

Interview Consent Form
Grambling State University

Service-Learning Project
Department of English

Fall 2016
C. Bonner, Lecturer 1

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I am a student at Grambling State University, and I am conducting this interview for my service-learning project, required of all English 101 students at Grambling State University. I am documenting the stories of senior citizens.

During this interview, you will be asked to answer some questions related to your own life's experiences. This interview was designed to be approximately a half hour in length. However, please feel free to expand on the topic or talk about related ideas. Also, if there are any questions you would rather not answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, please say so and we will stop the interview or move on to the next question, whichever you prefer.

All the information will be kept confidential. I will keep the data in a secure place. Only I and the faculty supervisor whose name is given above will have access to this information. Upon completion of this project, all data will be destroyed or stored in a secure location. However, if you permit, this data might possibly be donated to a local library.

Participant's Agreement

I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. I understand the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation.

The researcher has reviewed the individual and social benefits and risks of this project with me. I am aware the data will be used to meet the student's Service-Learning Program requirement at Grambling State University. I have the right to review, comment on, and/or withdraw information prior to the student's submission. The data gathered in this study are confidential with respect to my personal identity unless I specify otherwise. I understand that if I say anything that I believe may incriminate me, the interviewer will immediately delete the potentially incriminating information. The interviewer will then ask me if I would like to continue the interview.

If I have any questions about this study, I am free to contact the student researcher or the faculty advisor.

I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference. I have read the above form and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time and for whatever reason, I consent to participate in today's interview.


Participant's Signature


Interviewer's Signature

Date Nov. 23, 2016

Khaalis King

November 30, 2016

ENG 101

Ms. Bonner

Service Learning Project

Following is a collection of many interviews and conversations between my paternal grandmother, who I refer to as Grandy, Sally King and me, Khaalis King. Though the assignment has a community outreach focus, I chose to interview my grandmother, reasoning that she met the age criteria, was available, and has led an interesting life. After some time, when I told her I thought I had enough information for the assignment, she told me that she had enjoyed my more frequent calls and that my assignment had been good for her. She told me she was glad she remembered some things she probably wouldn't have thought to tell me if the questions hadn't triggered memories.

I alerted my grandmother early in the semester that I wanted to interview her to complete an English assignment, and to get a better picture of her life. Because she lives in Illinois, the setting of the interviews was via telephone. They cover a period of several weeks with no specific pattern of calling ... daytime, evening, weekends. Sometimes our weekly phone calls unexpectedly became interview sessions. Something she said would seem important and I would start to write notes when neither of us had my paper in mind. A few times she said that she would think over a particular call and would later give me what she called "a better answer." She would also text me, sometimes asking "do you want to know about ... ?" or, "don't forget we need to talk about ..." Some interviews lasted a few minutes, others lasted quite a while as prepared questions changed to spontaneous questions

that led to longer conversations. Grandy would remind me on the next call that I needed to take better notes because she wasn't always able to remember what we had discussed last.

Our conversations are usually always upbeat. But my grandmother wanted to "get it done early" and I wasn't always ready to work on the questions. I could tell she was impatient sometimes. Honestly, I was bored sometimes. My grandmother goes on and on. And she interrupts, but I knew I was supposed to let her talk. We would go back and forth with her saying "did I answer the question?" and me checking to see if I had asked *enough* questions. But I learned some things about my father's family I didn't know. I have a better appreciation for my grandmother's personality and see where her drive comes from.

The biggest part of the paper was trying to organize the interviews. The bits and pieces didn't make a lot of sense. But when I was able to get a timeline going the random questions were easier to make sense of. I had to reconstruct conversations, using my notes, from memory, from texts, from pictures.

My grandmother said she felt I had the family's story from my father's side. And she was very happy.

HOME PLACES

Q Where were you born, Grandy?

A I was born in 1947 in a small town called Newport, Arkansas. I'm 69.

Q But you grew up in Chicago. How long did you live in Arkansas?

