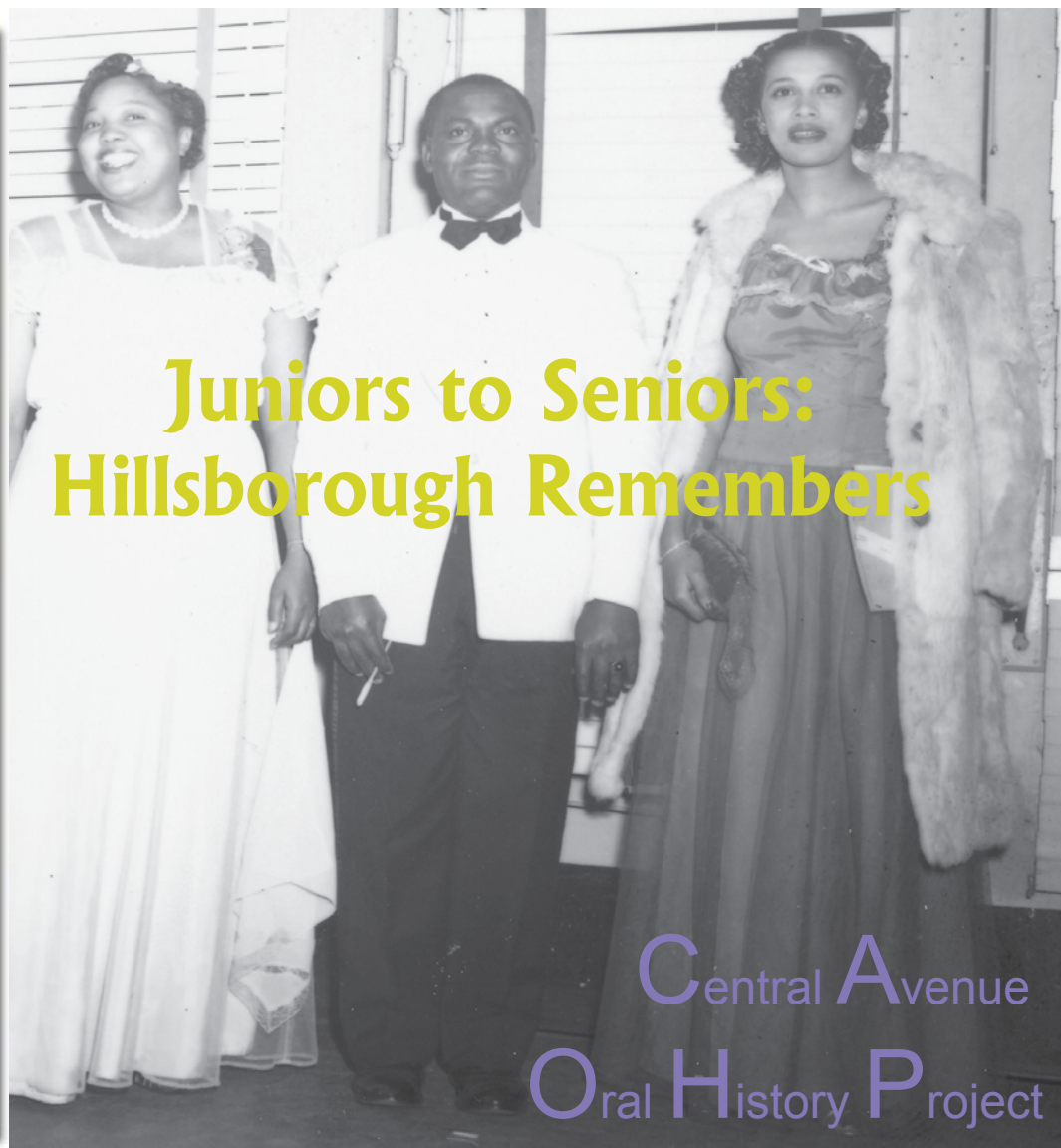


Essie Mae Reed



**Juniors to Seniors:
Hillsborough Remembers**

Central Avenue
Oral History Project

This is an interview with Essie Mae Reed (ER) long time Tampa resident. Formerly a resident of Central Park and Central Avenue. The interviewer is Myron Jackson, (MJ) representing the Central Avenue Business and Entertainment District Oral History Collections Project.

MJ: Let me ask you a little bit about your background and your coming to Tampa. What would be your earliest memories of Central?

ER: Well, I came to Tampa, I think I was about thirteen years old. My aunt and uncle who raised me brought me. We moved here from Savannah, Georgia and we lived in Sulphur Springs. So when I grew up and I got old, had children I left Sulphur Springs and I moved to in Ybor City. From Ybor City, when the storm Donna took the roof off the house, so I had to get someplace else to stay for me and my children. So we moved into public housing which is Central Park. I moved 1239 Jericho. And that time, Earl Fields was the manager. So I had to walk from up there through the little cut () to catch the bus to go to work. And I worked in Palma Ceia. So I wasn't a bar person and didn't drink and smoke and () in the bars but I tend the stores. Central Market, Joe Pullara, and I liked to go to John Reed, he had a beer and wine tavern on Central. In fact he sold crackly and sweet potatoes. You could get a dollar bag of crackly with your sweet potato and this is something I loved. And a big eater from the country. So when I didn't go there, it would be dead. The other ladies and I (), Francis Collier, () Sampson, and Estelle Sampson, that was our recreation on a Saturday nights. You could go to John Reed and get the sweet potatoes and crackling or go to the Greek Stand and get the lima beans and pigs feet and cornbread.

MJ: Those places were located on Central?

ER: Yes.

MJ: The sweet potatoes they were cooked?

ER: Yeah. You'd have the sweet potatoes was baked and the cracklins made. Yes. And go to the Greek Stand, I forgot the name of the people who owned it before a the

MJ: Yeah, they found the guy that originally owned it.

ER: They did?

MJ: Yeah, they brought him to a meeting week before last. And a he came in and shared some stories. And I think he was saying he sold it to somebody else. I think the black folk owned it.

ER: He did. Well, it was Jacob Jordan's family, I think. Cause he would be in there. And ah you go down and get them big lima beans. I don't even see those kind no more. Big lima beans, and they was fifty cent a bowl. And if you didn't get lima beans you got a piece of pig feet and I think the cornbread was five cent extra. And that that was our entertainment and sit there and look. And on Sunday's everybody in the United States would be to Shelly Green's, big lines you couldn't get in. Two big lines to get in. And big people eat and the one sit down and talk with Mr. Green, Shelly Green. That's your night out and this is the morning. Churches would bring their buses there on Sunday that was their outing. Everybody went to Shelly Green's. And then when you brought your children on Central we took them in to the little ice cream place. You know to get ice cream. And we'd go to

McArthur's and get our pictures made. I had a picture on this wall, coming in this door, that McArthur made many years ago. ().

MJ: Oh good. You know they were trying to remember the name of that photography studio. Sure glad you said that.

ER: That just happened to come to me by looking at those pictures. Cause I've had a stroke fifteen years, and I forgot. Some things I don't remember that I'm trying that hard too. And then there was a little fish market