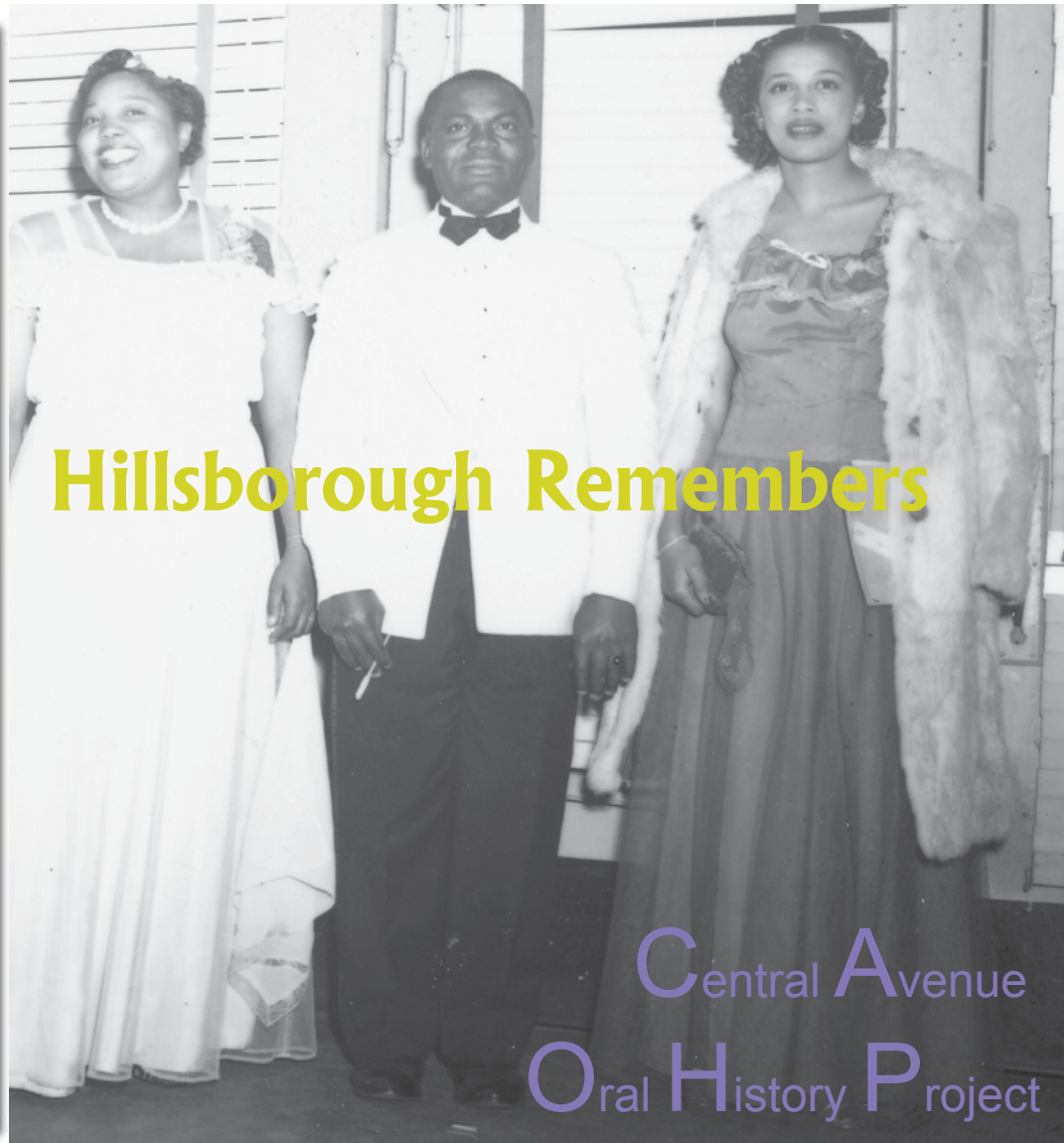


Lovie James



Hillsborough Remembers

Central Avenue
Oral History Project

This is an interview with Mrs. Lovie James (LJ). The interviewer is Carrie Hurst, (CH) representing the Central Avenue Business District Oral History Collections Project. This interview is being conducted on July 29, 2003 at the residence of Mrs. Lovie James. Mrs. James is going to talk about Lovie's House of Beauty and the Greek Stand.

CH: What are your earliest memories of the Central Ave. Business and Entertainment District?

LJ: Well my family moved here in 1953 and I finished high school. After completing my high school I went to Sunlight School of Beauty Culture and from there I started to work in Mrs. Lucille Singleton's beauty salon. At 1101 of course, Central Ave. and ah she said that I progressed faster than any girl she had ever had in her salon. So, she in a few years, she decided to sell the business and she asked me if I wanted to buy it. So, I purchased the business from her and that's when that was the beginning of course of Lovie's House of Beauty.

