

Ethnic Oral History Project, 1977-1978

Fresno Historical Society

Lucy G. Crossley

Lucy G. Crossley was interviewed on May 17, 1978 at her home. Lucy Gwendolyn Crossley was born in December 1917 in Fresno, California. Her father, Roy Carlton, was a plasterer and her mother, Ruby Pierro, was a cook. Crossley recalls the Black Community in Fresno was close, fun, and very small. She also says that there were many church activities to attend in Fresno. In school, Crossley does not remember being academically segregated. Crossley says that she did not go to college until twenty years after she graduated from high school. She attended Fresno City College and majored in social work. After Fresno City, Crossley attended Fresno State and received her Bachelor's Degree in 1953. In 1970, Crossley began working in her profession as a Psychiatric Social Worker.

Crossley recalls never having a problem with the Ku Klux Klan, but she did hear stories about them from her mother. Crossley says that during the Great Depression, black men did menial labor and the women did housekeeping. Crossley states that she had been a Republican, but when Ford pardoned Nixon she became a Democrat. Crossley says that she belonged to organizations like Alpha Kappa Alpha, National Council of Negro Women, and various other professional organizations. She says that she holds the office of Membership Chairman in the Alpha Kappa Alpha. Crossley describes how it was unusual for black people to attend college at the time she did. She says after World War II that blacks going to college was more popular.

Interviewer: Patricia A. Dimry
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Fresno City and County Historical Society
Interview with Lucy G. Crossley
May 17, 1978

Today is May 17, 1978. I, Pat Dimry, am interviewing Mrs. Lucy G. Crossley in her home.

Dimry: What is your full name?
Crossley: Lucy Gwendolyn Crossley.

Dimry: What is your maiden name?
Crossley: Carlton.

Dimry: When were you born?
Crossley: December 1917.

Dimry: Where were you born?
Crossley: Fresno.

Dimry: Did you ever leave Fresno?
Crossley: Yes. My parents, my younger brother and I moved to Berkeley, California. We lived there until I was approximately 9 years of age.

Dimry: What are your parents' names?
Crossley: Roy Carlton and Ruby Pierro.

Dimry: Where were they born?
Crossley: My mother was born in Colusa, California. My father in Lawrence, Kansas.

Dimry: What were their occupations?
Crossley: My father was a plasterer and my mother was a cook.

Dimry: What are your earliest memories of the Black community in Fresno?

Crossley: My memories are of closeness and fun. I remember the community was very small. Everyone new everyone else. If a stranger came to town, it was known. I remember the area ~~around~~ west Fresno ~~as~~ as very cosmopolitan. There were all races--Blacks, Chinese, Italians, Swedish and so on. I thought Edison School was the most cosmopolitan school ^{in terms of} ethnic groups in the world. I don't remember any ^{overt} ~~racial~~ ^{community} ~~divisions~~. I'm remembering the summers when we use to swim in the ditches. There was only one swimming pool. All the kids and those from the Eastside would gather, not meet, at Head Gate or Snake Road and we would fight. It wasn't a racial fight, -it was eastside aganist westside. After the fight

mailed the orchards together;
 we would all swim, but we had to have the fight first.

I remember every child was in Sunday school. Teenagers on Sunday were at B.Y.P.U. or the Methodist Young People Group. There were very few Catholics at that time in Fresno, black Catholics that is. The adults looked out after each other in times of sickness. Maybe not with money but attending to the sick and bringing food.

Dimry: Were there many church activities?

Crossley: Oh yes! Practically all the activities were centered around the church. The hayrides, picnics. We had a Jr. Church during the week where we had teenage deacons, trustees and choir. After Jr. Church we would go to a little park we called *the* Mexican Park with our record player, records and dance. (laughter) I can remember that.

Dimry: Do you remember the name of the park?

Crossley: No, but it is in the area of the project housing authority, the highway and Plumas street.

Dimry: What schools did you attend?

Crossley: I attended Columbia Elementary and Edison High School.

Dimry: Did they have jr. high during that period?

Crossley: No. You went from Columbia's high sixth to Edison. I don't believe it was considered a jr. high school, and I don't remember exactly but it was Edison Technical High School at that time; rather than ~~just~~ Edison High School.

Dimry: Were you treated any differently than the other students?

Crossley: Academically, I don't believe so. The black girls did not participate too much in sports, but the black boys did. The blacks were involved in drama and music; that kind of thing.

Dimry: Do you recall any of the names of your classmates?

Crossley: Oh yes. I was looking at this (book), Evelyn Bruno, Tony Cook; I have this (book) before me but I'm calling them as I remember their faces as I don't remember all their faces from the names here. Molly Berg, Otto Berg, Lucy Arriaga, Vincent Bernard, Johnny Bernardi, Addie Berry, Mike Fermisco, Alice Lombardi, Floyd Lombardi, Fred Makel, Eddie Mele, Andrew Morena, Zedekiah Moore, Henry Rudolph, Lillian Whit, James Williams, Grace Yoshioko, Hector Zamora, Mero Zulim, Arnold Elizaldi, Billy Hunter, Joe Pieretti, Alice Sanders, Frances Telesco, Willie Telesco, Jack

~~Sanders~~
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

Villaneva and Ruby Winters. Those are the ones I remember.