A I lived in Newport until I was four years old. That's when my family moved to Chicago

Q Why did they go to Chicago?

A It's the story of the Great Migration ... in the late '40s, through the 50's, Blacks we're leaving the South looking for better paying jobs, and to escape the more overt racism of the South. My mother's sisters had left and were doing good. They convinced my mother, who convinced my father that we should move to Chicago, too. The story goes that it took a lot of convincing because my father was a successful businessman in Newport. He didn't want to leave because he owned a café, and a movie theater, where all the Black people went. Because my father was a businessman we were considered "rich," important people there. When we moved to Chicago we lived in a crowded apartment with my aunts on the South side and my father became a factory worker. I don't know if he viewed the move as an upgrade or a comedown.

Q I've heard my Dad talk about the South Side/West Side divide in Chicago. Why did the family move from the South Side to the West Side?

A When we first moved to Chicago we stayed on the south side with my aunts. But there were six children, and my grandmother and my parents, all living with my aunts and their families. We needed to move into our own place but nobody wanted to rent to a large family. We moved west because the house for sale were cheaper, and because the factory where my father worked was on the west side.

Q HOW LONG DID YOU LIVE ON THE WEST SIDE?

A The family still owns the house I grew up in. Your Dad's cousins -- your cousins too-- still live in the house. That house - 1819 S. St. Louis, has been in the family over 60 years.

PERSONAL DATA

Q Did you go to school on the South side or West side?

A Both. But I forgot to tell you that all six of us children went to Catholic school when we moved to Chicago. I started kindergarten in Catholic school on the South side. I look back now and marvel at how my parents, two factory workers, were so determined that their children would have quality educations. I can't imagine what it took for them to pay tuition for six kids from grammar school through high school. All of us graduated from Catholic grammar and high schools. My mother became Catholic so that we could attend Catholic school. My father remained Baptist. My father always complained that the Catholics were always begging for money. First tuition, money to put in church, money donations for the poor, and so on. The Catholic school educations paid off though. All of us were/are intellectually capable. We Williamsons pride ourselves on being "smart" people.

Q What was the good part about being in a big family?

A For me it was that I was the youngest. Even though I had a twin sister, I was very spoiled. My twin, your Aunt Sue, spoiled me too. She let me have my way in whatever plans we made. I was the dominant twin. It was always my way. And my older siblings were working right after high school graduation and they helped my mother financially. My father died when I was 12. So my mother could only make sure Sue and I had everything we needed. My sister and brothers, the older kids, made sure we had everything we wanted. We had our own roller skates, nice clothes, went to the movies. I didn't know we were poor.

Q What happened that your father died?

A My father was only 43 years old when he died. He had a cerebral hemorrhage – a blood vessel burst in his brain. This was a bad time for me because I was the youngest and I was his pet. I had been diagnosed with heart trouble when I was eight years old and I didn't go to school for a whole year. I was able to keep up because my twin, Aunt Sue, would come home and teach me what had been taught in school that day. When I did go to school my father would drive me to school and carry me into the building because I would get too tired just walking up the stairs. So we had a special relationship because I was with him so much. When he died I didn't cry, I couldn't cry. I pretended for a long time that he was just away on a hunting or fishing trip.

Q What happened that your mother died?

A My mother died when she was 76 years old, after her third heart attack. She was 53 when she had the first one. She was in the hospital a lot. Four of us six children have serious heart conditions. Two died following their second heart attacks. One has had a triple bypass. I

have coronary artery disease. My cardiologist told me "you look the picture of health, but you are very sick." All I can do is take my medicine and try to live healthy. Our family history of heart disease is not good. You need to know this so you can take care of yourself.

Q Is your heart trouble the reason you don't drink?

A No. I don't drink because I have never had a drink I liked enough to drink it again. Not champagne, wine, beer, nothing. I'm a Pepsi connoisseur! People can't stand that I don't drink. My friends, even now, keep urging me to try this, try that. When I'm out with friends I don't waste my money or my calories just to please my friends. When I met your grandfather I was 17, he was 22. I lied about my age, pretending to be 19 and a college student. So the first dates when he would offer me a drink I pretended I was drinking. Within a couple of months I didn't even pretend. I would just order a Coke.

