



Interview with Jacqueline “Jackie” Lawson

MOHAI, *Seattle on the Spot* Oral History Project, 2018.104.3

Narrator(s): Jacqueline “Jackie” Lawson

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Interviewer(s): Al “Butch” Smith, Jr.

Interview with Jacqueline “Jackie” Lawson, past President of the Black Heritage Society of Washington State about her memories and perceptions of Seattle photographer Al Smith and his photography of Seattle’s African American community in the Central Area. Jackie Lawson’s cousin Chris Jones joins the second part of the interview. Interview conducted by Al “Butch” Smith, Jr.

Notes: This interview was created jointly for MOHAI and the Black Heritage Society of Washington State (BHS), with each repository receiving a copy. The interview and transcripts were completed with support from 2015 & 2023 4Culture Collections Care Grants.

Keywords: Black history, Al Smith, Central District

Transcriber’s Note: This second interview takes place nearly two years later. Although the original transcriptions for these interviews were separate documents, we’ve combined them for this project for uniformity. Jackie Lawson’s cousin, Chris Jones, joined her for this part, as well as Howard Giske, MOHAI’s Curator of Photography. Areas of uncertainty have been marked with an asterisk (*).

[Statement begins]

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Jackie Lawson: ...jobs in that area.

Butch Smith: I’m going to have to do this over again, so—

Jackie Lawson: Good.

Butch Smith: I’m sorry, if that’s all right.

Butch Smith: This is Butch Smith. The date is Saturday, August 15. And I’m in the home of Jackie Lawson, past President of the Black Heritage Society of Washington State to facilitate an oral history interview with her addressing her memories and perceptions of Seattle’s preeminent African American photographer, Al Smith. Jackie, you and your husband Walter Lawson were



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friends with Al and Isabelle Smith throughout the ‘40s and the ‘50s here in Seattle when Seattle’s Black community was less than 15,000 in, in population. And Black people in those days, I’m told, tended to know one another. You worked closely with Al and-and MOHAI about fifteen years ago to document and describe over 800 of his photos as part of the Al Smith Neighborhood collection that still resides at the MOHAI facility. Tell me about your earliest memories of Al.

Jackie Lawson: I remember Al as a friend of my sisters’. I had two sisters, they were nine and eleven years older than I. And so I really didn’t know Al when—as well as my sisters did because they were the same age.

Butch Smith: He was about eight or ten years older than you.

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Jackie Lawson: Right. I got to know Al more when I was dating my husband-to-be, Walt Lawson. And I knew Al and Isabelle because we used to go over to the Smith’s house over on 21st across the street from the YWCA. I think the Smiths lived in a house on the side street. I guess it was Denny.

Butch Smith: Was this his mother at the time? Mrs. Smith?

Jackie Lawson: Mrs. Smith lived in—they lived in a house on Denny which was across the street from the house where Al and Isabelle—

Butch Smith: Oh.

Jackie Lawson: Lived.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: I think - I think that was Al and Isabelle. Or it may have been Jason—

Butch Smith: And Vera.

Jackie Lawson: And Vera—

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Who lived in that other house.

Butch Smith: I-I remember that house.

Jackie Lawson: Right. So, that’s where we used to go.



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Butch Smith: Wasn’t there a Black women’s sorority across the street, or sorority house?

Jackie Lawson: Oh, that was the YWCA.

Butch Smith: It was the YWCA.

Jackie Lawson: Phyllis Wheatley YWCA.

Butch Smith: And it was a-a big house.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

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Butch Smith: Yeah. Okay.

Jackie Lawson: If you looked in the phone book it would be called The Colored YWCA—

Butch Smith: Ah, okay.

Jackie Lawson: At that time.

Butch Smith: I don’t recall that. I’m glad you—

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Butch Smith: Reminded me.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Butch Smith: So, you-you remember them back then.

Jackie Lawson: Mm-hmm.

Butch Smith: And then, uh, how else do you remember—

Jackie Lawson: Well, we had—Walt was—was just before we were married. And I was actually living in Olympia. And I would every weekend come back home. And we’d end up over at Al and Isabelle’s or—and Jason and Vera’s house. And some other friends would join, maybe Kim Latchola ... uh, Ed-Ed Jones, Cadillac Jones.

Butch Smith: Les MacIntosh?

Jackie Lawson: Les Macintosh. Ed—was it Ed West? I forgot his first name.



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Butch Smith: And Jason Gales.

Jackie Lawson: Jason Gales. So that was in the middle-middle and late ‘40s.

Butch Smith: How about later ‘40s and into the ‘50s when he was taking photographs down on Jackson Street of the-the different bottle clubs?

Jackie Lawson: Well, that was an interesting time for me because my husband by that time had joined the Seattle Police Department. And I had also become a mother. So, I was not a part of the club scene, so to speak. So, all I would know is what I had heard or what my friends had-had

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talked about. I didn’t know anything about the clubs. I’d heard of them. But not involving Al and his photography.

Butch Smith: Well, tell us what you heard. What was the hearsay that you picked up secondhand?

Jackie Lawson: There were a lot of places where you were not supposed to go as a young bride, which I was. My group had started—my, my group of girlfriends, we’d started a bridge club. We called it the Idle While’s Bridge Cub – Club, because most of us were not working. And after our bridge club meetings sometimes we would kind of sneak out to different places. One night, I remember, we went to Airs. And this was a no-no place. It was a bar. I know that it was right around the corner from Sessions Club. And I knew where the clubs were but never went in any of them. One evening after my husband had I had been married a couple of months or so, we went with—they took me—Walt and Kim Latchola took me to the Black and Tan. And I was so thrilled. And there was Princess Zenobia doing her ... um

Butch Smith: Her thing.

Jackie Lawson: Her thing.

Butch Smith: [Laughing]

Jackie Lawson: Her modern dance. I got to meet Princess Zenobia later. Maybe we’ll talk about her.

Butch Smith: Do you want to talk about her now?

Jackie Lawson: Well, yes. This was like, thirty, forty, fifty years later. And I was at one of my club meetings and this young man came up, James Smith. And he said, “I hear you’re interested

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in—you were interested in—” Um, what’s her name? Princ-Princess Zenobia! And he says, “You want to go meet her?” And I said “Sure!” So he took me over to her house. And she was cooking something, I don’t know what she was cooking, but they were going to have a little picnic or something. And I started talking to her and I—it was almost like an interview. And as a genealogist I was never without my tape recorder. So I said, “Would you mind if I went out in my car and got my tape recorder while—and taped you while we were talking?” And she said, “No, not at all.” So I had a nice little taped interview with Zenobia. And got to know her as a person and not just an exotic dancer.

Butch Smith: Does—did she remember at all any of the photo sessions that he was involved with, or?

Jackie Lawson: No. We weren’t—

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: We didn’t get into that. We were talking about her and her life in Portland as a—sort of a nightclub owner.

Butch Smith: Mm-hmm. And was she a resident up here? Or was she just visiting?

Jackie Lawson: Yes. She had a—she had a lovely home overlooking Lake Washington up in the Beacon Hill, that way.

Butch Smith: Well, uh—

Jackie Lawson: Mount Baker area.

Butch Smith: He-he took several photos of her.

Jackie Lawson: Yes.

Butch Smith: Uh, and uh, they were recently a part of the group of photos that the Wing Luke Museum—

Jackie Lawson: Oh. Is that right?

Butch Smith: Showed at an exhibition about a year or so ago. So that’s tremendous information.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. She did give me a-a copy of a newspaper clipping where she—well, actually she gave me a poster inviting people to whatever club she was working at at the time. And the photographs may well have been something Al—probably were something Al took.



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Butch Smith: Do you have any of those photographs?

Jackie Lawson: No. I donated them—

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Butch Smith: Oh.

Jackie Lawson: To Black Heritage Society Collection.

Butch Smith: Okay. Okay. Well, tell us, did he ever talk to you about photography? You-you mentioned that you were interested in photography while you were growing up. And he-he was older than you. Did you ever happen to have an opportunity to discuss photography with him at all?

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. Well, actually it was in-in much later years. I did help him with, as you had said, identify—I got a group of people together to help identify some of the folks that were in his-his—part of his collection. And he knew I was interested in photographs. So he did say, “Since you’re a would-be photographer, you should start now going around the neighborhood—Central Area—and take pictures of some of the houses and the buildings and the businesses because these things will soon be gone.”

Butch Smith: When was this, Jackie?

Jackie Lawson: This would have been in the ‘80s.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. When I came back. Or ‘90s ... no. Eighties to ‘90s, in that era.

Butch Smith: Okay. Anything else that comes to mind? I know you spent a day a week with different members of the community that you helped identify to spend time with Howard Giske, the Curator of Photography at the Museum, to develop this collection, Al Smith’s Neighborhood. Do you recall anything from those sessions that you want to - want to highlight?

