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Interview with
BETTY KIMBLE
December 8, 1987

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Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Jane Harris

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Approved: Betty J. Kimble
(Signature)

Date: Dec. 8, 1987

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Oral History Collection

Betty Kimble

Interviewer: Jane Harris

Date of Interview: December 8, 1987

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Ms. Harris: This is Jane Harris interviewing Betty Kimble for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on December 8, 1987, in Denton, Texas. I'm interviewing Mrs. Kimble in order to obtain her recollections concerning the Denton Women's Interracial Fellowship and its role in desegregating Denton.

First of all, I'd like to get some biographical information from you. Would you tell me when you were born?

Mrs. Kimble: August 30, 1931.

Ms. Harris: Where were you born?

Mrs. Kimble: In Denton.

Ms. Harris: Tell me about your educational background.

Mrs. Kimble: Well, I finished high school. At that time it was Fred Douglass High School. They had built the new school, but due to the roof leaking in the gym, we didn't get to graduate in that school. They named it Fred Moore the next year. I finished in 1949, and in 1950 they named it Fred Moore. I went to college at Texas College in Tyler, Texas, for a year-and-a-half and then at North Texas for a year-and-a-half.

I lacked a semester finishing (chuckle).

Harris: At North Texas, you mean?

Kimble: Yes.

Harris: I see. What years were you at North Texas?

Kimble: In 1953 and 1954, I think it was. It might have been later.

I'm not for sure (chuckle). It was so long ago.

Harris: What was it like being in a segregated high school?

Kimble: Well, I was in a segregated high school. That was in 1960 when they integrated the schools.

Harris: So Fred Moore was an all-black school then?

Kimble: Yes.

Harris: I see. How did you develop an interest in race relations?

Kimble: How did I develop an interest in it? Well, coming up, we were always around white people. In our neighborhood whites used to live, and we played with the kids coming up. Over on Congress, on the other side of town where my auntie and her family lived, that's in the white part of town. Every week we were over there on Congress. Denton High School used to be on Congress. So, really, it was no major step; we were just there. So when they organized this club at that time, it was nothing; I mean, it was like somebody that we had known all along. It was no big deal, you know, being white and black. It was nothing.

Harris: So did blacks live in all different areas of Denton then?

Kimble: Well, they lived over on Congress and on Egan and then on

the other end of Prairie (this side of the cemetery). Our principal stayed there on Prairie. So basically they did live here and there. There was not a big neighborhood of them. Most of the blacks stayed over here in southeast Denton. But they were there in these other places.

Harris: Were you at North Texas State when they desegregated?

Kimble: I think it was maybe three or four years after.

Harris: What was your reaction when you heard about North Texas State desegregating?

Kimble: At that time I worked out there, and, like I say, it was no big deal because we had always been around the white people.

Harris: What kind of a job did you have there?

Kimble: I was a maid out there.

Harris: I see. Do you recall the first black student at North Texas State? His name was Tennyson Miller.

Kimble: Yes. Mr. Miller taught here when I was a little girl at Fred Douglass. He was a football coach and...well, I don't know what else he taught there, but he was there when I was a little girl.

Harris: Was he a native of Denton?

Kimble: No, Fort Worth. But he married a Denton lady.

Harris: Did you ever meet him?

Kimble: Oh, yes! He lived right up the street here--right on the corner up there (chuckle).

Harris: Tell me what he was like.

Kimble: Oh, he was a big, robust fellow--dark and very jolly, but stern. But all the kids loved him. At that time kids didn't stay out of school like they're doing now. When Mr. Miller would say something, they would do it. They had a good football team, and he was a good teacher.

Harris: I see. Do you recall the Joe Adkins case that took place in the 1960s?

Kimble: Here?

Harris: Yes. Do you ever recall hearing about that?

Kimble: No. What is it?

Harris: Okay, he was a black who wanted to be admitted to North Texas State. He was an undergraduate. Do you recall that?

Kimble: Yes. Well, it seems so long ago that I don't even remember. I don't think I liked it, but I won't say because I don't really remember.

Harris: Do you know anything about what happened to Joe Adkins?

Kimble: No.

Harris: There was a woman named Mrs. Sephas, who was the first black undergraduate here in 1956. Can you describe your reaction to her?

Kimble: All I remember is that she finished out there, but I don't remember too much about it. That's been so long ago that I don't remember! With not being in contact with these people, I didn't relate to what was going on.

Harris: Describe your reaction to Abner Haynes.