She said my Granddaddy liked that about her, that she didn't drink just because everyone was drinking.

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

Q Granddaddy died a few years ago. Tell me again, how long you all were married?

A Your grandfather died on the day of our 42nd wedding anniversary. I had just left him watching TV a few hours before. Before I left we talked about what we would do to celebrate our anniversary ... we always celebrated, even if it was just dinner at a local restaurant. Our anniversary was on a Tuesday so we decided to go to a concert downtown on Saturday, and have dinner at a nice restaurant downtown. When I returned about four hours later, I thought he was asleep in his chair. But he had had a heart attack and was gone. After I returned from the hospital I found a vase of flowers on the kitchen counter. The florist had delivered them about a half hour before I came home and found him. It happened that quick!

My brothers always teased us when we came into family gatherings – “WHAT! y’all still together? Or, “man you ain’t left her yet?” This was because I was spoiled, so they said, and they didn’t expect my husband to put up with me for long. I would always have some smart response for my brothers and they would walk away laughing and telling your grandfather they felt sorry for him. I guess we fooled everybody. Forty two years of good and bad. And yes, I’d do it all over again.

Q You don’t talk about granddaddy since he died. Why not?

A It’s too painful. I miss him but I don’t want to talk about it because I’ll start crying. I’m not a crier and I don’t like for people to see me crying. So I keep my thoughts to myself. I want you to remember him though. Remember how he called you “Tiger” and how he let you get away with anything? Do you remember that we took you to the airport on Monday to go back to Atlanta, and he died the next day? I want you to remember that the last time you saw your grandfather, the last words he said to you were “I love you” and he hugged you and then I took you into the airport. That’s what I mean about talking about granddaddy ... it makes me cry. But I want you to remember him and tell your children about him.

Q Did anybody else stay married as long as you and granddaddy?

A Your dad’s paternal grandmother and grandfather were married more than 60 years- granddaddy’s parents. Mr. King was very demanding and abrupt with Mrs. King. I was a young woman in the early years of Women’s Liberation and I spoke my mind. I thought he spoke too harshly to her sometimes and I would put in my two cents about whatever he was yelling at her about. Mrs. King set me straight one time, though. She told me don’t be upset at him, that was just his way and he wasn’t really angry with her. She ended the conversation by saying “there ain’t nothing he wouldn’t do for me.” After that talk I never said anything else about how mean I felt he was to her. About 20 years later when he was sick and ailing, I saw the love and tenderness between the two of them. I came to understand that his

meanness had hidden his love. He just didn't know how to be openly loving. He showed his love by being a good hardworking man, a provider.

Your Aunt Rae and Uncle Chuck have been married 55 years.

Q My dad is an only child. Did y'all want a lot of kids?

A We thought we did. But I had two miscarriages before your dad was born. For a while we thought we wouldn't be able to have children. We were so happy when your father was born. He was our pride and joy. It was so hard to go back to work and leave him with a babysitter, even though the babysitter was his Aunt Rae. But we had become a two income family and our lifestyle was built on me having a job too. I couldn't have worked if it hadn't been for Aunt Rae. You've heard the stories. Your dad was the son Aunt Rae and Uncle Chuck never had. To this day he acknowledges them as his second parents. They're more than an aunt and uncle.

We kept waiting for the right time to have a second child and the right time never came. Before we knew it your dad was 10 years old and by then I didn't want to start over with a baby. I also felt that the age difference would be too great for the children to become close. Maybe I shouldn't have been so selfish. I know that sometimes your dad was lonely and wanted a sibling.

Q What did dad do as a child besides school?

A Your dad was a big time basketball player. In high school, your dad was the star of the team. We thought that he would play in college. Even today, when your dad and his friends get together they remanence on their old times on the basketball court. Your dad also played baseball just like you. Me and your grandfather didn't get to see him play baseball as much though because we were working, so his uncle often took him to his games and practices.

