each side of you and your wife." They said, "If anybody lays a finger on you... we ain't going to have no policemen there. We're going to have plainclothes people. We're going to beat the hell out of them right there, and then we're going to put him in jail and really work him over. We think that would be a good idea. What do you think about it?" Nobody said anything so I said, "Well, I think maybe we could be able to do it. What do you think, brothers?" They said, "Yeah, we'll do it." (chuckle)

Kumler: When was this?

Bate: Oh, this was in the 1960's.

Kumler: In the 1960's.

Bate: And so he had been meeting with the doctors and the lawyers and the judges and the best people of the town. I still think

a lot of these people who worked in the community. We used to meet early in the morning in the Grayson Hotel. We'd go up there and talk and plan out different things that we would do.

But in the meantime, I said, "I can't get my wife because she just got a one-teacher school up there, and she'd have to know a day ahead. But I'll go with anybody else. Give me another man to go with me. Mr. Stark and his wife...

Kumler: I know Mr. Stark.

Bate: Yes. So we went up there, and at 10:00 on the watch I put my foot in the door, and Stark came behind me. So when we got in there, a guy caught me by the arm and said, "Ed's coming to talk to you." They took me on back outside. Remember that they said, "We ain't going to say nothing about this to nobody because we don't want no slipup in it. Don't say nothing to anybody. We're going to do it tomorrow at 10:00." So in the meantime, he caught me by the arm and said, "I want to talk to you." We have some kind of disagreement somewhere. I said, "We're going to have to get another date."

But in the meantime, at that same time, you know, they had all these signs in the courthouse--"Black" and "White." So they took all those signs down. One of the lawyers said he got up there at 6:00, and when he got up there, it was already down. They had decided they were going to take them

down. This is the judicial people. David Brown is the one that had gotten these people together on this particular occasion for the sit-in. They stayed down for two weeks at the courthouse, and somebody put them back up. They took them right down the next day, and they never have been up anymore.

I coached for about twenty years at the old black school. I don't care what kind of weather it was--rain, sleet, or snow --at the halftime, I'd go to the north end of the football stadium. The visiting team would go to the other end. I don't care how it was raining.

David Brown was down there one night, and he caught me there and said, "How come you didn't go in that dressing room that night in all that rain?" I said, "You know they won't let us go in there." He said, "The hell they won't!" He said, "If they don't tell you, when you have your next game, that you can go in there, you call me. If they don't tell you before that game, you call me."

That Monday morning, Mr. Davis came over to the school, walking, and he came up and said, "We're going to let your boys use the dressing room down there, but be careful and don't steal nothing." (chuckle) That cooked that, so we began to use it.

They didn't give us any assistance from the high school. Do you know Mr. Davis? He was a Sunday school teacher in the Baptist church, and he taught Sunday school

lessons on Friday. He didn't on Friday evening or Saturday morning. Anyway, he taught it. In the meantime, they didn't give us any money for athletics or anything of that nature. I don't know how it got out, but it got out someway, and they put it in the Democrat that they'd given all the coaches at the high school $125, and they was all going to go in one car to the coaching school. I'd been going all the time for a long time, and I had to pay my own way and pay my own hotel bill or whatever to stay, and my own board. So I said to our principal, "I wish they'd give us some money." I said, "I've been going all this time, and I've paid my own way." He said, "Well, why don't you just write Mr. Davis a letter." I said, "Okay, I'll do that." I wrote him a letter, and I told him I was going to go. I mentioned that he'd given everybody else money. We were going to Lubbock. He didn't answer my letter. He wrote it to Mr. Neblett. He said, "Tell Mr. Bate and Mr. Sanders they can go, all right, and we can give them $30. But be sure to bring back a receipt that they attended." I said, "Tell him to go to the devil with that money!" He was a big Christian man—a Sunday school teacher. I changed my conception of him right then as a man, as a person. I think Christian people are supposed to be the best people, and if the right decisions on things do come about, I think that they are the ones that they should come from first. It's the same as people who go to church.

They may not go all the time, but they're better than some who don't go at all. Do you know what I mean? They're in the atmosphere.

Kumler: When these things were happening here in Sherman, do you remember people bringing up the courthouse burning and the lynching?

Bate: Well, we didn't talk too much about it. It was supposed to have been what they called a "Black Friday." We didn't like to hear it or to refer to it too much. It's just like a lot of things like that.