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. I-I guess it was Howard that wanted to get the groups - group together. So, I called on probably ten lady friends that I had known for years, and that I knew Al and probably had visited some of the clubs and may have been part of the photographs—his photograph collection. And each week we got together for two or three hours with Al and Howard and a typist using a computer and we just discussed the pictures. And it would bring back a lot of old memories for those that had actually been to those places or been part of the events that were in the pictures.

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But I’ve always been one to love old pictures and try to identify folks. So we did that. And I-I’m not sure how many—almost 1,000 pictures, I think, that we identified so that MOHAI could make negatives and have them available for people, for the public.

Butch Smith: Anything else that you can recall regarding how he went about doing his photography or the particular topics that he decided he was interested in? Does—do you recall anything along those lines?

Jackie Lawson: Oh, I know one thing. I was also part of the, um, R.O.O.T.S Committee—R.O.O.T.S Group founders. And we had, of course, the picnics every year at one of the beaches. And Al was always there with his camera slug around his neck. And he—I know he took thousands of pictures at those picnics. But if you ever wanted to know who Al Smith was, you’d just say “That tall man over there with the camera.”

Butch Smith: [Chuckles] How would you describe him as a man? His personality, appearance, his interest? How did he behave in public with his camera?

Jackie Lawson: Well, I - I’ve always been kind of amazed at somebody that seems so quiet and shy that he could capture so much. Making friends with his camera, and friends, period. I didn’t think that, uh—I wondered how he could - he could be aggressive enough to get pictures of people like, again, Madam Zenobia, and, uh, but even the celebrities that he has photographs of. Because he was very, very quiet. And he just sort of went his way.

Butch Smith: It-it seemed to me, as his son growing up, that the camera was almost a ticket into any place he wanted to go. He seemed to—I don’t want to say hide behind the camera, but the camera seemed to allow him to overcome his, his shyness. He was a very quiet person.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. It reminded me of something that my husband said—my husband was a policeman—and I used to—he had to be out late, or work the night shift and I always said, “Well, Walt just can’t get too far because he has his policeman’s uniform.” And Walt would say, “You know, that uniform is a passport.” So, I think Al felt the same way. And it was. It was—with him having the camera, he didn’t have to go up and talk to people. They could—he could show them who he was. And he wasn’t just somebody with a camera. He was a photographer. And that was his introduction.

Butch Smith: What do you think motivated him to take pictures the way he did?

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Jackie Lawson: I’m not sure, but I know he motivated me just as I mentioned about—he did tell me that since I was into photography I should be doing this with my camera. And, indeed, I have a collection of all the houses—the big houses on 24th Avenue, from Madison almost over to Union that I’ve taken because of Al. And I know who lived in those houses back in the years. I’ve taken pictures of all of the buildings in the East Madison District, many of them that are not here anymore. Many of them that are - that are being built over.

Butch Smith: Do you recall the years that, approximately, that you took those photos?

Jackie Lawson: Umm ... I—let’s see. When I came back It would have had to have been the ‘90s.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Early 2000s, when I came back to Seattle.

Butch Smith: Al was known for always having his camera and—with him, unless he was working as mail carrier which was his day job. Why do you think he spent so much of his free time taking photos here in Seattle?

Jackie Lawson: I think for the same reason I did. Because he-he is—he was a historian. And I think the way that he wanted to preserve history was to have pictures. And that’s very important. The same thing is important to me.

Butch Smith: Can you recall any stories about him and his photography? Do any particular memories of him come to mind? Community events, local jazz club, the Senior Citizens Club?

Jackie Lawson: Actually I-I can’t. I wasn’t a-a member of the group—of the people that went to the nightclubs, as I said. I only went to those—to two. And my husband was with me. And it was a quick—

Butch Smith: You-you were the—you were the little sister?

Jackie Lawson: I was the little sister. I was the little sister.

Butch Smith: [Laughs] What would you say from-from knowing him, growing-growing up with him, and also from your experience with him in-in his work and how it’s been highlighted by the

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Black Heritage Society and other organizations in the Black community. What would you say is his legacy here in Seattle?

Jackie Lawson: Again, I would say “Preserve the history, because it’s not here for long.”

Butch Smith: What is it about his photos that are special to you?

Jackie Lawson: I love that most of his photos are not strictly posed. And I think that getting, um—they’re not snapshots, because Al was taking photographs. I take snapshots.

Butch Smith: They were more action oriented, more, um ... some people would say candid?

Jackie Lawson: I’d say realistic.

Butch Smith: Realistic. Okay. Not staged in any way?

Jackie Lawson: No. No. Not at all. Except for weddings and that kind of thing.

Butch Smith: And coupled with what you mentioned earlier about his ability even though he personally appeared to be a shy man, a quiet man, his ability to—I’ll use the word, aggressively approach people and take photos really without asking permission and getting away with it. Did you observe any of that?

Jackie Lawson: I’m afraid not.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: I’m afraid not.

Butch Smith: Did you observe him—

Jackie Lawson: I just observed the results of his aggressiveness.

Butch Smith: He, he seemed to-to—by aggressive I mean he seemed to—even though he was shy, with that camera, he didn’t let that hold him back from approaching people that might have been celebrities or anybody for that matter.

Jackie Lawson: No. Not as you can tell from—as a result of his collection.

Butch Smith: Anything else you want to add, Jackie?

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Jackie Lawson: No. But, uh—Al, I had some good times with him because I would go over there and—over to the house on 25th. And we’d sit there and have coffee, ice cream. Al had—oh, I know our favorite was quick – cookie – crackers and cheese. He had always had delicious cheese. And so we would eat crackers and cheese. And then very carefully look through his photograph collection. Always had to have your gloves on.

Butch Smith: [Laughs] Well, thank you very much, Jackie. It’s a real pleasure to interview you and thank you for inviting me into your home. And we’ll certainly be in touch about this as it- as it progresses down to the exhibit we’re going to have.

Jackie Lawson: Good. It’s a pleasure, Butch. And I’ll let you know about other people as I think of them.

Butch Smith: Thank you very much.

[End of first audio file]

[Second file begins]

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Butch Smith: We couldn't recall, Howard, uh, when she was involved with the original MOHAI, uh, exhibit of, uh, my dad's work—

Howard Giske: Oh, yeah, that was a terrific—yeah.

Jackie Lawson: I don't even remember.

Butch Smith: And-and, she was trying to remember the dates, and I couldn’t remember the dates. They were like, ten or fifteen years ago, wasn’t it?

Howard Giske: Yeah, yeah. It was.

Jackie Lawson: But are you sure I was - I was here?

Howard Giske: You were here. Now, here's—here was the thing that was—

[Audio is turned off for production talk]

Butch Smith: Two, three, we’re on.



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Howard Giske: Oh, okay. Hi, I'm Howard Giske, um, Photo Curator at MOHAI. We are here today doing an interview with, um, Jacqueline Lawson, Jackie Lawson. Um, around the table is myself, Jackie—Jackie, could you say a couple words just so we have a—

Jackie Lawson: Yes. Hi Howard, it's good to see you again.

Howard Giske: Good to see you too, always, always. And talking to her with a lot of questions is Al Smith, Jr., Al "Butch" Smith, Jr., the son of the photographer, Al Smith. Butch, could you just say hello?

Butch Smith: Hello.

Howard Giske: Okay. And then on sound, and also asking some questions, is Chris Jones. Chris, you want to say hi?

Chris Jones: Hello. I'm a distant cousin of Jacqueline Lawson and pleased to be here with you today.

Howard Giske: Great. Well, this is March 15, 2017. And I'll just say, just take it away, Butch, and we'll—we'll get to listen.

Butch Smith: Well, good morning, Jackie.

Jackie Lawson: Good morning, Butch. Good to see you again too.

Butch Smith: Nice to see you. Could you tell us what the date and place of your birth was?

Jackie Lawson: I was born in Seattle, the fourth of April, 1928.

Butch Smith: And would you spell for us your full name?

Jackie Lawson: Jacqueline, J-A-C-Q-U-E-L-I-N-E. Middle name Eva, E-V-A. Maiden name Alexander, A-L-E-X-A-N-D-E-R, and married name Lawson, L-A-W-S-O-N.

Butch Smith: And your parents, do you recall the date and place of their birth?

Jackie Lawson: My mother was born December 10th—forgot the year. It's 1890 ... 80—oh, 89, I think it was.

Butch Smith: And what was her name?

Jackie Lawson: Irene Eva Harvey.



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Butch Smith: And where was she—

Jackie Lawson: She was born in—

Butch Smith: Where was she born?

Jackie Lawson: In Seattle.

Butch Smith: In Seattle, okay, and what about your dad?

Jackie Lawson: Daddy is Ernest Alexander, no middle name. And he was born in Paces Count—Paces, which was in Halifax County, Virginia.

Butch Smith: Okay. And when—do you recall when he came to Seattle?

Jackie Lawson: Well, Dad was in and out of Seattle. He was in the Navy, so he was in and out of Seattle—actually Bremerton, the Bremerton area. And I think he probably settled here—they were married in 1916. He probably settled here in 19—maybe ‘14.

