



## Mary Alice Dorsett

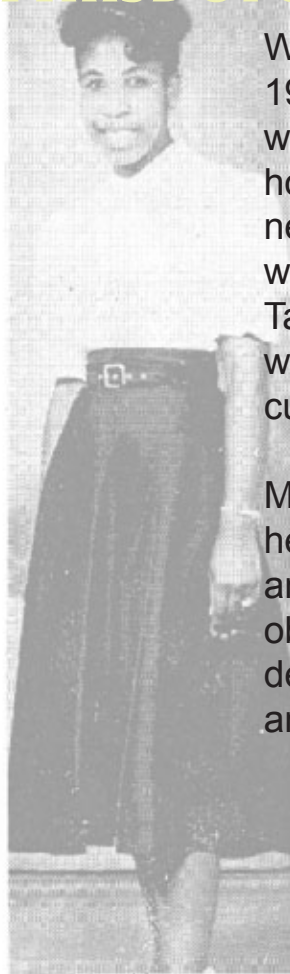
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CARR'S CORNER

### Tampa Lady Serves In Bail Bond Business

An attractive Tampan is one of the few ladies in Florida working in the bail bond business. Miss Mary Alice Dorsett is in her fifth year in this work. She finds the work interesting, as well as lucrative. When she was asked her reasons for going into this type of work, her answer was: "I am doing this work in order to get money to satisfy my desire to do humanitarian work. I have always been interested in this idea of doing for others who need it. I have never charged for this kind of work. This business also furnishes me with the material things of life." It has paid off in both instances. Her business is conducted from her home, one with five rooms and bath, on E. Broadway. Miss Dorsett came to Tampa in 1959. She is a native of Dade City, but she completed her high school work at Washington Park High School, Lakeland. She attended Paine College, Augusta, Ga., and the National Professional School for Women and Girls, Washington, D. C. Her work brings her in contact with all kinds of persons, and she is on call 24 hours each day. She still finds time, however, to serve on the executive committee of the Board of Directors of the Branch YWCA of Tampa. She is committeewoman for Precinct No. 17 of the Democratic Party. At her church, Greater Bethel Baptist, she was recently elected

## Hillsborough Remembers



When we remember the 1950's, we often think of women as wives, mothers, homemakers. Being a businesswoman in the 1950's was a difficult task. Being Tampa's first bail bonds woman was especially difficult.

Mary Alice Dorsett looked to her friends, her community, and her faith to overcome her obstacles and become a dedicated community leader and activist.

*This is an interview with Mary Alice Dorsett (MD) of Tampa, Florida. The interview is being conducted on July 31, 2001 at the John F. Germany Public Library in Tampa. My name is Steve Szekely (SS), representing the Tampa-Hillsborough County Public Library System's Oral History Collection Project.*

**Steve Szekely:** Ms. Dorsett, can you give some, just to get some basic background information, uh, where



were you born and when?

Mary Alice Dorsett: I was born in Dade City, Florida, February the

4th, 1926.

**SS:** And when did you happen to come to Tampa?

**MD:** I came to Tampa, July 19, 1950.

**SS:** And, you came for what reason?

**MD:** Uh, Dr. Martin, Geechee Martin, who was my pastor in Lakeland, Florida, was called to be the first director of the Baptist Fellowship Center here. One of his duties, uh, was to train, uh, Baptist ministers in churches to set up summer vacation bible schools and that I had just come from Ms. Bowes' School, a national training and professional school for women and girls in Washington, DC. He knew that she had taught me, uh, and he had me come, he and his wife, had me come here to help him set up a summer vacation bible school. So, that's my, why I came to Tampa.

**SS:** And you went into business by yourself without him, shortly afterwards.

**MD:** I went into, the very next year, I went into business with myself in 1951.

**SS:** And where was your business located?

**MD:** Uh, my business was located 911 E. Broadway, here in Tampa, out in the Ybor City area.

**SS:** And what was the nature of the business?

**MD:** Um, I had, uh, well, I did income tax. I was a professional bail bonds woman, and I ran a general employment agency.

