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**Marjorie Barringer, 2009**

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*Marrison Scales:* On behalf of Crossroads of Freedom, I'd like to thank you for doing this interview and for the record could you say your name and your birthday?

*Marjorie Barringer:* My name is Marjorie Barringer. My birthday is May 7.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay and what year were you born?

*Marjorie Barringer:* 1917, I think it was.

*Marrison Scales:* 1917, okay and –

*Marjorie Barringer:* Isn't that right?

*Gloria Singleton:* 1917.

*Marrison Scales:* Where were you born and raised?

*Marjorie Barringer:* I was born in Memphis, Tennessee.

*Marrison Scales:* And you've been here all your life?

*Marjorie Barringer:* I have been here all of my life.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay.

*Marjorie Barringer:* I was living on – I can't think of the name of the street.

*Gloria Singleton:* Was it in Douglass?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Oh no, I was born downtown. See, Douglass wasn't heard of

[01:00]

then. I can't think of the name of the street. I know where it is. It's if you go down – go almost to the end of Beale Street, it's another street over there. I think it was Exchange.

*Marrison Scales:* Exchange?

*Erijit Paul:* Okay.

*Marjorie Barringer:* I believe it's Exchange but if it don't, I can – either one of you got a car when we get through I can tell you. I'll take you there. I used to know. But I can't – lots of things I've forgotten.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay and Ms. Barringer what was your occupation?

*Marjorie Barringer:* My occupation? Well as a child I had to – mother made me study my books. That was one occupation.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay.

*Marjorie Barringer:* And I always had to be on various programs and things

[02:00]

for different occasions and I just can't remember all those things. It's been so long.

*Gloria Singleton:* You were a teacher. Didn't you teach?

*Marjorie Barringer:* No not until – I didn't teach until I think when you met me I was a teacher wasn't I?

*Gloria Singleton:* Yes ma'am.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well I didn't teach until – you know you don't teach anyway until you finished school and college.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay, you mentioned your mother. Could you tell us who your parents were?

*Marjorie Barringer:* My parents, Letitia Jones and Allan Jones.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay and what did they do?

*Erijit Paul:* Could you –

*Marjorie Barringer:* My mother was a missionary, Christian missionary, and my father, he made bands, bands for the cotton, for the cotton to be baled, just little bands just like, just about like this.

[03:00]

Just about that wide, just a long band that'd go around the cotton; you know you see the cotton with about here bands on it? Well that's what he made. All you had to do was just hit them and cut them off. They were already there. All you had to do was cut them according to the size of the cotton. You know, different cotton is different sizes.

*Erijit Paul:* And did you have any brothers or sisters?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yes I had two brothers and two sisters. They are dead.

*Erijit Paul:* And who were they and what did they do?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Louis, Louie, Louie, Jones, and my sister was Lillian, it's been so long, Lillian, well they had two children

[04:00]

**Balleria** Branch, now Branch, Balleria Branch and Audrey Branch. Audrey is the oldest and so her name was Lillian Branch and her husband was James Branch.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yes.

*Marrison Scales:* Can you tell me a little bit about your neighborhood that you grew up in? Like what was it like? Did it have a lot of children?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well yes, it had plenty children. I went to Klondike School. I lived right over there at 885 Klondike School. Wait a minute, my address was 885 and the school then was on Olympic Street. It was midway Olympic Street. I did not know the number

[05:00]

and that's where I went to school and then later my mother – oh yeah, my mother had to move to the country and that was, you know where Warford Street is? Do you know where Warford and Chelsea is?

*Marrison Scales:* I know where Chelsea is.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Alright well, Gloria can you tell her better about it?

*Gloria Singleton:* Well it's an interview. They want to hear you. I'll tell her a little later.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Oh yeah, okay, and I think she was – well I can't think of all – it's been so long.

*Marrison Scales:* That's fine.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Okay.

*Marrison Scales:* Now the school you told us about, was this an elementary?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yes, Klondike, right over there on Olympic Street, on Olympic right over there. Do you know where Olympic Street is?

[06:00]

*Marrison Scales:* Is it going toward downtown?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yes it's in that subdivision.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay.

*Marjorie Barringer:* It's right behind; I can't think of the name of the street, I can't think of all the names of all those streets now.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay, now what high school did you go to?

*Marjorie Barringer:* I went to Booker Washington.

*Marrison Scales:* Booker Washington?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yes.