Kimble: Well, I remember him as a baby (chuckle). He stayed on the next street over. So when he went to North Texas, that was something great for the blacks because we all saw him grow up and we knew his whole family. I finished school with his two brothers; we all finished the same year. They lived on the next street behind us--Bishop Haynes, his daddy. We all grew up in the same neighborhood, so it was just wonderful to see--we called him "Butch"--him go to North Texas and play on the team. Then he made pro. So that was a big deal.

Harris: Do you think he helped the desegregation process?

Kimble: I do, yes.

Harris: Why do you think so?

Kimble: Well, at the time there wasn't too many blacks going, and I think that a lot of them would have liked to have gone but wouldn't go because of it being a segregated school. So when Abner came along, that just kind of opened up the door for some of the other kids.

Harris: What did you study at North Texas State?

Kimble: Voice and elementary education.

Harris: I see. Did you ever feel any sort of prejudice?

Kimble: Yes, in biology. We had maybe two or three hundred in one class, and we were in the "Pit," I guess, the auditorium, where the teacher would be there in the pit. I started getting phone calls, nasty phone calls: "You're flunking

the course, and you don't need to be going to North Texas." Okay, I let it go on for about two or three weeks, I guess, and it was getting close to exam time. It wasn't the end of the semester, but it was close to where they were having exams.

So I went and told the teacher. It was an assistant; it wasn't the main teacher. I told him that I knew it was some white boy, and he said, "How do you know?" I said, "By the voice." It was easy to detect. So, anyway, I don't even know how it stopped. But after I talked to him...I wasn't the only one. It was some more, and the ones that I talked to were the girls who lived in Denton, Denton girls. But we didn't find out who was doing it or that. All we knew was that it was white boys.

Harris: They were getting phone calls as well?

Kimble: Yes. And one girl was smart as a whip, and that was Dorothy Antoine. She was a Denton girl. She was getting calls.

Harris: Do you recall any other incidents?

Kimble: Well, there was one teacher at the time, and he was pretty good about covering up. But you could tell that underneath he was prejudiced.

Harris: How could you tell?

Kimble: By certain little ways he would act, you know, and some things he would say. It was a government class.

To this day, I get him...he was on the order of Mayor Ray Stephens--the mayor that we have here now (chuckle). He reminded me so much of him. I thought, after I met Ray, that that was the man, but I don't think it was. I don't know, but he reminded me so much of him. He looked like him.

Harris: Did he say things to you?

Kimble: No. In class he would say little things. I can't recall right off, but that stuck with me, you know, that it was different. But some of the teachers were very nice. The president that used to be at TWU, Dr. Huey, she formerly taught out there at North Texas. I had a class under her. I think it was either government or history. She was good. Then I had a music teacher who was fantastic. I don't know. I guess it was okay. On the campus, they never did bother you. You'd go in assembly, and nobody never did just right off say anything. Those phone calls were the only things that I had.

Harris: Were you allowed to eat on campus?

Kimble: Oh, yes, yes. You could do anything you wanted to.

Harris: Could blacks live on campus?

Kimble: At that time, most of them were living over here. They were all over here.

Harris: So they could not live on campus?

Kimble: Not at the beginning, they couldn't. And I don't remember

when we did (chuckle). It was such a smooth thing that we just went on into it. We didn't have too many...I don't remember any incidents--nothing but those little phone calls. It was the same way with my daughter, who got them when she was in high school--same type of calls.

Harris: How did the blacks that lived in this part of town get from here to the campus?

Kimble: Cars. We would take a carload every morning. My husband was going to school out there, too. These girls that lived across the street, we would take them. We would take a carload every morning. Then other kids would have their cars.

Harris: I heard that there was a cross burning incident that happened in about 1956 on the North Texas campus. Do you recall that incident?

Kimble: Yes, but I didn't see it. I just heard about it.

Harris: Tell me what you heard about it.

Kimble: It was in the paper, I think. I think that's what it was. All I know is that it happened. I wasn't there. I didn't get involved with it, so I really don't know.

Harris: Now you mentioned that you worked at North Texas State. What types of positions were open to blacks?

Kimble: Nothing but working in the kitchen and as maids and janitors.

Harris: Do you know anything about the desegregation of TWU?

Kimble: No, I don't. I went out there. I enrolled in a business

course out there, but it was at night, so I don't really know much about that.

Harris: Tell me about the Campus Theatre incident, if you recall that. This happened about 1961.

Kimble: The Campus Theatre on the square?

Harris: Yes. Do you recall that? They staged a stand-in at the theatre.