EDUCATION

Q I know you've taught in high school and in college so you have a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree, right? What college did you go to?

A Khaalis, getting my degree was a long uphill battle. I started at a community college on the South side- Wilson Junior College, now called Kennedy King College. I was a working student and college was not fun for me. I would race from class to take the bus and the el downtown to my job at the telephone company. I couldn't hang around talking or stay for games when the teams were playing at home. I met a lot of nice people and I was friends with them at school but I never saw them after class. After a couple of semesters I transferred to Crane Junior College on the West side. I don't remember why. That was a bad move because Aunt Sue was already going there and she knew everybody. We spent a lot of time in the lounge and cafeteria. I blew it and failed Biology. I just stopped going to class because we were having so much fun in the student lounge, playing cards. Eventually I transferred to Roosevelt University. I received my Bachelors and my Masters from Governors State University.

Q What kind of student were you? All As?

A I should have been. I wasn't always an A student though. I excelled in my major, both undergrad and graduate. But the required science courses kicked my xxx. I forgot to tell you, I started off as a Physical Education major and changed to English Literature. I never did well in science and I knew PE was not the field for me. I loved the athletic portion of the field but I recognized fairly early that I could not do well in the sciences. Did you know that Granddaddy was a PE major? He loved it, and he was very good in the sciences.

Q Did you graduate on time?

A It took me 20 years to get my Bachelors degree. I bet you didn't know that, did you? I got tired of going to school, then, my job wouldn't let me work part time when I wanted to go back. Then your father was born and it was hard to work, take care of a baby, and go to school. But I just couldn't give up. I never stopped. I wanted that degree. I had to prove that I had it in me. Sometimes I took one class each semester. Once, I was working full time and had a family and took nine hours. I was determined to graduate. When I got a letter from the registrar's office that read "Congratulations! You are a candidate for graduation, please submit your credentials by the following date," I was thrilled! It was like I had won the Lottery.

Q Did granddaddy take as long as you to graduate from college?

A No, Granddaddy graduated pretty much on schedule. He graduated from high school in 1961, and from college in 1967.

Q Did you go to the same college?

A No. And he was older than I was so I wouldn't have known him anyway. But he went to the University of Illinois at Navy Pier, and graduated from George Williams College. They renamed George Williams, Aurora University about 30 years ago.

WORK

Q What was your first job?

A My first job was with a catalog company as a file clerk. It was very hard, you had a quota to fill every day. I was young and had no work experience but somehow I knew this work schedule wasn't right. I stayed there three weeks and another job came up and I took it.

Q What was that job?

A My second job was in the dietary department at a hospital. I delivered patients' dinner trays to their rooms. It was okay, I could work part time and go to college. I left there after one year when another job opportunity came up. When I wrote my letter of resignation the chief dietician called me to her office and offered me a raise and asked me to stay. She said I was a hard worker and always on time. I said no because the new job offer was way more money. That was the job at the telephone company.

Q How long did you stay at the telephone company? Are you glad you went to the telephone company?

A I retired from the phone company after 28 years. Yes, I learned a lot from my years there. I was only 46 years old when I retired and had the world before me. The decision to leave was one of the best life decisions I've made. After I retired from the phone company I had so many other exciting work experiences of my choosing. I loved being retired.

Q What did you do at the telephone company?

A I started as a long distance telephone operator and later worked as a customer service representative. When I retired I was a Communications Consultant. After retirement the company hired me as a consultant in Corporate Education. I taught service representatives. I was also the editor for several company newspapers. I first wrote for the Marketing department and later for another in-house publication. That was my most enjoyable position. That, and working in Public Relations on the Lottery account.

Q How did you start working for the Lottery?