Butch Smith: Okay, okay. So he was here living—both your parents were here living through the ‘20s and the ‘30s.

Jackie Lawson: Yes.

Butch Smith: Yeah. Okay, and how about you? You've been living in Seattle all your life.

Jackie Lawson: Right. Mm-hmm.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Well, with a couple of times off.

Butch Smith: And where did you live in Seattle?

Jackie Lawson: My actual address was 415 29th Avenue. It was North at the time. I think it's East now, which is in the Madison Valley district.

Butch Smith: And you knew Al, and probably your parents knew him too—or possibly your parents knew him. And I know your brother, Don, and-and Al were-were good friends.

Jackie Lawson: Mm-hm, they were.

Butch Smith: And what-what would you—or how would you—how do you recall your relationship with him? How did you happen to know him?

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Jackie Lawson: Well, actually Al was my sister's age. I have two sisters who—had two sisters who were nine and eleven years older than I. And Al and Vera, his sister, were close friends of my sisters. I think—didn't Vera—didn't they go to Catholic school?

Butch Smith: They did.

Jackie Lawson: Uh-huh.

Butch Smith: Yeah—

Jackie Lawson: And—

Butch Smith: Immaculate.

Jackie Lawson: Dorothy and my sisters were going to Garfield at-at the same time, but they were very close friends.

Butch Smith: Okay. And, um, do you have any particular early memories of him?

Jackie Lawson: Not early memories of him. I started thinking about Al—[coughs] excuse me—I think about Al more with his camera.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: And I was a kind of a camera nut. I learned how to use a—I forgot the name of it. What's the name of a camera?

Howard Giske: Kodaks?

Jackie Lawson: Probably so.

Howard Giske: No? Yeah?

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Howard Giske: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: Old faithful. And would get advice from Al on what pictures to take and he was—wanted to make sure that somebody followed him in taking pictures of Seattle, Seattle homes, Seattle businesses, Black businesses, Black homes.



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Butch Smith: Mm-hm, mm-hm, mm-hm. So, you did have conversations with him on-on occasion about photography? I know through your work with the Black Heritage Society you met with him frequently.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah, umm I would go over to Al—I think my interest was because Al had so many pictures. And I like to look at old snapshots and see what's in the background, and his photography allowed me to do that. I-I don't know why I was so interested, but I was. That's what I did.

Butch Smith: How would you describe him, his personality, his appearance, his interests?

Jackie Lawson: Well, all—Al was all photographs, so that's all I—one of the things that he—one of the photographs—group of photographs that he took that I've never seen—and maybe when MOHAI gets into looking at slides—and that was the attendance, or attendees, at my husband's funeral. I never did see those. So someday we'll get around to looking at those.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Um, I-I always noticed Al at mainly the R.O.O.T.S picnics.

Butch Smith: How did - how did you observe him behaving in public with his camera, say at the R.O.O.T.S picnics and—

Jackie Lawson: Oh he was—

Butch Smith: Other places?

Jackie Lawson: Very positive and jovial and-and always trying to get people to-to pose in certain ways.

Butch Smith: Did he ask permission to take pictures or did he just?

Jackie Lawson: Not that I remember.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Nobody—

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Needed—

Butch Smith: In those days?

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Jackie Lawson: We—Al didn't need permission.

Butch Smith: He didn't need permission.

Jackie Lawson: No. Everybody knew Al—

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: And his camera.

Butch Smith: Okay. What do you think motivated him to take pictures?

Jackie Lawson: Probably the same thing that motivated me. It was just a-a good hobby that turned into something that kind of took over his life. And I would've done the same if I'd had a *little* bit more experience.

Butch Smith: Why do you think he spent so much time in his free time taking photos here in - here in Seattle?

Jackie Lawson: He wanted to preserve-preserve the history of—not necessarily Blacks in Seattle, but preserve the history of buildings, events, weddings, anything, but to preserve that history in some way. And what better way than visually?

Butch Smith: Can you recall any stories about Al and his - and his photography?

Jackie Lawson: Not particularly. I—

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: I really can't. I'm sorry.

Butch Smith: Okay. Do any particular memories of him come to mind? Community events, local jazz clubs, uh, R.O.O.T.S picnics, uh

Jackie Lawson: Umm Well, one of the things that surprised me was—when we started looking at his photographs—at how much he had relating to jazz, um, venues? Is that the word I want?

Butch Smith: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

Jackie Lawson: And I don't—again, I don't know why I got so interested in him, but, uh, I-I continue to have interest in ... things.

Butch Smith: Okay. What would you say is his legacy here in Seattle?



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Jackie Lawson: His legacy was to—again, it had to do with historical places and events, and to leave as much, um, proof ... I guess that's the word I want—of the things that had gone on in Seattle, that continue to go on in Seattle.

Butch Smith: In the sense of documenting?

Jackie Lawson: Yes. Thank you. That's the word I want. To document what—that Seattle did live, and still lives.

Butch Smith: What is it about his photos that are special, or, uh, of—meaning, particular meaning to you?

Jackie Lawson: Again, my personal interest is the historical significance of the photographs, snapshots especially. I'm-I'm really not too interested in post-studio-type photographs, but I like the—oh, I can go crazy over snapshot - snapshots.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Just love to.

Butch Smith: Yeah, yeah.

Howard Giske: Do those bring things to life in a different way—

Butch Smith: It does.

Howard Giske: Do you feel? Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: It does. And I keep telling people to, you know, look at those snapshots. I think one of the things that hurts me about photographs that people took in the past was cutting out the outline of individuals, you know, the faces and-and forgetting about what's in the back. And the background is so important, because you don't-don't know what's back there. I think—

Butch Smith: Captured-captured a moment in-in history?

Jackie Lawson: Right. I think I had mentioned to someone the other day where I had a snapshot that—not one of Al's, but it could've well been—and in the background, way in the background was the old Sojourner Truth home, which, of course, is take—demolished years ago. And we have a—I've seen a painting that someone painted from their memory, and it doesn't look anything like what the Sojourner Truth—

Butch Smith: What you remembered?

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Jackie Lawson: Home really looks like, but here we have a photograph of it.

Howard Giske: I don't know anything about the Sojourner Truth home. Could you tell me a little more about—

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Howard Giske: Why that's important?

Jackie Lawson: It was, uh, it was located on 23rd—about Marion, I think—a couple of blocks—whatever direction that is—of Union, East Union.

Howard Giske: Okay. Yeah.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: And it was a home for single women. It was a religious home. Like they weren't nuns, but they were religious sisters or mothers, or whatever they call them in the church. And I know he had quite a few that lived there from the First AME Church that actually reside—lived there.

Butch Smith: Single women?

Jackie Lawson: Mm-hmm.

Butch Smith: Is that building still there?

Jackie Lawson: Is the—the what?

Butch Smith: Is it still there?

Jackie Lawson: Oh, no, no, no, no.

Butch Smith: No? Okay.

Jackie Lawson: It was torn down years ago.

Butch Smith: Oh, okay. Okay. Can you think of anything else about, um, Al that you want to add?

Jackie Lawson: It was just his-his knowledge. I just wished that we had-had written more. I don't suppose Al would've liked us to write on the back of his photographs, but it would've been nice if he had written more on—

Howard Giske: Yes [chuckles].



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Jackie Lawson: On the photographs, you know, where they were, who these people were, because trying to pick up—pick things out of his head when he's not here, it's kind of difficult.

Butch Smith: We can relate to that.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Howard Giske: Mm-hmm.

Jackie Lawson: Mm-hmm. I know.

Chris Jones: So, so, Jackie, if I can ask you a question. If you could kind of take us back on your recollection from your perspective, growing up in Seattle, some of the—maybe the highlights or some of the—the group activities that stand out in your mind like the Mardi Gras, or the jazz clubs—kind of take us back, you have—through your eyes as a little girl seeing how Seattle was, places you were kind of restricted to go in to and places where you gathered with your friends, and then as you got older, maybe how people gathered in the jazz clubs, but can you kind of take us back through Jackie's eyes and tell us what it was like as a reflection of some of these snapshots that we have through Al's eyes, but the group picnics—

Jackie Lawson: I was restricted from everything.

Chris Jones: Oh!

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. I remember a lot, and I think that my memory is based on my sisters'—my two sisters again, especially Dorothy, the older one—from their experiences. And then I just took an interest in—in finding out about—and I don't know how I got into nightclubs—but I got deeper and deeper, and my dad didn't—the law in my house—I was the youngest—is that I would not date until I was eighteen, which really hurt my feelings, because my sisters were going out when they were fifteen and sixteen, but I had to wait. And then my brother, he was going out, of course. But actually, I didn't miss much. When I got—when I was married, is when I really started learning about the various nightclubs. My husband was a Seattle policeman, so I had more restrictions on places that I could go, or should go, or shouldn't go, but he did allow me—he did take me to—I went to the Black and Tan once. I went to the Sessions once, the rocking Chair, so I have been to those places, and the, um, union ... what do they call it, the union—the one down on 13th and

Butch Smith: Black and Tan?