Kimble: Oh, college kids! Yes, I remember now. Well, I guess that's what broke it down. Yes, they did that more than once, I believe.

Harris: Did you know anyone who was involved in that?

Kimble: No. Most of them were college kids. Well, I think it was college kids. I don't know.

Harris: Tell me about your reaction to that incident.

Kimble: I was glad.

Harris: Why were you glad?

Kimble: Because that would mean we didn't have to sit up in the balcony and go in the back door (chuckle). We could go in the front door. At the time that I was a little girl, we would have to go up a little stairway going up to the balcony. And this was the only way we could go, and we could only go to either a midnight movie on a Saturday night. That's the way we would have to see the movies. But then after that, that broke down, we were able to go through the front door. So, yes, I was glad.

Harris: Were you able to go at other times of the day to see movies or just at the times you mentioned?

Kimble: Oh, we could go anytime, but it was up in this little balcony. Then at the midnight movie, that was the only time we could go--to a midnight movie. Then, finally, we could go to this little balcony with about three rows.

Harris: About how big was the balcony?

Kimble: I don't believe it was as large as this room.

Harris: How big is that?

Kimble: Three rows and maybe about twelve or thirteen feet to each row.

Harris: About twenty-five feet maybe?

Kimble: Probably. And that was it.

Harris: Were there certain restaurants that you were refused service in?

Kimble: Oh, all over town! We didn't go to restaurants. We could go to the back door and order a hamburger or a coke or something like that, but we didn't go through the front door.

Then after all of this was open to the blacks, or supposed to have been, my brother came home from the service, and we went over here on the...then it was the Fort Worth highway. I can't remember exactly where it was, I mean, the location, but it was going out like toward the Fort Worth highway. It was in town on Elm Street. That's

where it is--on Elm. Mister Frosty, I think it was. No, it wasn't. Anyway, we went over there to get a hamburger. We thought, "We can go up and drive up and get us a hamburger." Some places would let us. Okay, this girl came and took our order. It wasn't too long that she came back and said, "I'm sorry. We can't serve you." God, that liked to kill me! I was so angry. And there was nothing we could do but drive off. It wasn't long before that place ended up closed. After about a year or so, it went out of business.

Harris: Were there any specific restaurants that were especially bad?

Kimble: No. Now this group--this same group--the Interracial Women--during the time we were trying to integrate--would assign maybe two members to different restaurants, motels like the Holiday Inn, different businesses to eat. And we would go. Margaret Jones, one of the members, and myself went down to the Holiday Inn. We had perfect service, no trouble.

Harris: Did you go with one of the white members?

Kimble: No, no, just the two blacks. But this was part of the plan to break this down. It came from the Interracial Women. So we went, and I don't think anyone had any trouble.

Harris: No one was refused service?

Kimble: No.

Harris: Why do you think that was so?

Kimble: Well, things were beginning to level off then, and it had

already passed that everything would be integrated. So we ate. We didn't have any trouble. I felt uneasy--very uneasy--because that was my first time to go to the restaurant at the Holiday Inn. We ate and there was no trouble.

Harris: I have a listing of several restaurants here, like, Barlow's Cafe, the Ju-cy Pig, Little Apple, Little Dude.

Kimble: Well, I wouldn't go to any of those anyway (chuckle)! No!

Harris: Why do you say that?

Kimble: Oh, those weren't the types of places that I would like to go to.

Harris: What were they like?

Kimble: To me that's where the "goat ropers" hung out, and I wouldn't have felt comfortable being in those places.

Harris: Do recall if there were any demonstrations at any restaurants?

Kimble: I don't know because I didn't go to them.

Harris: You mentioned that you had been in the white sections of Denton.

Kimble: Been where?

Harris: In the white part of Denton on occasion. Did you visit white people in Denton?

Kimble: Yes, like, over there on Congress, where my auntie stayed, there were white neighbors. Yes, we played with the white kids over there. You know, the white kids would go in and play with kids.

But one Sunday we were over there in this creek branch that goes all the way through Denton. It was cement, and we could go down off in there and play. Somebody shot at us. We got out of there really quick! We were just kids. After that we didn't go back--not on a Sunday evening--down in there.

Harris: Do you recall any other incidents?

Kimble: No.

Harris: Tell me about the attitude of the white power structure toward blacks.

Kimble: Well, in other words, they "kept us in our place."

Kimble: I mean, they were nice. We all worked for them in their homes and things, but that was about it. We worked for them; we took care of their kids. That's about all. And there was some good white people, too; I mean, they were nice.

Harris: By "nice," what do you mean by that?