*Marrison Scales:* And what was school like for you?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Oh school was fun, lots of fun, lots of learning and lots of fun I always had in various affairs and everything while we were in it. Then we organized a singing, a glee club. I think it was a glee club and we went to various places singing and whatnot. So it was always lots of fun.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay and besides the glee club

[07:00]

were there any other activities?

*Marjorie Barringer:* No I never – I don't know. I never did like to play ball or something like that. I was always in the, let me see, what did they call it, I can't remember, affairs. We just called them affairs I think where they have play affairs.

*Marrison Scales:* Sort of like theater kind of?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yeah, like that, they always had affairs like that and I always played a part in them.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay. Now what did you do after you graduated from high school?

*Marjorie Barringer:* After I graduated from high school, well that was a depression year at that time and everything just fell apart.

[08:00]

All the people just about lost their jobs. Some was like what I think is coming on now because so many people have lost their jobs now and we'll see that the times are getting I would say changing times. It would be changing times.

*Marrison Scales:* Now Booker T. and Klondike, were they majority black schools?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Oh yes, they were black. There was separation, race separation.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay so the whole time you were in school they were segregated?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yes.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay, alright.

*Marjorie Barringer:* We didn't have but two high schools, Booker T and –

*Gloria Singleton:* In Douglass?

*Marjorie Barringer:* No high schools; Manassas was the other high school.

[09:00]

*Marrison Scales:* Did religion, I know you mentioned your mom being a missionary, how big a role did religion play in your family? Did you belong – what church did you belong to?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Baptist church, Mt. Moriah, I belonged to Mt. Moriah. It's on Florida Street.

*Marrison Scales:* Florida Street?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Mhm.

*Erijit Paul:* Could you describe that church? What was it like?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Oh it was just a brick church and just like any other church I guess. I don't know. It wasn't a real large church but it was large enough and since then that church has burned down. I passed by there, oh, about four weeks ago and it's another church there now.

[10:00]

But that church was a brick church. I don't see how it burned down like that and now it's another church. It's at Florida, Florida Street and I can't think of the other name now. I thought I could but I can't.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay and could you share some memories from your childhood that might have impacted you or influenced you later on in life?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well yes, my mother was – she was I guess you'd call it a cook. Yeah, she had a restaurant on Front Street. Now then there was where the – I don't even know – what do you call that place over on Front Street

[11:00]

where you go across?

*Gloria Singleton:* Mud Island?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yeah, I guess they did call it Mud Island. Over at Mud Island then there was a – I can't recall the name of it. Compress, it was a compress over there and where she had a restaurant there on Front Street and quite naturally she – the restaurant was large enough to hire three people: my sister and someone else and my mother. Naturally I had to do things there too until they closed out, see, in later. It became what it is now.

*Marrison Scales:* Now you mentioned that you said after

[12:00]

you graduated from high school it was a depression. Now how long after this did you start your own family?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well I can't remember. I didn't know y'all were gonna ask.

*Gloria Singleton:* Do the best you can.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Huh?

*Gloria Singleton:* Do the best you can.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yeah, now what did you say?

*Marrisona Scales:* Let's start with did you get married?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well yes, I got married. I even forgot when. Yeah, I even forgot when but I do know I was in my 20s when I got married. I might have been 21 I guess.

*Marrisona Scales:* Okay and did you have any children?

*Marjorie Barringer:* No I did not have any children.

*Marrisona Scales:* Okay.

*Marjorie Barringer:* And so I joined the – I was in the church in South Memphis where my mother was

[13:00]

but I got tired of getting on the street and I didn't think it was necessary when churches are right around you or you were around the churches and so I joined St. Paul Church, over at St. Paul in Douglass. Well, Douglass School was on that street too. In fact Douglass School started at St. John Church. Now what years I don't know, it was a long time ago; later after the majority of the children increased when they changed the school and started putting it where it is now. What is the name of that street?

[14:00]

*Gloria Singleton:* It's Mt. Olive.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Mt. Olive? No it's not on Mt. Olive.

*Gloria Singleton:* Douglass is not on Mt. Olive? Douglass High School?

*Marjorie Barringer:* It might be. I don't know. I don't go over there.

*Marrisona Scales:* Okay, that's fine. So what did your husband do?

*Marjorie Barringer:* My husband worked at – I can't remember all of that.

*Marrison Scales:* That's fine, that's fine.

*Erijit Paul:* So now we're gonna talk a little bit about the period between 1950 and 1970. Do you have any stories from that period in particular that you'd like to share?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Oh my goodness. Well perhaps the changing of the subdivisions,

[15:00]

you know, the place they had to finish enlarging the city, see, where they had gravel, we had concrete I think you know, that's concrete out there?