Jackie Lawson: No, the—it

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Howard Giske: The Basin?

Jackie Lawson: No.

Howard Giske: No? Okay. All right.

Jackie Lawson: No, the—the Black Musicians Union. The building—

Butch Smith: Oh!

Howard Giske: Oh.

Butch Smith: Oh sure.

Howard Giske: Right, right, right.

Jackie Lawson: On 13th and—

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Whatever that street was. We went there once. He also took me to a place I bet nobody knew about. It was out on Highway—it was out on Empire Way. And I don't know if you recall, or if you know, when you leave Seattle, leave town, or whatever, and you're going out Empire Way towards Renton, there's a street that is to the right that goes to the horse race—or what was it called?

Butch Smith: Long Acres.

Howard Giske: Long Acres.

Jackie Lawson: Long Acres.

Butch Smith: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: And you turn to the right to go to Long Acres. Well, across the street from that turnoff, down there in the woods somewhere [laughs], was a white house. I'll never forget it, it was a white building, and actually it was some kind of a nightclub. Do you—have you heard of anything? And we went in there. He took me in there once with his friend, Ken Latchola. And I don't really remember too much about it, except that we had to go behind the bar, and then through a door. And we were in—probably gambling, because it was right near Long Acres—but it was another nightclub. And I'd like to someday find out what the name of that was and find out more about it.



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Butch Smith: I haven't seen any trace of it in Al's pictures, but like you say, he—

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Butch Smith: Didn't identify them, so we might be looking at it and not know.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. It was a white-white house, or white building, that kind of sat down in the tules, in the woods. The house might—it might still be there. But anyway, nightclubs—they said I went to all of these places at least once. There was another one on 14th and Yesler. It was called Heirs*.

Butch Smith: Were they exciting? Were they, uh?

Jackie Lawson: No [chuckles].

Butch Smith: No?

Jackie Lawson: I couldn't imagine—couldn't really understand why anybody would bother, except you could go there and drink, you know.

Chris Jones: Right.

Jackie Lawson: I did manage to see Zenobia, who is—

Butch Smith: The dancer.

Jackie Lawson: Yes. And, and that's another story, because I had an opportunity to go over and meet her.

Butch Smith: I think we have some photos of her.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Butch Smith: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: And I interviewed her. In the interviews, I don't know if everybody—even if our team knows—that the interview was right back in the—

Howard Giske: Oh good, on tape then?

Jackie Lawson: On tape.

Howard Giske: Yeah.

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Jackie Lawson: Mm-hmm.

Howard Giske: Oh that's good to hear.

Jackie Lawson: And then I transcribed it too.

Howard Giske: Oh, good for you. Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: Anyway—

Butch Smith: During the—

Jackie Lawson: Oh.

Butch Smith: During the '40s and the—in the '50s here, the Black population increased dramatically from just a little under 5,000 in 1940 to well over 45,000 in 1960, so there was a dramatic increase in the number of Black people coming into the Central Area. And as an old-timer, meaning that your family goes back before 1940, as-as Al and his family also went back before 1940, what do you recall it was like as, uh, so many newcomers began to come in to the, um, Black community in the Central District? For example, what was community social life like as a - as a young person when, when you were coming up?

Jackie Lawson: I didn't—my group, as far as I know, didn't notice any ill effects or have any bad senses about new people coming in. We would hear our elders talk—what was that one they would say—oh, handkerchief heads.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: And, of course, they are using that for Muslims now, I guess.

Butch Smith: Sure.

Jackie Lawson: I don't know.

Butch Smith: Sure.

Jackie Lawson: But there was, uh ... I don't remember them using the word sharecropper.

Butch Smith: I was gonna ask, do you recall—

Jackie Lawson: I don't remember that. No.

Butch Smith: That-that term sharecropper? I heard that term—



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Jackie Lawson: I heard it, but I didn't remember.

Butch Smith: Coming out a little bit. Yeah, yeah.

Jackie Lawson: I remember the first time I heard the word nigger. And I was shocked, because—this has nothing to do with that, I'll get back to this—but when I was in grade school, I was a girl—patrol girl, where we carried the flag and let the little kids go across.

Butch Smith: Were you at Horace Mann?

Jackie Lawson: No, Longfellow—

Butch Smith: Longfellow. Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Which is Edmond Meany now.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: So I had a little friend who lived down in the valley with me, a little white girl, and we would walk together, because we were both patrol girls. Then as we're going up Madison Street, she turned—she was a little ahead of me—and she turned around and she says, "Why is it you get mad when people call you nigger?" And I looked at her like—I-I didn't even know what the word meant. And I had—I don't think I'd ever heard it before—

Butch Smith: How old were—

Jackie Lawson: But I knew it was a bad word.

Butch Smith: How old were you?

Jackie Lawson: Probably ten—

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Maybe eleven—

Butch Smith: Okay.

Butch Smith: Ten. But, you know, it wasn't a word that was thrown around. And she was someone that I had known for years, and so—I just got mad at her, because I know it was a bad word. That's all, just an incident.

Butch Smith: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.



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Jackie Lawson: Yeah—

Chris Jones: So are you—

Jackie Lawson: Yeah, the life of Jackie.

Chris Jones: So, Jackie, you stated you grew up on 29th.

Jackie Lawson: Mm-hmm.

Chris Jones: And so, my family grew up on 28th. I'm just wondering, location-wise, this was all by Washington Park, 29th and Valley.

Jackie Lawson: Oh.

Chris Jones: And, yeah, and you had the Buchanan Laundromat. You had the stores on Madison there. There was that - there was that little business area.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Chris Jones: So I'm just wondering whereabouts on 29th, as relation to those business areas, your family was at that time. Do you recall?

Jackie Lawson: We lived on the good side of 20—of East Madison. You lived on the other side [laughs].

Chris Jones: I-I understand.

Jackie Lawson: No. No, I don't mean that at all—

Chris Jones: No, I, I—

Jackie Lawson: Because my-my-my mother's sister and her-her husband and children lived very close to your family on that side of Madison. Now, is that the - is that the east side? No.

Chris Jones: That would be the north side of Madison.

Jackie Lawson: You lived on the north side.

Chris Jones: Right.

Jackie Lawson: And we lived on the south side.

Chris Jones: Okay.



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Jackie Lawson: Apparently, yeah, because we lived between Republican and Harrison.

Chris Jones: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah, because my aunt and uncle, I think they lived on Valley, up the hill from you.

Chris Jones: What were their names?

Jackie Lawson: Wright.

Chris Jones: Wright. I don't recall them.

Jackie Lawson: Charlie Wright was my—in fact, he's still living. He's—Charlie is close to 100.

Chris Jones: Wow. Do you remember the family names on Valley? The Galloways, the Barfields—the Joneses were closer up to 23rd—the Walkers?

Jackie Lawson: Oh, there were some Lawsons down there.

Chris Jones: The Warings?

Jackie Lawson: No, not Lawson. My brother-in-law's—my brother-in-law's mother-in-law and father-in-law lived—I think they lived on the same block as your family, just around the corner, on that same block. I forgot their names though.

Howard Giske: Yeah, another question, talking about geography, um, I used to live a block or two off Madison also. And it interested me talking with people about how do you define the Central District? And everybody has a little bit different idea of what those boundaries would be. You want to take a shot at it, Jackie?

Jackie Lawson: Yes.

Howard Giske: Okay [laughs].

Jackie Lawson: Because I have - I have argued with people about a couple of things. Now, if you talk about Madison, there's Madison and East Madison.

Howard Giske: That's—

Jackie Lawson: Okay.

Howard Giske: A difference, yeah, yeah.



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Jackie Lawson: That, that's one thing.

Howard Giske: It still is.

Jackie Lawson: And then when you talk about—after you leave, say, 23rd, you're going down the hill, so when you go first go down the hill and you get on the level, that's Madison Valley.

Howard Giske: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: And then when you keep on going, you're going up a little hill, by Broad—Broadmoor?

Howard Giske: Mm-hmm.

Jackie Lawson: Broadmoor. And then you go over and down, then you're in Madison Park.

Howard Giske: Right.

Jackie Lawson: So that's—I—and as far as the Central District, umm, I—of course, I've expanded my, my view of it—it used to be, you know, the Valley and—what are the other streets on that side?

Howard Giske: You have Ward.

Jackie Lawson: Aloha.

Chris Jones: Aloha.

Howard Giske: Aloha—

Jackie Lawson: Aloha.

Chris Jones: Yeah.

Howard Giske: War-Ward.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Chris Jones: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: The Ward.

Howard Giske: The Montlake.



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Jackie Lawson: Yeah. Before, before you start going down to Motley, that—whatever that is up there.

