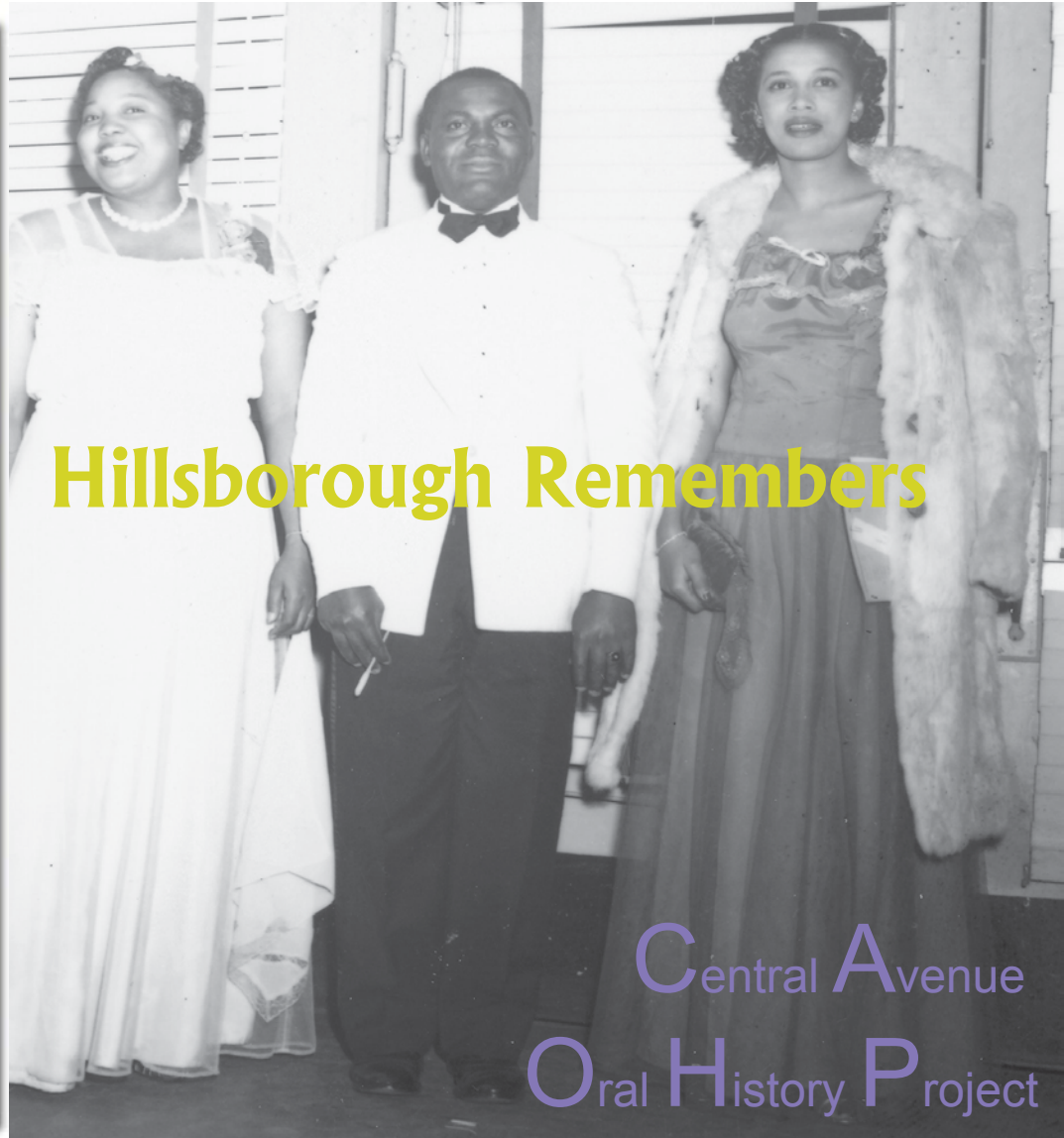


*Katherine Quarles*



**Hillsborough Remembers**

Central Avenue

Oral History Project

*This is an interview with Katherine Quarles (KQ) of Tampa Florida. This interview is being conducted at the Library on January 5, 2004, at the Robert W. Saunders, Sr. Public Library. Mrs. Quarles is going to tell us something about her memories of Central Avenue and her mother; Ada T. Payne. The interviewer is Carrie Hurst , (CH) representing the Central Avenue Business and Entertainment District Oral History Collections Project.*

CH: Ms. Quarles what are your earliest memories of Central Avenue's Business and Entertainment District?