Kimble: They treated us nice. They weren't the mean-type that you'd work for. You could talk to them and feel comfortable talking to them. Well, they'd turn their house over to you, and that was it. My mother worked for some of the families for years--same families. I don't think they had been too bad because mother would not have been there.

Harris: How did the white power structure "keep you in your place?"

Kimble: All you did was work for them. Now that was about it.

They didn't open up any jobs for you, like, in their store and stuff. They didn't have any factories around. But that was about it. So they had their little thing, and you didn't belong to their organizations. We didn't go to their churches.

Harris: What kinds of jobs were open for blacks in Denton?

Kimble: Maids and janitors and shoeshine boys. Porters at the train station and porters at the hotel. But no clerks. There was nothing like that.

Harris: Who represented the white power structure to you?

Kimble: I don't really know. I guess the people that were over at the Denton Record-Chronicle, the store owners like Russells and Cravens. These were families that had been in Denton, I guess, all their lives.

Harris: Who were the most liberal of these people--of the white power structure?

Kimble: All of them were the same to me. See, I really didn't know just...all of them were about the same.

Harris: Describe to me their attitude toward desegregating the public facilities?

Kimble: I was not around them. Do you mean the families that had been here all the time--the whites?

Harris: Yes.

Kimble: I don't know because I wasn't around them. I didn't work for them, so I don't know.

Harris: After the group formed, do you know of any incidents where the black women's employers placed pressure on them because they were a part of this group?

Kimble: No.

Harris: No?

Kimble: Did anyone say that?

Harris: I recall that someone did, but I can't remember who. She couldn't think of specific things, so I wondered if you might have heard of any.

Kimble: Say that again.

Harris: I interviewed one person, and she thought there might have been some cases of that. She couldn't remember any specifics; it was just a vague recollection.

Kimble: Because we were members of this group?

Harris: Yes.

Kimble: I don't remember anything like that. But, see, I didn't work out, so I don't know; I mean, right at that time I wasn't working out. I remember when--I think--Euline Brock helped Linnie McAdams to get on at Moore Business Forms because at that time it wasn't...she was one of the first blacks to start working out at in the plant there. Then, later, maybe a year or two later--it wasn't long after that--Moore started opening up, and they started working at these different places.

Harris: Besides Linnie, were there others in the group that started getting positions like that?

Kimble: Not in the group. But in general it was the blacks. I knew quite a few that started working there--young girls--but they only let a few. I put in an application down there, but I never did hear a word--nothing. To me they would hire a few, you know, and just say, "Well, we did hire a few blacks." It was not like it is now. A lot of them work there now, you know, before they closed last summer. But at that time, a black here and a black there, you know, was hired to make it look good. That's what I would say (chuckle).

Harris: I'll ask you some questions just about the group itself. When did the group begin?

Kimble: That I don't know because, see, as I told you, I wasn't one of the originals. It was maybe two or three years later when I got into it.

Harris: When did you join?

Kimble: I don't know (laughter)! It was in the 1950s. It was about the middle of the 1950s, I guess.

Harris: Okay, do you know anything about how the group formed? Any of the background?

Kimble: They started meeting...I don't even know the ones who organized it. I don't know. Mrs. Hill was one of the original members. She's dead. But her daughter, Norvell Williams at the time--she's a Reed now and lives on Wood Street--probably would know. Catherine Bell said she was one of the original members.

When I got into it, we were going from home to home and meeting, and it would be like twenty or twenty-five members, white and black. We would have Christmas parties where we'd bring a gift, and then in the summer we would have a picnic in someone's back yard and bring a covered dish.

Harris: Have picnics for families?

Kimble: Yes, you could bring your family.

Harris: How did you hear about the group?

Kimble: Somebody invited me, I guess, or they sent me a letter.

I don't know. It's been thirty-something years ago! I don't know. They called me up. All I know is that I just started going. I think Pat Cheek was a member, and so was Ann Barnett. Ann Barnett taught my daughter music. It's coming back to me, but I don't remember what she looked like (chuckle)!

Harris: Do you recall any other members?

Kimble: Euline Brock, Trudy Foster, Carol Riddlesperger. There were two or three more. I can see their faces, but I can't remember their names. They belonged to First Methodist Church uptown. I see them occasionally, but I'm bad on names. I remember faces but not names.

Harris: Now was Norvell Williams a preacher's wife?

Kimble: No.

Harris: No? I've got her confused then.

Kimble: Her husband used to sing. He would sing at the country club, and whenever the white folks would have a big occasion, he

would sing and provide entertainment. He was a great entertainer.