Chris Jones: Prospect.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. That would be part of the Central District to me. And because of where—where I was going to school, and raised, and ran around, I never thought about Jackson and Yesler as being part of the Central District, but I guess it is. I mean, that's where a lot of us lived. And one of the reasons that we might've said—you haven't asked this, but I was going to say that we settled—so many settled in the Yesler area, is because of the, um, the railroads, for one thing, because a lot of, of our men were employed on the—

Chris Jones: Borders on the

Jackie Lawson: Yeah, on the railroad, and then the boats too. A lot of our young men worked on merchant marine, and they would get off the boat, and then they'd get an apartment down-down there in the Internat—not International District—what do they call that? Where the Japan—might as well say Japan Town.

Howard Giske: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Butch Smith: Wow.

Jackie Lawson: Chinatown.

Howard Giske: Chinatown, Japan Town.

Jackie Lawson: Chinatown.

Butch Smith: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Jackie Lawson: Chinatown. Yeah, there'd be...

Howard Giske: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Butch Smith: The IED.

Jackie Lawson: Mm-hmm. And I keep getting off the subject.

Howard Giske: Where would the, the Central District—

Jackie Lawson: Oh, that's right—



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Howard Giske: Boundaries to the—

Jackie Lawson: We were talking about the boundaries.

Howard Giske: Like up to the East be?

Jackie Lawson: East is

Howard Giske: Towards the lake and heading up away from Downtown?

Jackie Lawson: Well, I used to think that 25th was ... that's it, because we couldn't go past—we couldn't go anywhere. What's the nightclub up there on ... Gideon's Drug Store, in that area, which—

Howard Giske: Oh, Birdland and—

Jackie Lawson: And all of that.

Howard Giske: That? Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah, so, my-my boundary was 25th, but as for the CD, you're coming back down the hill a little bit, and I'd kind of say that 29th, 30th.

Howard Giske: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Because there were a lot of Blacks that lived in that area.

Howard Giske: Yeah. Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Not just our family. We had a lot of family that—we had about five families, five of the Harvey families that lived there.

Butch Smith: You went to Garfield—

Jackie Lawson: Yes.

Butch Smith: And Garfield, in-in my recollection, was a central hub when I was growing up. I can remember a lot of people had association with Garfield, and not just going to school there, but it was almost a community hub in, in some ways. What were your recollections of going to school there? I know you graduated 1946?

Jackie Lawson: Mm-hmm. Well, personally I didn't like high school, [laughs] so I worked very hard, studied very hard, got good grades, and that's what I did, but I wasn't very social. I had—I

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have had friends, but not buddies. My—I think my closest buddy was—not think, I know she was—Priscilla Proctor. I don't know if you knew all the Proctors connected with the Timonys and—and a whole lot of other families, but she is - she was my closest friend. I, of course, knew Vivian Mead and Julie Gatun and that gang—that, you know, those girls. And then there was some boys who were ... I don't want to say bad boys, but [laughs] anyway. Um, our big social that Gul—not Gula—Vivian, Vivian's mother was, um, Mrs. Mead was—

Howard Giske: That's Vivian Caver?

Jackie Lawson: Yes, Vivian Mead Caver. Her mother, Mrs. Mead, was the director, I think, or whatever, of the ... she was connected with the—what was the thing for, for servicemen?

Howard Giske: Oh, the USO Club maybe?

Jackie Lawson: Thank you!

Howard Giske: Okay, yeah.

Butch Smith: Ah, okay.

Jackie Lawson: But the USO—

Howard Giske: Yeah. Yeah, well, some of Al's pictures, I think, were taken at the USO—

Jackie Lawson: I'm sure, I'm sure they were.

Howard Giske: But I'm not sure. Oh good. Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. So, Ms. Mead was connected with that, or she was head of the-the USO in the Central District. And the USO is-is—was actually located in the old YMCA building, which is on 23rd and Olive, I believe. Yeah.

Butch Smith: Where the East Madison Y is now?

Jackie Lawson: East—they call it East, and I never could understand why they call it East Madison. It's nowhere near Madison, but that is to identify the district that it was.

Butch Smith: Did you ever go to those—

Jackie Lawson: Now, what was—

Butch Smith: Those clubs, those USO—



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Jackie Lawson: No.

Butch Smith: Clubs? You didn't go? You were—

Jackie Lawson: Oh, that's what I was getting ready to say was, because Vivian's mother was connected, that Vivian got to go to those things. I couldn't. And Vivian's good friend was Gula, so Gula got to go to those things, whatever dances and things. When I was writing my book about Camp George Jordan, I-I was remembering that Gula and Vivian could go to Camp Jordan, which is—which was downtown somewhere, and I couldn't go there, but anyway.

Butch Smith: Was that restricted to just Black servicemen, or-or?

Jackie Lawson: No, it wasn't restricted to, but it was primarily for Black servicemen that were—it was a camp, rather than, um, a fort, like Fort Lewis or Fort Lawton, because it was a temporary place to house the Black servicemen that were going to be sent overseas or-or whatever.

Butch Smith: And it was in Downtown Seattle?

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. It was On First Avenue—First and Spokane. That's the main part, the main place where it was. And I wrote a book about it.

Butch Smith: What do you recall about the annual Mardi Gras parade and festival that was in the Central District back in the '40s and '50s?

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. We had a—we lived right on Martin Luther King. And—is it Martin Luther? Well, it was Empire Way at that time, or 27th, whatever, and Jefferson, 2715 East Jefferson—and so we lived right there where the parade would go. Well, the parade had several roots—routes—roots—routes, but one of them was to go past our house. And at one time they—they actually started it in the park, which is now, I think, Paul Barnett Park, or one of the Barnett's Park. And that was—my kids—my children used to say that it was the, um, Army Camp. Now, had you ever heard of it—that area being called an Army Camp?

Butch Smith: Is that now a park?

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. That's Paul Burnett.

Butch Smith: I know where you're talking about.

Jackie Lawson: Isn't it Paul Burnett Park?

Butch Smith: I'm not sure.

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Chris Jones: I don't know. Yeah.

Howard Giske: It sounds familiar to me.

Jackie Lawson: One of the Barnett's anyway—Doug Barnett's.

Butch Smith: But it's a big park, right?

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Butch Smith: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: Oh, yeah.

Butch Smith: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: It's a beautiful park now, but it was just kind of an empty lot. And originally it was Garfield High School's track. They have a track course where they used to run track around there. Anyway, a couple of the years that they had the Mardi Gras, they would start their parade there, and they would put their floats and things together at that park. And then they would go from—I'm not sure what the route was—but we'll say from Cherry up to Yesler, and then reverse and probably go to Union. Later on, it went across 23rd Avenue, the-the parade. And the park was—one year they had a—it was like a carnival where they had games where you could toss a-a ... like a horseshoe and win a prize or something. We won—my daughter and her brother—won a-a parakeet one year.

Chris Jones: [unintelligible]

Jackie Lawson: And then another—

Butch Smith: Lucky you.

Jackie Lawson: And they—yeah—and they called him Marty, because they won him at the Mardi Gras.

Butch Smith: Oh.

Howard Giske: Yeah.

Chris Jones: Great.

Howard Giske: What would you—the parade itself, what would you hear going by?

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Jackie Lawson: Oh.

Howard Giske: Were, were people—

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. They had the—

Howard Giske: Playing music?

Jackie Lawson: They had the trucks, the little trucks decorated with flowers and-and different types of decorations or whatever. And they had, of course—prior to that, they had the events that led up to ... um, not appointing, selecting, whatever, the Mardi Gras Queen—

Howard Giske: Oh, okay.

Jackie Lawson: And her Princesses.

Howard Giske: Yeah, yeah.

Jackie Lawson: I think she had six Princesses, whoever she was. And they would feature her on top of one of the floats. They had regular floats that they—

Howard Giske: Yeah, yeah.

Jackie Lawson: The groups made. And they, of course, they were sponsored by various clubs, men's clubs and women's clubs, and girl's clubs, or whatever, stores. Gideon, who had the drug store, was sponsored, so.

Butch Smith: Did you feel proud of the fact that that was a Black community event? Did-did you identify it as a Black community event?

Jackie Lawson: Oh, yeah.

Butch Smith: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: It was outstanding. It was *the* event of the year, before the R.O.O.T.S. Picnic. And then that, I think—I'm kind of getting them mixed up. I think they were kind of going on at the same time.

Butch Smith: So did the, did the Mardi Gras in a way, from your memory, did it transition into the R.O.O.T.S. Picnic in a way, or?

Jackie Lawson: That's what I was just trying to, trying to remember.



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Butch Smith: Yeah. Okay.

Jackie Lawson: I don't think it did.

Butch Smith: But the Mardi Gras ended, and then it seems like the R.O.O.T.S. Picnic began about, about that time?

Jackie Lawson: Yeah, but they weren't related at all.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: And I'm just—yeah, I-I just don't.

Butch Smith: What-what was, what was—how would you describe growing up in the Central area in the '40s and '50s when there were white people living in the Central area. There—I know, was a large Jewish community living in the Central District then. There was a large Japanese American community, primarily before the war, but even after the war some of them did come back. And there was a ... a, um, other Asian populations, Filipino, Chinese were living in the Central District. How did people get along? Was there—for want of a better expression—race mixing, interracial relations?