A I didn't actually work for the Lottery. I worked at a public relations firm and the Illinois Lottery was the firm's client. I was assigned to the Lottery account. It was a very demanding and challenging account because the African American community viewed the Lottery with distrust. Black people felt that the big winners were in white neighborhoods and that the drawings were rigged. It was my job to dispel this misconception and keep African American winners in the public eye. I developed strong relationships with editors across the

city, and nationally. I had several placements in national magazines. Look at the pictures on the wall in my office the next time you come to Chicago.

FAMILY LIFE

GATHERINGS, STORYTELLING, TRADITIONS

Q What were some of the things your family used to do together?

A One tradition, since we were Catholic, was that we always went to Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. All of us children went. The church was beautiful and there was a lot of pomp and circumstance, a lot of pageantry. The priests would have on special vestments and the students would be part of the procession. I loved all the pageantry. Our church was a big church, it seated 1200 people. There was a huge Nativity scene at the front of the church. We would come back home and open one gift. We always had lots and lots of gifts under the tree because my mother said each of us should have a gift from the other. The gift might be a pair of socks or a bottle of finger nail polish. The older kids who were working would buy us coats or shoes or a pretty dress. To this day I want a lot of gifts at Christmas. I would rather have five \$10 gifts than one \$50 gift. It's the pleasure of opening gift after gift that I like.

Q What else did you all do?

A I remember that everyone came to our house for all the holidays. It was easier for my mother's sisters to come to us. One sister had one child, the other sister had no children. So it was better for them to come to our house than for her to pack up six kids and go somewhere. The house would be full of people. All the women would be working in our tiny kitchen. My mother had beautiful dining room furniture and all the adults would be seated at the table. She had pretty china too. The young people ate in the kitchen or in the dining room when the adults finished. In the summer my dad barbecued in our back yard, my grandmother made fresh lemonade, a biiiig container of it.

Q You never went to other people's houses?

A Sometimes we would. When we went to other people's houses my mother would pack a shopping bag full of food. This was so we didn't eat up their food. It takes a lot to feed six kids so she didn't expect anyone to feed all of us.

Q What did you do at those houses?

A We kids sat and listened to the grownups. My twin and I played with our dolls and each other or with the children whose house we were visiting. I don't recall what the big kids did. We didn't stray too far from where the grownups were talking. It was bad manners to walk around somebody's house. We listened to them talk about other family members and about who was doing what down south.

Q Did people stay in Chicago or go back to Arkansas?

A As far as I know everyone who came to Chicago stayed here. I think once they saw the freedom of lifestyle they would visit the South but no one wanted to go back there to live. Every summer we would ride the train with our grandmother and go to Arkansas for a couple of weeks. Our grandmother would pack a lunch in a shoe box and we would look out the window and eat all the way there.

NAMES AND NAME CHANGES

Q Williamson is your maiden name. Where did the name come from?

A I don't know really. But there is a story in the family that the name came from slavery times and that the master was Swedish or Norwegian.

Q Do you know the origin of your mother's maiden name?

A No. But her father's name first name was Valpo. He was such an important figure in the daughters' lives that the sister who had one child modernized the name and named him Val. That was my aunt Babe. My mother's other sister was Hotline.

Q Were those their real names?

A No. Babe's name was Searcy. But we kids called her Sugar Baby, after the candy. Over time we shortened the name to Babe. Hotline's real name was Vernita. There was a children's TV show with a clown and a pretty majorette. The majorette's name was Mary Hartline. We thought our aunt was pretty too, so we started calling her Hotline, mispronouncing Hartline. Babe and Hotline were good aunts. They took us places and bought us things, trying to help our mother, who was their little sister.

Q Were there any other unusual names?

A I wouldn't say unusual, but my youngest brother, Uncle Louis, who was still older than me, had a real long name. His name was Louis Charles Hollingway Leroy Thompson Williamson. For real! The first two names were after my mother's brother. I don't know where the rest of it came from.

Q Did anybody use all those names?

A No, but he always used his full name. That's why I can still remember it after all these years, and he's been dead almost 30 years.

RACIAL DIFFERENCES

Q Are there racial differences in your family, like white ancestors?