Harris: How often were meetings held?

Kimble: I think once a month.

Harris: Was a meeting ever held at your house?

Kimble: Yes.

Harris: Do you recall if there were any officers in the club?

Kimble: Like I said, Trudy was an officer, and Mrs. Hill was an officer. I don't know whether Mrs. Hill was a secretary or something, but she was an officer. It seemed like Linnie was an officer. I don't know the others; I really don't. Someone had to have been in charge, but who I don't know.

Harris: Do you recall that there was any secrecy about the meetings?

Kimble: No, it was open to the public--anyone who wanted to join. That was to bring a better relationship among the blacks and whites. One used to be the president of the Missionary Society up there. She keeps her hair cut short, real short, and she was very outgoing, just jolly all the time. I don't even remember her name. You know, when you don't see these people...last time I saw them was about five years ago at a funeral. I know they are all here. There was a professor's wife, and he taught at North Texas. She stays on McCormick Street, and she's still living, but I don't remember her name, either. We went to a play or something up at North

Texas, and then we left there and went out to eat with Carol Riddlesperger and her husband and this other little lady and her husband. But really I don't remember their names.

Harris: Okay, we think the group started in the early 1960s, and I believe you said you were not one of the original members.

Kimble: No, I guess it was about two or three years later. Oh, Mrs. Simmons--she was a black lady--was a member. I don't know her. All I've ever known is "Mrs. Simmons." She was a member back then. Catherine Bell can tell you. Are you going to interview Catherine Bell?

Harris: I believe one of the other people in the class is.

Kimble: Catherine knows quite a bit about the beginning.

Harris: Do you recall the first meeting you went to?

Kimble: Yes.

Harris: Tell me about it.

Kimble: I think it was on Oak Street or Hickory Street. Everyone was cordial--nice atmosphere. I didn't feel ill at ease.

Harris: You did not feel ill at ease?

Kimble: No, I did not feel uneasy. In other words, I did not feel uneasy. They served at the meeting. I don't know what the meeting was about; I really don't. All I know is they were trying to establish a good relationship between the blacks and whites. Then after the meeting, they served coffee and cookies, I believe it was, or punch and cookies, something like that. I do remember that after each meeting,

we would all laugh and talk, sometimes thirty or forty minutes after the meetings were over.

Harris: What did you talk about with the whites?

Kimble: I don't know. We were all friendly. It wasn't no strain being there with them.

Harris: Do you recall whose house you were at?

Kimble: No, but it was somewhere on Hickory or Oak. I do now know whose house. It was along in there where the Evers house is, you know, where the old museum is.

Harris: Oh, yes.

Kimble: Well, it was in that area--somewhere over in there--because I remember I couldn't hardly find a parking space. I remember that.

Harris: How many people do you think were there?

Kimble: Oh, about twenty or twenty-five. There was a lot of people. Well, the living room where we were was full. That's all I remember.

Harris: Do you recall who was there?

Kimble: Willie Mae Bell, Catherine Bell, Mrs. Simmons, Mrs. Hill. Now these are the black people. Now I don't remember the whites because I didn't know too many of the white people. I guess Norvell Williams (now Reed) was there. Linnie was always there--Linnie McAdams. I don't know whether Lovie... no, Lovie Price was not in Denton at that time.

Harris: Lovie Price?

Kimble: That's about all I can remember. Oh, yes, Jewell James and Bessie Harden were there.

Harris: Did you know these black women?

Kimble: Yes.

Harris: Did they live in this neighborhood?

Kimble: Basically. Some stayed over in this part, and then some stayed where they called Solomon Hill. It's not too far from here. It's on the other side of the cemetery down there. That's where some of them lived. They call this southeast Denton, but that's part of southeast Denton, too. Basically, it's the same neighborhood.

Harris: Do you recall the next meeting you went to?

Kimble: All of them were about basically the same.

Harris: The same type of format at each meeting?

Kimble: Yes.

Harris: Do any stand out in your mind?

Kimble: Nothing but the picnics in the summer. One particularly was kind of like a pool party, and I remember Linnie getting in the pool. That's about the only one. The last one I remember we had, to kind of like call us back together after so many years, that was that Valentine party.

Harris: Do you know what year that was in?

Kimble: It had to have been in the 1970s, early 1970s. They weren't trying to reestablish the organization. They were just trying to kind of call us back together for a little

get-together. I don't even know whose house that was.

Harris: Tell me about it.