Dimry: Do you know if any of them are still in Fresno?
 Crossley: Let's see; Addie Berry lives in the Kerman area. August Constatino is still here, Alice Lombardi, Otto Berg is still here, Henry Rudolph, James Williams, Arnold Elizaldi, Billy Hunter and Joe Pieretti are all I can remember.

Dimry: Did you continue your education after high school?
 Crossley: Not immediately. I didn't continue my education until about 20 years after my graduation from high school.

Dimry: What school did you attend when you returned?
 Crossley: Fresno City College.

Dimry: What did you study there?
 Crossley: Initially my major was education. However, as I thought about it I felt that I could cope very well with the children but not the parents. So I changed my major to social work.

Dimry: Where did you go from there?
 Crossley: Fresno State.

Dimry: When did you graduate from state?
 Crossley: I received my B.A. in 1953. Then I worked approximately eight years as a social worker for the Public Welfare Department. I returned in 1966 (Fresno State) to work on my Masters and I completed that in 1968. I returned to the welfare for two years because I received a stipend from the state in order to work on my Masters and therefore I was committed to the Welfare Department for two years.

Dimry: When did you start practicing your profession?
 Crossley: As a Psychiatric Social Worker, 1970.

Dimry: Are you still in that profession?
 Crossley: Yes I am.

Dimry: When did you marry?
 Crossley: February 9, 1952.

Dimry: Do you have any children?
 Crossley: No I don't.

Dimry: Was the K.K.K. ever a problem in Fresno?
 Crossley: Not as I recall. I have heard my mother speak of the K.K.K. attempting to frighten members of

the family, but they weren't successful.

Dimry: What did most blacks do for a living during the depression?

Crossley: The men, menial labor, the women, housekeeping and cooking.

Dimry: Which political party do you belong to?

Crossley: I now belong to the democrats. I remained a republican until Ford pardoned Nixon.

Dimry: Did you take an active interest in politics?

Crossley: No more than voting.

Dimry: Were there any politicians who created problems for blacks in Fresno?

Crossley: Not that I can recall.

Dimry: Were there any politicians who were particular friends of the blacks?

Crossley: Not that I can recall.

Dimry: Did you know Joe LoForti?

Crossley: Yes I did.

Dimry: Was he a friend of the black community?

Crossley: I do not think so; no.

Dimry: How was he not a friend?

Crossley: He lived on the westside and had a lumber company. But I remember him as an arrogant man. Naturally, during World War 11, when he shot a black soldier who had nothing to do with the problem involved, I don't think and can't think favorably of him.

Dimry: How did the black community react to the attack on Pearl Harbor?

Crossley: Apprehensive. Many males of our families had been drafted. They were ~~placed~~ *based* in Fresno which had many black soldiers.

Dimry: Was your husband one of the men drafted?

Crossley: My first husband, yes.

Dimry: And Mr. Crossley, were you drafted? How did you feel about being drafted?

Mr. Crossley: Yes I was drafted. I was called up to serve my country for four years, three months and nine days.

Dimry: Did you participate in any civil rights activities?

Crossley: I can't say that I did except financially.

Dimry: Do you belong to any organizations?

Crossley: Yes. Alpha Kappa Alpha, Links, National Council of Negro Women and of coarse professional organizations.

Dimry: Would you care to name a few?

Crossley: The National Association of Social Workers, and the National Organization of Black Social Workers. I also belong to Iota Phi Kappa.

Dimry: Do you hold office in any of these organizations?

Crossley: In the Alpha Kappa Alpha, I am the membership chairman and I also hold the office in the Iota Phi Kappa.

Dimry: During the time you attended school, was it unusual for blacks to attend school?

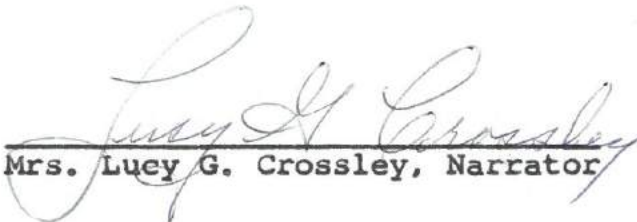
Crossley: It wasn't unusual for blacks to attend high school.

It was, however, unusual for blacks to attend college. When I graduated from high school, nursing school in Fresno did not accept blacks; *That did not happen* ~~not~~ until ~~World War II~~ World War II. I can remember two people who went ~~to~~ ^{in Fresno, during} nursing school ^{of World War II}. I don't remember their first names but their surnames were Hodnett and Hardner. After World War II, blacks began to attend college. Positions, such as clerks ~~and the professions~~ *opened up to Blacks.*

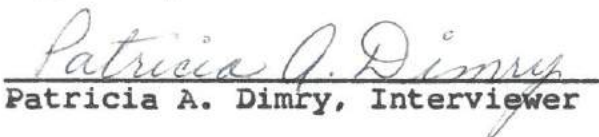
Thank you Mrs. Crossley for time.

Lucy G. Crossley

By my signature, I make this transcrip available to re-
searchers in the Fresno City and County Historical Society
Archives.


Mrs. Lucy G. Crossley, Narrator


Date


Patricia A. Dimry, Interviewer


Date

fhs/pad