Jackie Lawson: We didn't have any interracial marriages. I know that.

Butch Smith: You didn't?

Jackie Lawson: No.

Butch Smith: Oh.

Jackie Lawson: No. But we did have very good—well, we were just friends, just was.

Butch Smith: Did they—did people get along?

Jackie Lawson: We had—yep, people got along fine. I don't remember any—I'm thinking again of my brother, Don, and his best friend. Well, he had maybe three, four, five, six best friends, but they were three, four, five, six different races, you know. That's Most of my friends in—on my side of East Madison where we lived, they were Italian, Swedish. The people next door were Norwegian. And, well, the girl next door was—her mother—her parents were from England. And we were like this. We were all together. We were just friends. On my brother—on the other side of-of East Madison were my brother's friends, and they were mainly Japanese and Chinese. I can recall when the war started, and President, uh ... Roosevelt? Yeah, was going to have this big

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announcement. And at that time, I was going to Meany, which was—had been Longfellow. And they had a big assembly and called us all into the assembly, and he got up there and announced that within a few days all the Japanese children were going to be leaving. And we just didn't—we didn't know what to think. We didn't understand any of that. And a lot of us—and me included, because everybody else was—just started crying, because our friends were going to leave and-and we, we didn't understand why. Now, how old was I in '41?

Butch Smith: Well, you were probably—

Jackie Lawson: Twelve.

Butch Smith: In junior high school maybe? U-u—

Jackie Lawson: No.

Butch Smith: Upper, upper grades.

Jackie Lawson: We didn't have—

Butch Smith: Upper grades?

Jackie Lawson: We didn't have any high—junior high.

Butch Smith: Eighth grade, six-sixth grade?

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. It was probably—

Butch Smith: Somewhere in there.

Jackie Lawson: The eighth grade. I was trying to think how old I was.

Butch Smith: Uh-huh.

Chris Jones: So...

Butch Smith: Thirteen maybe?

Chris Jones: So, Jackie, what were your—quick question for you—your, your career aspirations or your career that turned you into a-a—for the Seattle area—noted historian, you said you were interested in the pictures and the—and looking at what was going on behind the scenes, but as you transformed into this person who wanted to capture this history, write these books, document the history of the CD, I mean, not quite sure where that came from, or your educational direction that pushed you to be interested in those things, any thoughts on that?

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Jackie Lawson: Yeah. No. I mean, yes and no. I did have somebody ask me if I ever taught school or taught something, because of my interest in history and things. Actually in school, I—History, next to Chemistry, was my worst subject. I hated History, absolutely. I—Geography was okay. So it didn't come from any early—and it, it might've started with my dad, trying to figure out who my dad was. Or I knew who he was, but where did he come from? Because—well, I'm getting off the subject again. And I'm going to sneeze.

[Recording paused]

Howard Giske: Take-Take Two here now with Jackie Lawson, continuing our previous conversation. Take it away Jackie.

Jackie Lawson: Okay. Yeah, I was trying to figure how did I get so interested in not necessary—in photography. Because when I went—moved to Denver after my husband had passed, he-he bought two cameras for us, and they were the same.

Howard Giske: So don't let—let me know—

Jackie Lawson: Kodak?

Howard Giske: Why did you move? Quick interruption.

Jackie Lawson: Oh, I...

Howard Giske: You moved to Denver because?

Jackie Lawson: My first husband had passed. Okay. When my husband died, I was living in Ala—we were living in Alaska. He died while on a trip—I guess you could call it—to California. He was - he was a recruiter. He was trying to recruit Blacks to come up-up to Alaska.

Butch Smith: Where, where in Alaska?

Jackie Lawson: We were living in Juneau.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: So we were in the capitol.

Chris Jones: To fish? To be fishermen or—

Jackie Lawson: No, to be policemen.

Chris Jones: Huh?

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Jackie Lawson: To work with the Seattle—with the Public Safety Department in Alaska. And so he—he went down there to recruit. And while he was there, he was involved in a single car accident. He had a stroke while driving.

Butch Smith: Was that in the ‘60s?

Jackie Lawson: '82.

Butch Smith: Oh, '82.

Jackie Lawson: Uh-huh.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Howard Giske: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: So, anyway, after Walt passed, and my—our youngest son was living with us and—no he wasn't—he wasn't living with us, he had his own apartment, but he wanted to—we were trying to decide what-what to do. And, of course, everybody thought I was going to come back to Seattle. That was the first thing. And my idea was, I was not going to go—I was not going to go where I would be somebody's mother, somebody's—no, somebody's sister, somebody's daughter. I wanted to go where I didn't know anybody. So I started kind of looking around, and went to the drug store, grocery store, and they had these little books as you go into the drugstore—I mean, the grocery store, and they still have them, the apartment books. So I pulled one of those out and started looking. And anyway, to make a long story short, I opened it up and I saw this apartment in Denver that had five buildings, five separate buildings. I didn't know what the buildings were for, but they were all apartments, and it was like a little community. And I said, "That looks nice." And then I thought, "Well, Denver sounds like a nice place." I'd never been there in my life, but I liked the fact that it had 360 days of sunshine. Not 365, but 360. And I said, "That's where I'm going to go." So I moved to Denver.

Chris Jones: So, without career aspirations or anything?

Jackie Lawson: No—

Chris Jones: Just pull up and—

Jackie Lawson: I—well, by that time I—my husband had set up—well, you know, I had been set up okay, so I-I could retire. I had had a good job, so I had a good retirement from that. I had a very nice job in-in Juneau. But, anyway, that's why I moved to Denver, did not know a soul. My sister

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and her husband drove down with me, because they did know one couple there, a man and his wife and their three—two or three sons that owned the largest funeral parlor, Black funeral parlor in Denver. So they introduced me to them. And I forgot his name, but he took me around to two or three places to look at apartments, but I didn't like what he took me to, so I got in the—I guess I—yeah, I had our car, my car, and I just drove around and found this particular place that also had several buildings. Wait a minute. Am I getting them mixed up? Oh, no, that's what I'm talking—that had several-several apartment buildings, the one I finally moved into. And it was like eight blocks from the—walking blocks from downtown Denver, close to the library, which I always wanted to be close to a library. So I went back to Juneau and packed up and left.

Butch Smith: Did-did Al have any influence on you as far as your photography interest?

Jackie Lawson: I'm sure he must have. I mean - I mean, yes, because he wasn't, he wasn't the one that started me with the cameras. I had the cameras—camera. And I taught myself how to use all the lenses. And if—and then I would take them over and discuss my—the camera and the different things—I don't remember any of it now with him—and he would help me decide which ones to use for what purpose, and all that kind of stuff, because my—Walt and I had made a—had a big—he had a big collection of lenses and things in this big bag, and I didn't know anything about it, but I sure got into it.

Howard Giske: So what did you do with your photos? Do you have a—your—

Jackie Lawson: Oh, I've got them all. I have—I keep them, well, I have them in different ways. I do have some. Some of them are on CD now, because that was what you're supposed to do. Other than that, I like the paper pictures, you know. I have these friends that come, come up to the apartment and they'll have—what do you call these—not telephones, but these things.

Chris Jones: Laptops?

Jackie Lawson: Not a laptop.

Howard Giske: Or the, the tablets—

Jackie Lawson: Tablets!

Howard Giske: That you look at.

Jackie Lawson: And those kind of stuff—

Howard Giske: Yeah, and the pictures. Yeah, right, right.

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Jackie Lawson: Full of pictures. And I say, well, that's nice, but I like to have a picture that I can write on the back of it when it was taken or something. So I—what I actually have—I had three. I don't know what happened to the other one. It's somewhere in that apartment—but boxes that are about this long. They're just long enough wide—big enough for, for a photograph, for a snapshot. So I have two of those full. And I have them all—so you'll never have to have any trouble identifying mine, because they're all by year. I have a divider by year.

Chris Jones: Great.

Jackie Lawson: And some of them are divided into children, or family, and that kind of stuff. Yeah, I have all my pictures. And I have, um ... what happened to those? All the negatives from the negative days, from the Kodak days?

Howard Giske: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: And I—

Howard Giske: Those negatives are important, you know. That's the—

Jackie Lawson: And I have all of—had all of them. I haven't looked for them lately. I don't know where they are. They gotta be in that apartment though.

Howard Giske: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: But, yeah, I kept everything.

Butch Smith: What do you recall about the Black churches, when you were growing up? I know you went to First AME, but you had friends that went to the Baptist—

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Butch Smith: Church.

Jackie Lawson: Well, most—

Butch Smith: How—

Jackie Lawson: Of my, yeah, my girlfriends and I went to First A—well, I was sort of born in that church. My grandfather, my mother's father, was a ... a, not a founder—what was he?

Butch Smith: Deacon?