Kimble: Oh, it was nice. We had a sit-down dinner. Well, it was more of a dinner; it wasn't a luncheon. It was a dinner. Maybe there were about fifteen or sixteen of us there. We talked and we ate, and that's about it.

Harris: Can you recall who was there?

Kimble: No, I sure don't remember who was there. It wasn't at Trudy's house, but Trudy was there. I think Euline was gone to Turkey or somewhere at that time; I don't think she was there. Maybe Carol Riddlesperger was there. Mrs. Hill was there. And I'm sure that if Mrs. Hill was there, Norvell was there. That was her mother. It seems like I went with someone or someone went with me, but I don't remember. I remember what I wore, though.

Harris: Tell me what you wore.

Kimble: I had a blue knit suit on, trimmed in white--navy blue, I remember that.

Harris: I've heard that one of the last meetings had a fashion show. Do you recall that?

Kimble: No.

Harris: I think it was one that was perhaps out at the president's house at North Texas State. Do you recall any sort of meeting at his house?

Kimble: Yes, I do remember, but I didn't go. I remember hearing

something about it, but I didn't go. They did have something out there--I remember that--but I did not attend.

Harris: Tell me some more about the picnics you mentioned.

Kimble: We'd all bring covered dishes, and we'd sit around and talk, play games. They'd have games for the families. We'd eat. That was the biggest thing. You'd take covered dishes. There was plenty of food, all types of food. We'd sit and talk and eat for maybe two-and-a-half hours and then go home. We'd do that every summer. I don't remember if we had a Christmas party every Christmas, but I know we did have Christmas parties. That's all.

Harris: Do you know when the group ended?

Kimble: No. I guess it was probably in the 1960s. Like I said, they kind of called us back together in the 1970s--somewhere in the early 1970s, I believe it was--so it had to have been in the latter part of the 1960s.

Harris: Why do you think the group ended?

Kimble: Well, with me I was working. Different ones had their jobs, and their kids were beginning to grow up. Then we had other things, you know. We were able to do and go everywhere that we weren't able to go to before. We didn't have time. Everybody was busy.

Harris: The public schools desegregated about 1963. Do you recall your reaction to desegregation?

Kimble: I was a little worried about the children, you know,

wondering if they were going to be okay in a strange school. I was glad in one way, thinking about how they would get a better education. It was 1967 when my kids went, but it was 1964 or 1965, I think, when they first integrated the schools.

I wasn't completely happy with it. To me we had had some smart black people, and for them to have made it in the world, like they were making it, I thought it was a good education that we got up there. We weren't exposed to everything, you know, but to me it was good. So it wasn't no big thing for them to go to the schools out there--the white schools.

Harris: Could you tell me what happened to Fred Moore School?

Kimble: The state has students up there. I don't know whether they're doing classes. All I know is the State School has it, or they're in charge of it now. I think that school stayed empty for a while, too.

To me it was a shame that they had to bus our kids out with that school up there just standing. I thought that was terrible, and I still do. I still think that it could be an elementary school. I don't like this busing kids from one side of town to the other. I don't think that's a good idea.

Then another thing I don't like is that I don't think some of the white teachers take pains with our black kids.

I think they're missing out on a whole lot by not being in their own neighborhood and with their own black teachers. If they want to integrate, okay. But personally, I don't like it--not in that way, not the schools.

Harris: Did any of your children have trouble integrating?

Kimble: Yes.

Harris: Tell me about some of the problems.

Kimble: They didn't like it. Like I said, one of my daughters... those boys would call, saying that she's a "smart black nigger." She thought it was because she was smart, and they didn't like it. They kept calling, so finally my husband one night got the phone. It would always be late. He got to talking to these boys--kids--and he talked to them, and he found out who they were, why they were doing this. He asked them why. They said, "Because she's smart." They didn't like it. Their parents would be gone partying when they'd call. They didn't have anything else to do, so they'd call and harass us.

Harris: Did your children mention anything else?

Kimble: Well, from what they would say, some of the teachers would be prejudiced. They didn't take part in organizations, you know, like joining those clubs and things. They kind of stayed isolated. Eventually, things got a little better. Not much. My grandson's out there now. For kids that can't comprehend or learn, it's hard because they don't have

nobody to take up for them, to help them out. My kids are just lucky they were smart. They didn't have any trouble with the books.

Harris: When desegregation first occurred in 1963, the board of education said black students would be able to transfer into white schools if they wished. Do you recall your reaction to that?

Kimble: I didn't really care whether mine went or not. But they didn't have no choice; they had to go (chuckle).

Harris: Do you recall if any black children transferred to a white school at the very beginning?