CH: What years, 1940 through 48 for example, did you spend time on Central Avenue?

LJ: My family didn't move here until 1953 so 1948 I was still a kid, you know. I was back in Georgia, of course.

CH: I mean years that you would have been in business.

LJ: Oh yes! () she sold me the business, I would like to believe then, probably about 1958. I believe. I stayed there until 1974 when I moved to Eastlake () in my home.

CH: During the time that you were there and you ran the business, what type of services did you all provide?

LJ: We did complete hair care, manicures, pedicures, and of course, during that time it was basically hot curling, shampoo, curling.

CH: Can you remember what was the cost of a perm back then?

LJ: Of course, the cost of a perm back then was \$2.00. I don't really think at that point, perms wasn't in existence but they finally came. Of course, just a wash and set or a shampoo and a straighten back then was about \$2.00.

CH: Do you remember what the shop looked like? I mean how was it set up?

LJ: Yes, it was a nice salon. It was large and it had as many as eight operators at times. It was well established, lots of business and lot of work to do.

CH: Did people have to make appointments, or did they just walk in?

LJ: Ah, basically we worked by appointments but also accepted walk ins.

CH: What kind of hours, do you remember the hours of operation?

LJ: Oh yes, we worked some ungodly hours. We worked like from sunup to kent just like – I remember going to work like 5:30 in the morning and not getting off until maybe 11:30 – 12 at night.

CH: Do you remember how the people dressed back then? I mean, you see so much today of the dressing, how did people dress back then?

LJ: Back then people was very articulate. They liked to dress well (). They had a a lady that, I know a lot of the people from that area and remember her. Her name was Black Beauty, she dressed so well. And of course, along with her there were many others that. People were very concerned about what they looked like in those days.

CH: Are you a relative of a Central Avenue business owner? If so, who was it and how are you related and can you tell me about the business?

LJ: Yes. Um, Johnnie Jordan, Solomon Van Dross was my brothers and ah they became owners of the Greek Stand. I don't recall the year right now, but they became owners of the Greek Stand. And of course, I was also co-owner with them.

CH: I talked with Mr. John Argilius and he told me that name originally was Simple Quick Lunch and that it became known as the Greek Stand because of their heritage. When the brothers took over was it then called the Greek Stand or still Simple Quick Lunch.

LJ: I don't recall it ever being Quick Lunch so when my brothers and those took it over it was the Greek Stand.

CH: What other types of businesses were there on Central Avenue and who owned them?

LJ: I can name a few. There's like Lodge's Dining Room, Johnnie Gay's, several others I just can't remember.

CH: Name some of the people you remember from Central Avenue.

LJ: I remember a Zachary Horace, Janet Gray, ah I remember the hotels that was located there. I'm not recollecting who owned them at the time. But ah, um.

CH: Do you remember seeing any celebrities?

JL: Oh yes, yes. I gotta remember the dance hall. The Apollo, I believe it was. Because a lot of us coming off the lawn cause we used to live across the street at the hotel. And some of us knew there Sam Cook, James Brown, and of course a lot of the gospel guys such as the Dixie Hummingbirds, Soul Stewards and a lot of the other groups. They lived at the hotel.

CH: What represented the best times on Central Avenue that you can remember? What were some of the good times that you remember?

LJ: Well to be honest, I was so busy trying to make it, I was young and I was just starting makin it. To me it really wasn't that important to me at that time. My most important thing was to save my people and try to get ahead.

CH: What about the worst times on Central Avenue? What were some of the worst times?

LJ: Well I can recall some of the worst times that's before they acknowledged it. Ah, that's the same way ah drugs and what have you came in existance, you know. And I used to see people in () and stuff you know, if they had to close.

CH: Where did you live or what during the Summer of 1967 or what do you know about the death of Martin Childers and the status of the following in Tampa?

LJ: Martin Childers was ah the young man that was killed by the police and the riots started. Remember that?

CH: What were some of the changes you saw on Central Avenue a few years before the closing of the street?

LJ: Well again that's back to ah you know, young people gone bad, drugs and what have you. And and of course, you know a lot of the business because they didn't have the finance you know, to ah enlarge them or something of that nature. Like run down some of the businesses did that.

CH: Where did the people typically go for business or entertainment after Central Avenue was closed?

LJ: That I'm not sure. I have no knowledge.

CH: After Central Avenue do you think a lot of the businesses migrated somewhere else and they just moved?

LJ: They maybe to name a few, but ah you know, and a lot of them to me I think it's maybe the beginning of the end for them.

CH: Is there anything further that you would like to tell us about Central Avenue and your businesses?

LJ: Well, it's a place I you know, I very well missed my little entire community. Because you know, that was the place we could call our own. Instead of, getting rid of it, it should have been evolved just as they have done 7th Avenue, I think. But ah but seem it wasn't to be.

CH: But you think it was a great life?

LJ: It was a great life, it was loved.

That completes the interview.