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Jackie Lawson: A Deacon, no, not a Deacon. Before the church was built, he was—I'm going to say a Trustee. But anyway, his name, along with one of my uncles, was on the—

Chris Jones: Cornerstone?

Jackie Lawson: Thank you! I guess, if that's what they still call it, yeah, cornerstone. In fact, I went to the church—well, actually it was for a funeral—a couple of weeks ago, and the cornerstone has been taken down, and they put up a new one with the new minister. You don't do that. That thing is

Chris Jones: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: So they're supposed to try to find it. And I got to go back there and see what's going on, that they haven't found that original cornerstone. I have a picture—that's where photographs document things—that I took of my mother standing in front of this—the cornerstone—while it was still on the church, so you can see my mother, the cornerstone with grandpa's name on it, and the church.

Chris Jones: Great.

Jackie Lawson: So, don't tell me that grandpa's name wasn't on that church. Anyhow, we were—I was born in the church, so to speak. And we all went. My girlfriends and I all went. Most of us went to the Methodist Church. And I was—I-I recall one time—because we were kind of flighty anyway—but one time I had a very bad cold, and I would cough, you know, and it-it would bother people, so when I'd have this cough, I'd have to move, or go outside, or something. So we decided that, at a certain opportune time, I would cough, and then two or three of the girls would help me get out, you know, get out into the hallway, because [sarcastically imitates coughing] I've got to have help, and then we'd go down to the Baptist Church where most of the boys were.

Chris Jones: So which—

Jackie Lawson: That was—

Chris Jones: What church was that?

Jackie Lawson: We'd start at the Methodist Church.

Chris Jones: But do you remember which—the name of it?

Jackie Lawson: First AME down on fourteenth and—

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Chris Jones: Okay. Oh, so, so it was the First African-American.

Jackie Lawson: First Af-African-American Episcopal Church.

Butch Smith: Which, which Baptist Church would you go to?

Jackie Lawson: What did they call it? What's it called, the Baptist Church?

Chris Jones: Mount Zion?

Jackie Lawson: Mount Zion Baptist—

Butch Smith: Mount Zion.

Jackie Lawson: Church.

Butch Smith: Oh, okay.

Chris Jones: It isn't too far.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. Yeah. It was, what, six, eight blocks or something? It wasn't that far.

Chris Jones: Do you remember—I've asked multiple people this question and they don't remember—in Madrona, there was a Black church down from Madrona Elementary. I-I got to remember the street. I got to get that down, so, but nobody—I remember going to this church as a child just for a while.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. It's on thirty fir—what's, what's the main street?

Chris Jones: Thirty-fourth?

Jackie Lawson: Thirty-fifth, so it'd be on thirty-third.

Chris Jones: Okay. So you were—you're—okay.

Jackie Lawson: And, they had a sister church over in Bellevue, but I don't remember the name of it.

Chris Jones: Yeah, because there—and there was a balcony. I remember a little balcony in this church, and I—but I can't—I have strong memories of like—

Jackie Lawson: Isn't it still there?

Chris Jones: Flashes. It's a Montessori School or something now.



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Jackie Lawson: Oh, okay. Well, you have access. You can go to the library and look up - look up our ancestry. They have the directories. And look for the Seattle Directory for a certain year. And then go to Churches.

Chris Jones: Churches.

Howard Giske: We've got one right next door. Maybe you—check those directories out, will you?

Chris Jones: I'd like to see.

Howard Giske: We've got them.

Chris Jones: Yeah. I will.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah, oh that's right.

Howard Giske: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: They have them.

Howard Giske: Yeah.

Chris Jones: Okay.

Howard Giske: Full set.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. Oh, okay.

Butch Smith: Do you remember Madrona—

Jackie Lawson: That's—I-I charge thirty-five dollars an hour.

Chris Jones: Okay. I'll take care of it.

Howard Giske: For you, five bucks an hour.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah, right.

Chris Jones: So, double.

Butch Smith: Oh, make it ten.

Howard Giske: Yeah.

Butch Smith: What about Madrona Beach? Do you remember Madrona Beach at all?

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Jackie Lawson: Oh, how could I forget Madrona Beach.

Butch Smith: Yeah. Tell-tell us about your memories of Madrona Beach.

Jackie Lawson: Well, again, you know, I couldn't swim, so I didn't go in the water much, but we just went down there to sit around in little groups and look at everybody and gossip. We didn't spend—families didn't go to Madrona Beach. We, as a fam—well, we had family picnics at other places, but, umm I don't know. Again, my brother just stands out in my mind. I can just see him swimming out to the—there was a-a little—what do they call it—little raft and a big raft.

Butch Smith: Right. Mm-hm.

Jackie Lawson: And I don't know why—what the difference was, but, anyway.

Butch Smith: They—one was just smaller than the other.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. That was it.

Butch Smith: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Howard Giske: Yeah. Was it—I've heard that it was more or less segregated beaches in-in Seattle at some time in our history, and that Madrona Beach was considered, like, the Black beach, and then other beaches were not. And am I just misinformed or is that?

Jackie Lawson: Yeah, you're misinformed.

Howard Giske: Okay. It was a little more—

Jackie Lawson: You were misinformed.

Howard Giske: Open than that.

Jackie Lawson: We did not have segregated—we were self-segregated.

Howard Giske: I see.

Jackie Lawson: I'll put it—

Howard Giske: Okay. That's a difference.



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Jackie Lawson: Just like at Garfield. They keep saying that we were segregated because we sat at—the Black kids would sit at one table, and the white kids would sit at another. And the Japanese—we were self-segregated. We did that because these were our friends. We wanted to be with our friends.

Howard Giske: Right.

Jackie Lawson: And—I don't know how, again—Quintard Taylor and I don't get along in that way, because he's—insists on things that I said weren't true. No, things that I—he would say something, and I'd think, “That's not true.” Somebody else wrote—sent an e-mail, or something, to the collections, because they heard that—what's the other high school, Broadway? Yeah, that Broadway was primarily Black.

Butch Smith: Broadway High School?

Jackie Lawson: Yes.

Butch Smith: No.

Jackie Lawson: I said definitely not.

Butch Smith: No.

Jackie Lawson: I said, as far as I know, just the opposite. My uncle went to Broadway.

Butch Smith: My grandfather went there, Claude Norris.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. And—

Butch Smith: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: I don't know of anybody else that went, I mean, back in the old days.

Butch Smith: Yeah. Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. More, more kids, you know, more have gone.

Butch Smith: Well, it closed in the '40s to become Edison.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. And I went to Edison.

Butch Smith: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: But that was something different. Mm.

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Howard Giske: I—one of the things I wanted to circle back on, Jackie, you mentioned a couple of times, Gideon's Drug Store, and that's just—

Jackie Lawson: Oh, yeah.

Howard Giske: Everybody I've spoken to has memories of the place, but details are just fascinating to me. Like imagine walking just through the door and what do you, what do you see, who's there, what's-what's going on?

Jackie Lawson: Yeah, right. It was quite a—well, one reason it was quite a community drop-in place, was because it was right in the center of everything. Because you had Gideon's Drug Store here, and you go up two blocks, or three blocks, you had the Baptist Church here, and it was you stop at—

Howard Giske: Right.

Jackie Lawson: Gideon. And then—I have to get my book, because I don't remember—I wrote all of those things. Then you—right across from Gideon's Drug Store was this grocery store of questionable content [all laugh]. And then across from the drug—grocery store, and then a block away was the YWCA, called the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA.

Butch Smith: Was that a house, a big house?

Jackie Lawson: It looked like a big house—

Butch Smith: Yes.

Jackie Lawson: But it wasn't.

Butch Smith: I remember that.

Jackie Lawson: It was not—never a house.

Butch Smith: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: And then Gideon's Drug Store was still here, and then the next block, across the street from Gideon's, on the corner, was Mama Law's and Papa Law's Ice Creamery. Law was their last name. Mama Law's—or Papa, one of them, their—her brother was Felton Eagles. Does that name ring a bell with anybody? He's just a nice guy. He was just—but anyway, and then you go across that—okay, that was the Ice Creamery. Next to the Ice Creamery was the skating rink that

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eventually turned in—no, it was a theatre that eventually turned into a skating rink, that then turned into

Butch Smith: Birdland?

Chris Jones: Birdland—

Jackie Lawson: Birdland.

Butch Smith: Birdland.

Chris Jones: And Eastside Hall.

Butch Smith: Yeah, I know exactly where that was.

Howard Giske: Oh, okay, yeah.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Howard Giske: But one of Al's photographs has got, in the back corner there, it says Ice Cream, so that must've been—

Jackie Lawson: That's the Ice Creamery—

Howard Giske: In the exact same building.

Jackie Lawson: Right next door. Uh huh.

Howard Giske: Oh, okay, Mama and Papa Law. Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. Now, it was actually owned, I guess, while it was a skating rink—oh, it doesn't matter, I forgot her name already. I want to say Grimes. Was that their—no, no.