KQ: My earliest memories of ah Central Avenue Business District dates back to the forties, when my mother Ada T. Payne worked this library in Harlem Branch Public Library.

CH: What years was that?

KQ: Well ah 19 possibly 1946. Possibly to 1966.

CH: And that was the time that you spent time on Central Avenue?

KQ: Yes.

CH: Are you a relative of a Central Avenue business owner?

KQ: No, I'm not.

CH: What was your mother's position at the library?

KQ: She was the head librarian at Harlem Branch Public Library.

CH: And was the Harlem Branch Library located on Central?

KQ: It was located at 1404 Central Avenue.

CH: And can you describe the library. Was it a store front or was it--?

KQ: It was a two story building which housed a store and above were doctors office. There were two doctors, two attorneys. Dr. Howell Irving and Dr. Salles and the two attorneys were Rodriguez and I can not recall the others.

CH: And can you tell us some of your memories about the library from that time, during that time?

KQ: Well during that time they allowed me during the summers when I would come home from college, to ah relieve my mother and work in her place. It was downstairs and there were only two tables and chairs for little children and two tables and chairs for the older – for the adults. And then there was just the desk where my mother would sit. Now books were outdated. We had to use books that were bought from the main library which had been used. Very seldom did we get new books in the library.

CH: What other kinds of business were on Central Avenue and who owned some of them?

KQ: Adjacent to the library was, on the corner of Scott was a barber shop and on Scott St. next to the barber shop was Shelly Green's restaurant. And next to Shelly Green's was the Arch Ellis Hall where we would go upstairs sometimes to meeting and dances. And next to

that building was ah a, a, a, where you have a garage and filling station. Across from that was a bar. I can't remember the name.

CH: Who were some of the people you remember from Central Avenue?

KQ: Some of the people I remember were ---- Watts Sanderson. Kid Mason. The uh Mr. Joyner, Henry Joyner. Um, Kid Mason and there were others that I can not recall right now.

CH: O.K. What represented some of the best times on Central Avenue? Such as the parade, you know what were some of the best times you can remember on Central Avenue?

KQ: Some of the best times that I remember were parades, attending dances at the ah Club Ryals. Um, ( ).

CH: O. K. What were some of the worst times that you can remember?

KQ: I can't recall of any worst times. During the time that I ah was on Central. I don't recall any bad times.

CH: You don't recall the riots?

KQ: No.

CH: Toward the end did Central start to decline?

KQ: Yes, it did. That's during the time when they had the riots, ah as Central began to decline. This is where we experienced those. But I didn't experience, I heard of the riots. But I did not experience haven't seen during that time.

CH: Where did you live and/or work during the summer of '67? And do you remember anything about the Martin Chambers ( ) that followed everything?

KQ: No, I do not recall that. At the time that happened I lived at 512 W. Ross St.

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

KQ: Before the close of the street I moved to another area so I did not go on Central that much after Mother retired from the library.

CH: Where did you typically go for entertainment after Central Avenue was closed or that most black people go for entertainment when Central Avenue closed?

KQ: As far as entertainment was concerned we no longer went on Central there were other places, but I, I did not go for entertainment after ah, Central ah, was taken away.

CH: Is there anything further that you would like to tell us about Central Avenue? A remembrance of that time.

KQ: What as far as entertainment or businesses?

CH: Anything that you want to tell us about that I didn't ask you.

KQ: Well Central Avenue as I remember it was a business district. We had businesses, restaurants, a movies we had two movie theatres, we had um, restaurants. Photographers businesses there we had barber shops, we had beauty shops all of this we not only on Central

we had two insurance companies on Scott St. We had a drug store and we had the Greek Stand where you could buy delicious ham sandwiches. Those were the best ham sandwiches in Tampa.

CH: When did Ada Payne die?

KQ: Mother died --- in 19 ---

CH: You can't remember? If you can't remember that's o.k.

CH: That concludes our formal interview. Thank you so very much for coming in and sharing your memories with us.