Kimble: All of them had to go. When they went, they had to go. Didn't any one just go out on their own.

Children: Yes, they did, Mama. There was a whole bunch of them.
[Several voices]

Kimble: Oh, did they? They did.

Children: Yes. That was before we went. They went by choice. [Several voices]

Kimble: Oh, all right.

Harris: So there were some who went by choice.

Kimble: Yes. My children didn't. They didn't go until they had to go (chuckle)!

Harris: When did they have to go?

Kimble: 1967.

Harris: Were they bused to the school?

Kimble: Yes.

Harris: Tell me about some of the activities of your group.

Kimble: Well, the one that stood out most was when Trudy Foster was campaigning to get our streets paved. Now that was one of the best things that could have happened out of that group. That came out of that group. I can remember that she walked these streets getting signatures. We walked the streets getting signatures, and she finally put it over. We all worked together, but she was the main source. I guess in about two years, they started paving, and we had paved streets.

Harris: Tell me about the condition of the streets.

Kimble: Terrible! Muddy! When it would rain, they would be muddy, and it was hard to get out of your yard. But the worst part was when they were working on the streets. Oh, it was horrible. They had to tear up all the streets. Then it seemed like it was a long time...Minnie Thornton was a member. I remember we went to her funeral, and the streets over there in front of her church...

Harris: Was she black?

Kimble: Yes, she was a black lady. She was Bessie Harden's mother. She was a member. She was one of the original members. She was a cook out at North Texas--in a kitchen out there in one of the dormitories. Well, let me see. I'm not for sure whether she worked there or in a home. All of the

white people knew her because she was such a good cook. Very intelligent lady. Harve King was in admissions or something at NTSU, I thought. He just retired last year from out there. It was his mother. Harve King was Bessie's brother. It seems like he taught out there, too. Anyway, he just retired from North Texas.

Harris: How did Trudy Foster become interested in the street issue?

Kimble: I don't know. Oh, I guess she saw the needs of our streets. Then when she came over here to meetings and things...and if it would rain, she might get over here and get stuck. But all I know is that that was her project. She started working on it. Probably some of the ladies might have said something to her about it, too, but I don't know. All I know is that we were getting the streets paved.

Harris: Did all of the group help her with the project?

Kimble: Oh, yes, yes. But she was the main one that did the foot work.

Harris: Tell me how your group went about getting the streets paved.

Kimble: I never did go to the city council meetings. We had to get signatures, and we did that, and we gave them to Trudy. I guess she went to the city council because I know they had to approve of it. All I remember was walking the streets, getting signatures, and going to the meetings and hearing the progress reports, you know, about how they were coming and all. I don't remember the actual paperwork.

Harris: Why were you getting the signatures?

Kimble: I don't know. We had to get signatures to get the streets somehow. I guess it was to see if people really wanted it. It was something that she had to take to the city council because you don't get anything unless you go before them, so I guess that was it. We had to get the signatures of the homeowners so they could take them up there to the city council.

Harris: How many times did you have to get signatures?

Kimble: I don't know. I really don't. All I know is that I was walking (chuckle), and it was kind of like in the wintertime.

Harris: Do you know anything about the reaction of the city council?

Kimble: No, because I never did go to any of the meetings. I never did go to any of those. See, at that time I was working, and I don't know when they had them or anything. All I know is that she would come back to the meetings and tell us of the progress that was being made, and before we knew anything, they had bulldozers and all kinds of tractors and things working on the streets.

Harris: Was this related in any way to urban renewal?

Kimble: No. At that time I don't think there was any urban renewal.

Harris: Okay, do you recall any other activities of the group?

Kimble: Nothing that big. It was nearly just a get-together. That was the most outstanding thing--just the blacks and whites mingling and getting together.

Harris: Do you recall getting involved in any voter registration drives?

Kimble: Oh, yes, they did do that.

Harris: Were you involved in that?

Kimble: Well, in later years, yes, but not at that time. But, yes, that was a part of the group, too. It was one of the projects--getting voters, getting the people registered to vote.

Harris: How was that carried out?

Kimble: In the churches. They'd have tables set up in the church, and that's about it.

Harris: What was at the tables?

Kimble: The materials to register to vote.

Harris: Do you know who supervised that activity?

Kimble: I don't. I really don't. I know Catherine Bell worked-- she really did--because Catherine was deputized to register the people to vote.

Harris: Do you recall a jobs program that was a part of your group's activities?

Kimble: Yes, that was where they were trying to place the blacks in these places. That's how Linnie got on at Moore Business Forms.