A I don't know about white ancestors. But my grandmother was part Cherokee Indian. She was about my complexion and had long silky hair down to her waist. That's where Aunt Rae and Uncle Mack got their silky hair from.

Q Did she talk about her Indian heritage?

A Sadly, no. That's all I know.

Q Where was she from?

A Arkansas is all I know.

Q Did y'all talk about race?

A We never did. I think because my father was very dark and my mother was very light we just accepted color in our family. We kids were in between, not light not dark. And since color wasn't an issue for us we didn't talk about race which is so closely connected to skin color. Then and now, light skinned people are better accepted by society than dark skinned people. Since our skin colors ran the gamut we just accepted others.

Q Who is the lightest of the kids?

A Aunt Rae. And she has freckles, too.

THE FAMILY BIBLE

Q I think this part deals with births and deaths and marriages. It's like the family kept a history of the family. Where would your family tree begin?

A The farthest back I can go is my father's father. His name was Frank Williamson. I don't know his mother's name; she died young and there was never any talk of her. On my mother's side I can go back to her father Valpo and her mother Minnie.

Q Those are the grandparents. Did your father have brothers and sisters?

A My father has a brother, Arthur, who is still living. He lives in California. He has Alzheimer's. He married Cremalle and had three children.

Q Any other marriages?

A Not on my father's side. On my mother's side her sister Searcy married a man we called Pops. His name was Henry Thompson. They had one son, Val. My aunt Vernita married Charlie Huggins, they had no children. My mother Inez married my father, Norman. They had six children: Rae, Mack, Kenneth, Louis, Sue, and me, Sally.

Q That's the marriages. Have people died?

A Yes, all the grandparents, my parents, my aunts and uncles, and some of my siblings.

Q How many births from all the children?

A From the six Williamson children there are 12 grandchildren

Rae: Norma, Angela, Lisa

Mack: Anthony, Gregory, Mack Jr.

Kenneth: Dina

Louis: Katy, Norman

Sue: Robin, Rob

Sally: Kermit

FAMILY DOCUMENTS

Q Do you have any important family documents?

A No, the closest I can come to important documents is family pictures of my parents and grandmother. They're really old, what is called sepia ... a beige or brownish looking picture, not black and white.

Q Why don't you have important documents?

A All the family keepsakes remained at our house on the West side after my mother died. She kept them in her dining room china cabinet. Rob and Robin put the china cabinet in the basement when they moved in. It had been down there about 10 years when the basement flooded. Water was three feet deep. The china cabinet and everything in it was destroyed.

Q Do you blame Rob and Robin for losing family history?

A No. We older folks should have taken the time to go through the cabinet. But after a while we just forgot about it. It's our own fault.

Q Do you have any of your own family documents?

A Yes, I have my birth certificate and your dad's birth certificate. And my marriage license and your grandfather's death certificate. I have a copy of my original birth certificate from 1947. It really looks different from today's certificates. Everything is hand written. And it gives a lot of information, like my father was a carpenter and my mother was a housewife.

Q What has losing family document taught you?

A I know to keep important papers in a safe place and to make copies. We lost a whole generation when that basement flooded.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Q You said once that your mother became Catholic so the children could go to Catholic school. What was she before that?

A My mother was raised a Southern Baptist. She was a bible totin', hand clapping, church going woman. As soon as Aunt Sue and I graduated from high school she returned to her Baptist roots. The Catholic mass never satisfied her soul. The priest spoke in Latin, you sat stood, and kneeled too much, and the white people in church ignored you. She was glad to get back. She joined a neighborhood storefront church where she could sing and shout "hallelujah!" all she wanted. And she was happy.

Q Your father never gave up being a Baptist, though?

A No. But it was easy for him. He wasn't a regular church goer like my mother and grandmother. My grandmother was big in her church, too.

Q What does "big in her church" mean?

A She was a mother of the church, meaning that she was respected for her spirituality and her age. She was also a church leader among the women. She ran some of the organizations and the pastor respected her role in the church. By the way, she wasn't Baptist. She was AME, a branch of the Methodist church.