I couldn't go into the dressing rooms, and they wouldn't give us money to go to the coaches' clinic. It cost $25 for me to register, just me by myself, and we had two of us. There was another guy with me, Sanders. And he gives us $30. That's $15 a piece, and we're going to pay our own transportation and our own room and board. I said, "No, he can go to the devil. Keep it!" So I didn't go. I didn't ever go anymore. It was a coaching school. I'd been going all these years and paying my own way. When Clyde came in, why, we went on together, and we shared our expenses together. We shared our money. We had to do it in order to try to make our kids come up to what, I think, the other kids were on the other side of the fence. So we did that. Black teachers sacrificed money and time for their kids. We'd go a little bit farther because we thought that with his environmental situation at

home and otherwise, why, he needed us teachers at least to kind of go a little further along with it. "If you want to come back to see us, I'll help you. I'll work with you on this situation. You can come by my house if you want to. I'll work with you." Those are the types of things that the black teachers did. They were used to going just a little bit further. Usually, when these black teachers went into the white school, those things were fixed in their minds, and it kind of made them a little different with their class. The kids in the school, of course, could tell that they were having a little bit something different than they had been having.

Kumler: I know Ed Hunt always did that, and Q.D. Ed Hunt and Q.D. Williams always did that. They worked with their students after hours.

Bate: Yes. That's what I'm saying. We felt like we had to do it. We'd make a little step further above and beyond the call of duty, we might say. "If you want to come, we'll help you." Then we had kids that couldn't do this and couldn't do that. Maybe they wouldn't pay $2.50 or $5 or something like that to pay in this thing. The teachers would give it to them so they could be represented. All down through the years it was the teachers--the black teachers--who made contributions not only to the school but to the individual child financially and laborously when it came to doing that. We did that.

Mrs. Bate: I can remember when we had nothing--no kind of research book at the library. All we had was a big dictionary in the office, and it stayed on the table. If you wanted to look up something, you went there.

Bate: That was the library (chuckle).

Mrs. Bate: You'd look up a word in the dictionary. That's all we had for any kind of reference.

Kumler: One dictionary.

Mrs. Bate: A big dictionary for the whole school.

Kumler: I want to see if I could just get your opinion about something, and you just be as candid as you want to be about it. Mrs. Bate, you do the same thing. Why do you think in Sherman we don't have black professionals now?

Bate: Sherman got a bad name when they had this riot--everywhere. For twenty years I tried to get a black doctor here out of two black medical schools. Nobody wanted to come this way.

Kumler: Because they knew about what had happened?

Bate: Yes, they knew what had happened. When you go to some town someplace, they'll say, "Uh-oh! You can miss Sherman! That's that bad place!" Even now you hear that every once in a while. That gives us a black eye.

Mrs. Bate: We sent for them to come here.

Bate: Part of that time, you know, they started a little oil boom around here, and the Chamber of Commerce was going to put a step forward for them to get a black doctor and a black

dentist here. For twenty years it stayed on the board. Howard University in Washington, D.C., and Meherry Medical College in Nashville, Tennessee, were the two schools that I kept up with, trying to get a black doctor here.

Kumler: It still is unsuccessful.

Bate: We got one black doctor here now, I think, Dr. Bell.

Kumler: Dr. Bell. Does he live here now?

Bate: He lives out by Grayson College.

Kumler: He does? I didn't know if he lived here.

Mrs. Bate: He's been out there a long time.

Kumler: Is that right?

Bate: I don't know whether that's the same one. I saw some Dr. Bell. I'm not acquainted with him. I have seen him down at the football game. He'd be down there sometimes. He was the doctor for the Bearcats. He's an emergency specialist.

Kumler: I see.

Bate: He's on call for half a week all the time, I think. Then he's off that much time.

Kumler: He doesn't have an office, does he?

Bate: Not unless it's out there. No, he don't have an office at all.

Kumler: So, really, there's still not a black doctor here with an established practice. There just isn't.

Bate: That's right. Sometime back Reverend McGruder told me somebody was going to come look around, but I don't know what ever happened to him. Long before we started integration, I had

started trying to get black doctors and dentists. I had the Chamber of Commerce backing this up.

Kumler: So there has been some help from the white community...a little bit, anyway.

Bate: There has to be to have gotten a black doctor. I see some doctors...I don't know whether they're out of Dallas or not, but I've seen them. I knew they were doctors because they worked out at the Medical Plaza Hospital. We had some boy out there who was sick, and he stayed there a lot, and on certain days of the week he'd come up from Dallas. He was supposed to have been some type of expert.

Kumler: But that's it?

Bate: Yes.

Kumler: Well, okay. Is there anything else? We just about covered it, didn't we?

Bate: Yes.

Kumler: Fifty-six years. We covered just about...well, more than fifty-six years. You went all the way back to 1909.

Bate: Yes (chuckle).

Kumler: It's more than fifty-six years.

Bate: Yes, right up to the time now, almost.

Kumler: Are you going to let me come back and talk to you again if I need to?

Bate: Yes.

Kumler: When I go back and listen to this tape, you know, I may think

of other things I need to ask you.

Bate: Okay, that'll be all right.

Kumler: So I might just do that.