*Marrison Scales:* Yes ma'am.

*Gloria Singleton:* Yes ma'am

*Marjorie Barringer:* Uh-huh, they changed it to that, changed it from gravel, grave you know when you're driving and the rocks are hitting the fender, like that you know. So that's all that and then they extended the lights, they extended the electric lights, street lights and whatnot. They put lights on the street and that's just about all I hues.

*Marrison Scales:* And what was Hyde Park like?

[16:00]

Were there a lot of changes happening in Hyde Park in the '50s and '60s?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yes, now I can't tell you whether it was the '50s or '60s because I don't know what year I lived over there and so whenever I moved I just drop that, you know. I move to a better place, a bigger place, somewhere I like better.

*Gloria Singleton:* Just tell them what you know about Hyde Park.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Hyde Park?

*Gloria Singleton:* Mhm.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well the Hyde Park School I can't remember where it was but they moved it on the street where the mailbox is. What is it? That's where the Klondike School was.

*Gloria Singleton:* It's Tunica.

*Marjorie Barringer:* You think that's Tunica Street?

*Gloria Singleton:* Mhm.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Okay they moved – they changed and moved it

[17:00]

on, she says Tunica Street. I've forgotten the name of all those streets.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay that's fine. Now do you remember being involved in any activities during this time?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well yes. I always – we had a society, what do you call it, a society or something, a society entertainment I think it was, something like that, and I worked in it. We always found places to go and take the children, take the children.

*Erijit Paul:* Okay.

*Marjorie Barringer:* And we started – I had to go back to, what was it called, ANI College to study about how to

[18:00]

start, let me see what it was, I can't think the name of it, but anyway, we started Bible school started. That's when Bible school started all around and we had that for the children and they had a swimming pool. They built a swimming pool, another swimming pool, out there in Orange, no not in Orange Mound. What's the area, the first area?

*Gloria Singleton:* Which school?

*Marjorie Barringer:* What school? It's Corrine I think, Corrine Avenue School I think. They built the first swimming pool out there.

*Marrison Scales:* Now was this swimming pool, was it just for blacks or was it for whites?

*Marjorie Barringer:* It was just blacks.

[19:00]

See, the city was not integrated then. That was long years ago.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay. Now do you remember any – do you remember any I guess certain activities or kind of acts that stood out I guess during that time with the city not being integrated? What was crime like I guess?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Crime wasn't too bad. It's never been too bad, nothing like it is now. But crime is everywhere now. They're specializing in it now.

*Erijit Paul:* How would you say integration and segregation how did that affect your life during that time?

*Marjorie Barringer:* It didn't bother me because I always had my certain things to do

[20:00]

and other people had their certain things to do and I didn't bother them and they didn't bother me.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay and now you mentioned some of the activities like taking the kids to the pool.

*Marjorie Barringer:* To the parks.

*Marrison Scales:* To the parks.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yes to the parks and various playgrounds. See, sometimes they would give a party or something, an entertainment, and then the kids would act. They would have various actions.

*Marrison Scales:* And those kids were mostly from Hyde Park?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well, it didn't matter.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay.

*Marjorie Barringer:* But mostly if it was given in the Hyde Park area, well then perhaps most of the kids would be from Hyde Park. Whatever area

[21:00]

they had the affair in, well quite natural, those kids would appear because the same with Orange Mound and let me see, what is that, out there where – I can't think, where they had the trouble with the funeral home.

*Gloria Singleton:* South Memphis?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Uh-huh it was South Memphis, what as the name of it? It just happened not long ago, the man bought the land, cemetery, what was the name of that cemetery.

*Gloria Singleton:* I can't recall.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yeah I can't either.

*Marrison Scales:* That's okay.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Huh?

*Marrison Scales:* That's fine.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Okay.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay now were you teaching during this time?

[22:00]

*Marjorie Barringer:* No I doubt it. I doubt it.

*Marrison Scales:* Like around when did you teach?

*Marjorie Barringer:* When did I start teaching?

*Marrison Scales:* Yes ma'am.

*Marjorie Barringer:* I cannot tell. I do not know.

*Marrison Scales:* What was going on in the community around that time? Do you remember anything or even maybe in Memphis, like I guess in relation to like the sanitation strike and things like that, do you remember was it anywhere around that time did you start teaching or were you younger than that?

*Marjorie Barringer:* I just can't tell you honey. I just don't know. I'd tell you if I knew.

*Erijit Paul:* Okay and were you – did you vote in the ‘50s and ‘60s and were you involved in politics?