Butch Smith: Boy, that rings a bell.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. Not the Grimes, that they live right next door to them or across. I don't remember. Oh,! Wood-Wood, Woodcuff, Woodcruft, Wood—it's right there. It's Woodcuff or something.

Howard Giske: Woodruff maybe, or...

Jackie Lawson: Versalee Woodcuff, Versalee—I don't know.

Howard Giske: But anyway—

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Jackie Lawson: Okay. Oh.

Howard Giske: Yeah. But back-back to Gideon's—

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Howard Giske: I thought there was a guy named Gideon, right? He was—

Jackie Lawson: Yes, right.

Howard Giske: There and, but what-what-what would you do there, or-or see, or...?

Jackie Lawson: Well, let's see. Did Gideon—yeah, Gideon had—for a while he had—let me see here. Did he, or is that the other drug store?

Butch Smith: Did they have—

Jackie Lawson: I think he had the—

Butch Smith: Did he have a soda fountain?

Jackie Lawson: Counter. That's what I was trying to think.

Butch Smith: Yeah. He had a soda fountain.

Jackie Lawson: For a while he did.

Butch Smith: Yeah.

Howard Giske: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: My brother-in-law wouldn't—my sister, my sister who became a nurse, she became a nurse down in Phoenix, Arizona, and she met-met this man, and eventually they got married. And then they eventually moved to Seattle. And he was a pharmacist.

Howard Giske: Oh.

Jackie Lawson: So he worked at Gideon's—for Gideon for quite a while. And then you have—okay that was in that Central District. And then the next Central District, which was a few blocks away on Twenty-third and Union, was another center. And you have—

Butch Smith: And there was a drugstore there too, wasn't it?

Jackie Lawson: Mayran's—



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Chris Jones: Mayran's, Mayran's was—

Butch Smith: It was Mayran's—

Jackie Lawson: Mayran's Drug Store.

Butch Smith: That's right.

Jackie Lawson: Mm-hmm.

Butch Smith: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: And Joyce—

Butch Smith: They sold everything.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah. Joyce Moore, was a pharmacist, worked there.

Howard Giske: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: Her husband—whatever his first name was—her husband was a dentist.

Butch Smith: And weren't there some Black dentists and doctors that were in offices above Mayran's?

Chris Jones: Yes.

Butch Smith: Yeah.

Chris Jones: I remember.

Butch Smith: Do you remember that? I remember going—

Jackie Lawson: I don't remember.

Butch Smith: When I was a kid to a dentist that was above there.

Jackie Lawson: A Black dentist?

Chris Jones: Yes.

Butch Smith: A Black dentist, yeah.

Jackie Lawson: Maybe that was the, uh, Joyce's husband. He was a Black dentist, but I—I was thinking about that last night. I don't remember where he dentisted. He might've been up there.



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Butch Smith: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: Um. Yeah, because the doctors that we had, the other doctors were over in this other central area, on Madison, where you have Dr. James—was his name Jackson? Dr.—oh my goodness, nothing is coming out.

Chris Jones: Was that on Twenty-third and Madison?

Jackie Lawson: No, right on Madison. Right next to the Mardi Gras. The Mardi Gras—wait a minute.

Howard Giske: Oh, going around Twenty-second, Twenty-third.

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Howard Giske: In there? Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: Right.

Howard Giske: Okay, yeah, yeah.

Jackie Lawson: You have Gideon's Drug Store—

Howard Giske: Gideon's.

Jackie Lawson: And then the, the Mardi Gras. What was—oh, The Tavern. I was trying to remember—

Howard Giske: Yeah, yeah.

Jackie Lawson: What the Mardi Gras was.

Howard Giske: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: And then next to that was the doctor's offices. And why can't I think of any of the doctor's names? Well, because you're old. What can I say? What was I—oh, I was going to say businesses. That's what we were kind of—but we weren't talking about businesses. One of the things that I mentioned in *Let's Take a Walk* book, was what happened to the Central Area, my Central Area, the East Madison Central area. And I think that with a lot of places that were built up by ethnic—certain ethnic groups, when they had no more use for those small businesses, then the ethnic groups would—the individuals or families move out, and other groups moved in. That's what happened, I think, with our little area up there on Madison, because we had—the war started.

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We had people that had—like Mama Law and Papa Law's Ice Creamery. What are all those other places they had across the street that he also owned? The Mardi Gras for a while. Huh.

Howard Giske: I know there was a lum—wasn't there a lumber—

Jackie Lawson: Well, that was on—

Howard Giske: A lumber mill, wood-cutting area there?

Jackie Lawson: That was nex—there was one that was next to the Birdland for a while. Or was it in the next block? It was in the next block. The thing next to Birdland was a garage that repaired cars and things. But I'm trying to think of the reasons for people leaving. It was probably because of the war. And what people that had the small businesses, we had—right next to Birdland, there was a group of businesses, small businesses. Mr. Freddie May Herd, Freddie May's parents had a bakery, and it was called Freddie's Bakery, I think. Not "The Herd's," but it was named after Freddie May. And then you had an Asian—I don't know, a Japanese or Chinese—that had a grocery store, and everybody knew him by whatever his name was, and he knew everybody by their name. And then a beautician was right next to it. Well, when the war started, these people that had these small little shops probably went to work for Boeing where they could make some money. Or over in Bremerton where they could build ships, you know, the shipyards and things. And there were shipyards over in Kirkland too. And they just closed up their doors and left. I don't mean they did that. I don't think that's how they left. They probably sold their businesses to other people, but then they were not Black people, and so white people started taking over, and the real estate, all of that. And that's what happened to my District [fake crying noise].

Butch Smith: Well, I don't have any more questions. Do any of either of you have anymore?

Howard Giske: Well, I've, I've loved hearing everything you had to tell us today, Jackie, that's for sure.

Jackie Lawson: Well, it's been fun.

Howard Giske: Yeah.

Jackie Lawson: I think that the-the funnest part was laying in bed last night and not being able to sleep—

[all laughing]



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Jackie Lawson: Because I kept thinking of all of these things I wanted to check—you know, look up, names, and places.

Howard Giske: Mm-hm.

Jackie Lawson: And then when I got up this morning I forgot them all, so.

Howard Giske: Oh. Well, sometimes the-the, the best facts are the ones of, you know, your direct personal—

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Howard Giske: Whatever you were doing that was unique.

Butch Smith: Mm-hm.

Howard Giske: The one thing that'd be so fun to learn more about—I'll try to find out on your behalf—that little white house in the woods out in Faraway.

Jackie Lawson: Oh, yes!

Howard Giske: Well, what the heck, now, was-was Walter—he maybe knew about these places because of having been—

Jackie Lawson: Because he was a policeman.

Howard Giske: On the police force and he'd be called in there every night on that, or?

Jackie Lawson: I have no idea.

Howard Giske: You probably don't want to know.

Jackie Lawson: I have no idea. All I know is that we went behind the-the bar, and through a door, and don't remember what was in that door.

Chris Jones: I would've loved personally if you could've brought some of your treasures with you when you came, of your-your photographic recollections of the history in the past just to see the differences in the photography, the photographic techniques, so to speak, as you kind of liked what was in the background and—

Jackie Lawson: Oh, yeah.



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Chris Jones: Different subject matter versus Al was doing portraits and a variety of things, you know—

Jackie Lawson: Yeah, yeah.

Chris Jones: But it would be interesting to see what you had taken from his techniques or-or—

Jackie Lawson: Oh, I think that would be the houses that I did, because he told me to be sure to—to take pictures of houses and, and businesses.

Chris Jones: Yeah.

Butch Smith: Mm-hmm.

Jackie Lawson: And I've taken, because now, is it two—the Black Heritage Society is working on something having to do with old businesses that aren't there anymore.

Chris Jones: I-I believe something's going on.

Howard Giske: Maybe, yeah.

Chris Jones: Yeah.

Howard Giske: That'd be a good project, that's—

Jackie Lawson: Yeah.

Howard Giske: For sure. There's one of Al's photos—you've probably seen it, maybe you have already—it is your, your brother up in Volunteer Park—

Jackie Lawson: Oh, yeah.

Howard Giske: And the beautiful conservatory behind him, and—

Jackie Lawson: Mm-hmm.

Howard Giske: He's got his—

Jackie Lawson: That big car.

Howard Giske: His foot up on his—yeah. Was that a brand-new car of his—

Jackie Lawson: I don't—



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Howard Giske: Or what?

Jackie Lawson: It probably was.

Howard Giske: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: It probably was, or a rental.

Howard Giske: Okay.

Jackie Lawson: I don't know. Yeah, I think—I bet it was a rental.

Howard Giske: Okay.

Butch Smith: He and my dad were good friends.

Howard Giske: Were they? Okay.

Butch Smith: Yeah. They were really good friends.

Howard Giske: Yeah, yeah.

Butch Smith: Yeah.

Howard Giske: It shows in the picture. Yeah, I think we'll call it a day then. Thank you.

[Statement ends]