Harris: Tell me some more about that.

Kimble: All I know was that they were trying to place blacks in these places, and she was one of the group. I remember her.

Like I said awhile ago, the others followed, you know, and started getting jobs at these places. But it stemmed from this group that she was the first black hired there.

Harris: Would employers come to the meetings?

Kimble: No, no.

Harris: How would you find out about the jobs?

Kimble: From Euline, I guess. Now this is hearsay; I don't know.

But Euline had Linnie go and fill out an application. Maybe she knew someone there to help her get on. But it stemmed from the organization.

Harris: Who supervised that activity?

Kimble: I don't know. I really don't know. Euline Brock helped Linnie to get on, so I guess she was in charge. She had to have been.

Harris: Do you recall any other of the members getting jobs because of the activities of the group?

Kimble: Well, let me see. Billie Mohair was a secretary at North Texas, and her sister Billie Harris was a secretary out there. It seems like Billie was a member of the group. But I think that kind of started things, you know. The white ladies in the group gave them an insight on where to go to apply for the jobs. We would not have known who to go see or where to go to apply if it had not of been for them to tell us where to go.

Harris: Do you recall any other activities of the group?

- Kimble: No. Probably when you leave, I'll think up some more things, but right now I can't (chuckle).
- Harris: What are your feelings and perceptions of the group in looking back from the 1980s?
- Kimble: It was good. It was something that we needed at that time.
- Harris: Why do you think you needed it then?
- Kimble: They helped us to break into places where we couldn't go, I mean, that we didn't have the insight to get to. So being in the group helped to kind of break down segregation.
- Harris: Do you think this group made a difference in the community?
- Kimble: Well, I guess it did. It wasn't that many that belonged. They had the option to belong or not. Like I said, it was open to the public. Anyone could have joined if they had wanted to.
- Harris: Did you advertise the meetings?
- Kimble: Word-of-mouth. They might have announced it in the churches that we were meeting, but I think it was mostly like I'd tell someone and they'd tell someone and like that: "You come go to the meeting with me."
- Harris: Did you form many lasting friendships?
- Kimble: Yes, like Euline. We still go to different meetings right now together. I see Carol Riddlesperger occasionally if we go up there to the white Methodist Church. I don't see Trudy that often, but when I do we talk about the old times.
- Harris: What was your life like when you became a member of the

group?

Kimble: It didn't change my life any. Is that what you mean?

Harris: Well, when I'm asking you that, I'm asking you, like, were you working when you became a member of the group?

Kimble: Yes, I was working.

Harris: And where were you working?

Kimble: At North Texas. I was working at that time, and I had children. It didn't change my life any (chuckle). It was just another thing added to my life. It wasn't no big deal.

Harris: Do you think the group was more for black women or white women?

Kimble: I think it was for both. They got something out of it, too. At least they seemed like they enjoyed it. I don't think they were looking down on us because we were black and they were trying to help us, because we really didn't need any help. But it was something just to bring us together. It was more of a get-together than to help us.

Harris: Can you think of anything that I might have missed that you would like to talk about?

Kimble: No. I think that now it would be a little harder to get a group like that to work together because now everybody's into everything, and we have so many interests now in life that we really don't have any need for a social thing like that. We're all still friends, see. It was a thing that

was needed for that time. At that time it was something that we all needed, and I think we all benefited from it. It did bring us closer together.

Harris: Well, I appreciate the interview, I think you've mentioned some important things.

Kimble: I hope I did. Right now it doesn't seem like I said anything that was worthwhile, but hopefully you can get something out of it.

Harris: I appreciate it.

Kimble: Thank you. I just thought of Martha Watson.

Harris: Was she another member?

Kimble: I think she was the one that I was trying to tell you about that was the president of the Missionary Society at First Methodist Church. I think that was Martha. I know Martha was her first name.

Harris: Thank you.

Kimble: I think someone took minutes.

Harris: You think that someone took minutes?

Kimble: I'm quite sure they took minutes.

Harris: Do you know where those minutes might be?

Kimble: No, I really don't, but if you talked to Norvell, she probably could tell you more. It seemed like Mrs. Hill was the secretary. I don't remember if it was in that or something else, but it seems like she was. During that time there was the P.T.A. and all this, too, and I kind of get

confused in there. Anyway, you can talk to Norvell. She can tell you a little bit more.

I told you about that Valentine party where we had the sit-down dinner. There is a little history about it. Have you contacted Trudy Foster?

Harris: Someone has interviewed her, yes.

Kimble: She was in the original group.