[23:00]

*Marjorie Barringer:* I’m quite sure I did. I always voted up until last year. I did not vote last year. I just couldn’t get there and I didn’t bother anybody to take me because I said I’d been there enough and there wasn’t anybody else as old as me there and I said they wouldn’t know the difference because they voted my church right down there. I belong right down there. I forgot the name of the church. I don’t know what it is.

*Marrisona Scales:* Now do you remember any of the times that Dr. King was in Memphis?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yes I remember.

*Marrisona Scales:* Now how did – do you remember how the Hype Park community responded?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well they were cooperative. They were cooperative. I can’t tell you just what they were doing because

[24:00]

I think that was the time, I know I was teaching at that time. Yeah, I was teaching. I remember. I think I was at Klondike School at that time because I did substitute teaching most and the reason I did it was because there were so many children that I thought that I could help because some of the children weren’t as smart as they should have been in the grade that they said they were in and so I was a special – they called me a special sub because I had to stay I think fifteen weeks I think. That’s what it was, something like that, in one place whenever I went. I had to stay

[25:00]

where other substitute teachers, they go here and there every day. They go somewhere else. But I had to go to one special class for about I’ll say, well one time I know I stayed about I think ten weeks. That teacher was sick and I stayed there.

*Marrisona Scales:* Okay.

*Erijit Paul:* Going back to the vote, were there any issues like education or any kind of issues that affected the way you voted?

*Marjorie Barringer:* No. I don't think voting had – you just vote period. I don't think it had any particular reason. But for the same purpose I know but it was somewhat different but I can't say because I didn't deal in politics too much

[26:00]

because it was so aggravating to me. They always doing this and turning around and change and do that and I didn't get into that mess.

*Marrison Scales:* Is that what I guess a lot of the politicians in Memphis at that time did?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yeah. Uh-huh. There was just a whole lot of nothing going on, and I didn't get in it.

*Marrison Scales:* Now, were there any political rallies or campaign parties or anything?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yeah. They had all that. I told you I didn't get in it.

*Erijit Paul:* Do you remember who you voted for for president during those times?

*Marjorie Barringer:* For all those and more. *(Laughter)*

*Marrison Scales:* Okay. Moving ahead a little bit, can you tell me a little bit about the **Cypress Creek**?

*Marjorie Barringer:* I don't know anything about Cypress – what do you want to know about Cypress Creek?

*Marrison Scales:* Do you remember like I guess how far did Cypress Creek run through North Memphis, or do you remember when they started dumping stuff in Cypress Creek or how the community responded to any of that?

0:27:25.8

*Marrison Scales:*

*Marjorie Barringer:* No. I know when they sort of shaped it up, made it look better you know, when the water washed too far over here and not much over here or something like that. They just came out and made a nice

ditch, you know. That's all I know about that 'cause I didn't live in that direction. I just crossed that and that was all.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay. Now, do you remember hearing about I guess anything that stood out to you about the Civil Rights Movement? Anything that stood out to you?

*Marjorie Barringer:* About Civil Rights Movement. Well, yes. I think things were different, and I think it's now like it should have been all the time. Mm-hmm. 'Cause it brings about animosity among all people.

*Marrison Scales:* And how would you describe now, in comparing now to back then? How would you compare those?

0:28:40.3

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well, I would compare it in – I don't know. I would say that I think it's better myself because it's all the people doing the one thing, not some and leaving the others out.

*Arijit Paul:* Are there some particular memories that you remember like Dr. King's assassination or the sanitation strike, things that stick out to you?

0:29:23.2

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well, yes. I think he was a very strong man, and I do know that because of what he did, I know there were a lot of people who did not like it, both – of all races, 'cause there's a mixture here. And as for what they – what was done, I think it brought about an attitude toward people toward each other. I think what he did helped to change – what was it, the – they were – I can't think of the word now. The people were not integrated, uh-huh. Don't you – what do you think about it? Do you think it was better or not?

0:30:31.6

*Marrison Scales:* Well, I'm 20, so in my 20 years of living it's always been integrated.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yeah. That's what I was going to say it's always been integrated, but it's different now. Now you can imagine how it was before then.

*Marrison Scales:* Right.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yeah. I think it cause a lot of mismanagement in doing something, being selfish. That's what I call 'em, selfish.

*Arijit Paul:* Can you remember when the schools were being integrated? How was it to be a teacher during that time?

*Marjorie Barringer:* It was no matter. It wasn't any trouble to me because that's what it needed, and so you just could look at it and say it's right now, let's agree.

*Marrison Scales:* How did the parents and I guess the kids react?