Q Why is that important?

A I don't know the distinction in religious philosophy among Protestants but for me her being AME or Methodist said that she was her own woman. She went against the grain by being Methodist, because I'm sure she was raised in the Baptist religion.

Q What other religions did your family belong to?

A Remember I mentioned my aunt Babe? Babe was a Mayan. I don't know the philosophy of the religion but it had something to do with the Mayan Indians. Babe used to get a magazine every month from the Mayans. She didn't talk about it, I just remember her saying to someone that she was a Mayan. And I remember the books.

FAMILY BURIALS

Q What do you know about family burials?

A I know that we've been using the same funeral home since 1958 when my father died. And for the most part, my immediate family is buried in one cemetery.

Q Why did you all keep using the same funeral home?

A My father died in 1958 and A.A. Rayner & Sons handled the arrangements. Apparently my mother was pleased, and when my first cousin died of leukemia when he was 13, the family went back to Rayner. It carried on from there.

Q What about the cemetery?

A My father was buried at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, a Catholic cemetery. You can only be buried in a Catholic cemetery on blessed ground if you are Catholic. You know my father wasn't Catholic. He was in a coma for several days and during that time my mother had the Catholic priest give him the Last Rites of the Catholic Church. That's how he was able to be buried in a Catholic cemetery. The family continued to use the cemetery for every burial.

Q My grandfather wasn't Catholic and he's buried there too. How did that happen?

A I wanted your grandfather buried at Holy Sepulchre because that's where I'm going to be buried with the rest of my family ... my parents and brothers and sisters will all be in that cemetery. I bought the gravesite next to your grandfather for myself. He was able to be buried there because of me being Catholic and owning a plot. In addition I had to have a cross as part of his headstone. I don't think he would mind that. It's small and unobtrusive. He wouldn't mind being in a Catholic cemetery but he would really object to flamboyant Catholic symbols. A cross is universal.

Q What about my father? Where will he be buried?

A I hope that when he passes I'll be gone and that the family will bury him there too. He probably won't like being buried in a Catholic cemetery but he will be pleased, I think, to be buried near me and granddaddy.

MILITARY SERVICE

Q Were any of the family in the military

A Yes! Your great grandfather, Norman Williamson, was in the Navy during WWII.

Q What did he do in the war?

A He was a cook. He used to cook for us a lot at home. He and my grandmother did all the cooking. My mother was not a good cook. They would go grocery shopping on Saturday and when they came back he would cook us steak and eggs for breakfast.

Q Did anybody else go to war?

A Two of my brothers were in the service during the Viet Nam War. Kenneth was in the Air Force. I don't know what position he had.

Q Which other brother went to war?

A My brother Louis. He was in the Army. Louis was a Green Beret. In case you don't know, they are an elite type of soldier. You have to pass a lot of tests to be a Green Beret.

Q Did any of them get special awards or medals?

A I don't know, and like I told you, all the important papers which my mother had were lost when the flood happened. She would have had their military records and papers and medals. Rob and Robin just threw everything away.

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVITIES

Q How old were you during the Civil Rights period?

A I was in my late teens and early 20s.

Q How active were you in Civil Rights?

A I was not active at all. It's sad to say but true.

Q Was Granddaddy involved in Civil Rights?

A No, he was outspoken about the racism in the country throughout his life. But he didn't march or protest that I know of. He was drafted into the Army, but he felt the war in Viet Nam was not right. So on the day he reported for induction into the Army, when he was told to step forward and take the oath for the Army, he refused to step forward. A few weeks later the FBI came to our house and arrested him. It was in the newspaper and everything. We hired a lawyer and it took a few years to have the Army drop charges against him.

Q How old was he when he was arrested?

A He was 25 or 26.

Q Did Granddaddy talk about that with my father?

A You'll have to ask him

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Q What community activities have you been involved with?

A Beginning in 1985 I've tried to be involved with community service. In 1985 I joined the Professional Women's Auxiliary of Provident Hospital. We raised funds for the hospital. This was important because Provident, a well-known hospital that treated Black patients, was in danger of closing for budgetary reasons. PWA had been an active fundraising group for many years before I became a member. I was with the organization for about five years before the hospital closed its doors. Provident was a landmark because Dr. Daniel Hale Williams, a Black surgeon, performed the first open heart surgery there.

Q After the hospital closed what did you do on a community service level?

A I gave my time to the NAACP. I was an active member once again of the fundraising committee. I worked hard. If I commit my name to something, I'm "all in."

Q Why was it important to do community service?

A Because when I was younger I benefitted from mentorship and activities provided by community service organizations. In my mind I was trying to give back. I made a conscious decision to join community service organizations. I'm especially proud of the years I volunteered with Junior Achievement of Chicago. I was on the Herman Crown Scholarship Committee for 10 years. I was frequently the only Black committee person. I know that my voice and my input made it possible for young Black scholars to receive the valuable \$20,000 four-year scholarship.

Q Are you doing community service now?

A No, I don't have the energy now.

Q What's your favorite organization?

A As I said, I am extremely proud of the work I did on the Crown Scholarship Committee.

Khaalis King

November 30, 2016

ENG 101

Ms. Bonner

Reflective Essay

I have known my grandmother, Sally King, since I was first born and over the course of our relationship, I have learned a lot from her. I decided to interview my grandmother, knowing that she would enjoy it, and wouldn't mind spending time talking to me for numerous hours. I also wanted to get to know more about her. This project ended up turning out to be a learning experience and rewarding experience for me.

My grandmother has said to me that she has benefited from the interview process. The frequent phone calls that we had with each other allowed her to benefit, due to her enjoyment of us talking so frequently and also her becoming more involved with my school life and helping me achieve my goal of getting good grades. One statement my grandmother made was "I'm glad I remembered some things that I wouldn't have thought to tell you if the questions didn't trigger my memory." From my perspective, I benefited from the interview process, because I learned a lot of information about my father's family and my grandmother especially that I would have never learned without the interview. For instance, I would have never known about or heard the name's Babe and Hotline, because I was not born while they were alive.

The saying "you never know until you ask", was proven to be true. Had I not had this interview assignment, I would have not asked many of the questions that I asked and wouldn't know some of the stuff about my family that I know now. However, I am glad that I got the

chance to do so. From the interview, one thing that I learned that stuck with me a lot is my great grandfather being a part of the Navy in WWII. He was also a business man in the south during a time when black people were working in the field and doing labor. I took much pride hearing that my great grandfather was a such successful business man. He owned a movie theatre and a restaurant.

Throughout the interview I had many different reactions and felt different emotions to my grandmother's responses. I laughed at the crazy names of my grandmothers' aunt, Hotline and Babe. I found the names extremely humorous due to the fact that you do not hear names like that nowadays. Names like that would get teased and made fun of. Although, there were majority many laughs and good vibes in the interview, there were some sad parts. I was sad and felt very sorry to hear my grandmother tell me some of the things that she did. For instance, hearing my grandmother talk about the death of her parent's was tough. Her father dying at such a young age and her mother having numerous heart attacks wasn't pleasant to hear. Along with hearing about her parent's death, was the death of her husband, my grandfather. This was probably the saddest part of the interview. I could hear in my grandmother's voice, that it wasn't an easy topic for her to talk about. However, I realized how strong my grandmother really is as she talked to me about it.

Following my father, and being the only child just like he was, I was always curious and wondered why he was the only child. I have asked him myself before but he had no answer. On the other hand, my grandmother had the answer and even more. I was shocked to hear that she had two miscarriages. I found her whole answer in general shocking. I felt like my father was just enough for my grandmother and grandfather.

In conclusion, what started out as a tedious school assignment, turned into a biography that I will be able to share with my children about my grandmother and my father. The many categories of questions helped me to focus and ask the right he questions. Some question even led to new questions. This is an assignment that I will always value.