0:31:32.8

*Marjorie Barringer:* I don't know anything about the parents. I didn't have anything to do with them.

*Marrison Scales:* Did the kids accept that well, integrating?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yes, uh-huh. Yeah.

*Marrison Scales:* Now, do you remember whenever they closed West Drive in HeinPark?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Do I remember when they closed what?

*Marrison Scales:* West Drive.

*Marjorie Barringer:* I don't know anything about it. I never heard about it.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Do you?

*Gloria Singleton:* I don't know either.

*Marjorie Barringer:* That's all right. I know if she doesn't know, it must didn't happen.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay. *(Laughter)* Okay. Fast forwarding a little bit, what did you do – did you always teach at the same school?

0:32:29.2

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well, yeah. I think I taught at two schools. I taught at – I taught in Memphis at – shoot, I can't think of all of that.

*Arijit Paul:* What were some of the problems you faced when you were a teacher?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Some of the problems what?

*Marrissa Scales:* When you were a teacher, like what would you have liked to see changed?

*Marjorie Barringer:* What did I like to be changed?

*Marrissa Scales:* Mm-hmm. What kind of problems did you face as a teacher, anything you would have changed?

*Marjorie Barringer:* I didn't have any changes. I didn't have any problems, I mean. I didn't have any problems. I just did what was to be done, and I did it the way it should have been done and that was all.

0:33:35.3

*Marrissa Scales:* Okay. Now, do you remember anything in Hyde Park I guess after the '70s? How long did you teach? Were you still teaching in the '70s?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Now, look.

*Marrissa Scales:* (Laughter)

*Marjorie Barringer:* I put all that so far behind me under bushes I can't think of it like that. I can't think of how many years and whatnot because, you know, I just did it.

*Marrissa Scales:* Is there any advice you would give to young Memphians now I guess in comparison to you teaching in a segregated school and then it was integrated and just your experience, is there any advice you'd give to the young Memphians coming up?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Just have in mind what you want to do and what you want to be. Help others, and what else?

0:35:00.8

*Marjorie Barringer:* Stay on the job.

*Marrissa Scales:* Stay on the job.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Yeah. Stay on the job.

*Marrissa Scales:* Okay. Is there anything else you'd like to add that we didn't ask you about?

*Marjorie Barringer:* No. I guess not because I'm sorry I didn't know all the questions you asked because it's been so long. I just forgot it, you know. When you get – then I'm sick too. I have heart troubles now. I

have to be very quiet and everything. It doesn't hurt or anything, but I have to be very attentive to it. I'm thankful I'm not hurting, I don't hurt. It isn't that kind – it isn't that type of heart troubles. The doctor explained it to me, but he said be quiet, don't rush. I can't rush anything like that.

0:36:04.9

*Marrassa Scales:* Okay. If you could go back in time, what advice you would give yourself, knowing everything you know now, what would you tell yourself back then?

*Marjorie Barringer:* You got lots to do. *(Laughter)* You got lots to do now I do believe. I don't know. I'm not in the affair now, and I really wouldn't know what it's like, but the children are just as bad I think. *(Laughter)* Well, you know, they doing things to teacher's car, they steal the gas out, do this, do that. In some of these areas I've heard 'em complain about it. It's no better. It's the same in all the situations almost of all the schools.

*Marrassa Scales:* Okay.

*Arijit Paul:* Are you happy with Hyde Park today?

*Marjorie Barringer:* Am I what?

*Arijit Paul:* Happy with the situation in Hyde Park today?

*Marjorie Barringer:* I don't know. I'm not over there. I really don't know anything about it. I never went to Hyde Park school. I did live in Hyde Park subdivision, but I never went to there. I never taught in their school.

0:37:34.3

*[Inaudible comment]*

*Marrassa Scales:* And is there – what would you say your proudest moment is? What made you the happiest, if you can remember everything?

*Marjorie Barringer:* As far as I know I always been happy 'cause I didn't get angry when it wasn't necessary, and it's not necessary when the group think the other way and you're thinking this way and then they get mad about that. That's what most people get mad about. You know, because you didn't vote like they voted.

*Marrison Scales:* Okay. Well, Mrs. Barringer, again, I want to thank you for doing this interview and participating in the Crossroads to Freedom project.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Well, thank you, and I'm glad to meet you all, but I didn't know anything. I might have been thinking of them, but I didn't know. It's my first time being inter – what is it being.

*Marrison Scales:* Interviewed.

*Marjorie Barringer:* Uh-huh. First time, so anything happens the first time.

0:38:50.6

*[End of Audio]*