**SS:** Mm hmm. A bail bond business is, uh, is a difficult one for anyone to get into, especially a woman. How is that you, how did you manage to cope with that, uh, that kind of a part of life?

**MD:** Yeah, well, it was, it was, it was a challenge and, uh, I'm, uh, a real fanatic when it comes to God. I just feel that the sky's the limit, if you believe in God. Um, I know I went to the minister, a Rev. Rhodes. I had to have \$1500 to give to a surety company, uh, when I wanted to become a bondsman. And he laughed at me and he said, "Dorsett, that's more money than the fish that God had, he had to go get( )." He said, "You can't be a bondsman. That takes a person with a lot of money and uh, background". And uh, I said, "I have faith" and he said, "To get in business in Tampa, you need more than faith, you got to have some money." So, um, when I succeeded uh, in getting into business, it was funny to him. He laughed, he wanted to know how in the world did I do it. He says, "You got some kind of vitality."

And, then uh, but how I did it, Mr. Abe Marcadis, um, was the biggest bondsman in town, the richest bondsman in town, and the oldest bondsman in town. And, um, I was trying, he told me I would have to a security company to back me, in order to do a lot of bonds. And, um, so that was what I wanted and was going to

be my down payment on \$5,000 I had to get up. Uh, and there was, um, a representative from West Palm Beach came to see me and uh, to get the money. And he stopped at Mr. Abe's bail bond office and I was telling him that I didn't have the money. I hadn't gotten the money up. Mr. Abe overheard him talking to me, uh, and he said, "Why didn't you ask me? I could've helped you." It was shocking, because when I, I never would have voluntarily asked Mr. Abe. Uh, because his office was in our area and, um, I just knew he wouldn't have helped.

**SS:** Back then, and today, people put up homes for collateral, for bonds and the like. What did you do for security, uh, in the 50s?



**MD:** We did some, uh, if the bonds, if it was a big bond, we would have to have collateral, assure yourself that a person's going to be there. And, of course, now I should think, would be so much different because I used to, I was my own detective. I be 'round, uh, in the

*I've dealt with many people from all walks of life.*

**SS:** You would be a competitor [laugh].

**MD:** Yeah, and down in our area of all places, out in our heart of our community, he had his office. But then, I was just so grateful to him and happy that he offered, volunteered to help me. And when I expressed my gratitude to him, he said, "Well, Alice," he calls me Alice, he asked me if it would be alright to call me Alice and I told him yeah. He said, um, he had made his money, so why not let me make some money.

**SS:** That's very professional.

**MD:** I will always love Mr. Abe Marcadis for his memory.

**SS:** Uh, what kind of people did you deal with, obviously people that got in trouble with the law, but were there any special folks that you...?

**MD:** I dealt with people from my classes. Late at night, a lot of times, a lot of your professionals and preachers and things like that get in jail and, uh, the people in the ditches, the trenches, and all. I've dealt with many people from all walks of life.

streets, under trees, and all that kind of stuff and today I wouldn't be able to. I'm sure I wouldn't be able to do that, but, uh, I was my own detective.

**SS:** Now, what did you have to look for? To find the people and let them know?

**MD:** Yes, a lot of 'em skipped bail on me.

**SS:** And of course, you're stuck with those ( ).

**MD:** And I would find them. I have found every one that skipped bail on me. Even a lady, a woman rather, who uh, went to Flint, Michigan.

**SS:** And you traced her all the way to Flint? Did you have to go there and bring her back or...?

**MD:** That was my responsibility, to go bring her back, and the bare fact that I couldn't tussle with these rough people. I had to pay the sheriff's deputy to go on the plane to get her and the bad part about it, I had to pay round-trip for him and had to pay her way on the plane. That was the bad

part, and, uh, even snacks and stuff like that. But, I got her. [laugh]

**SS:** And did the amount she had to pay, was that greater than your cost? Did you make a profit on that or a loss on that?

**MD:** Well, it would be a loss. What happened, and this is, again, something I should love what Sammy and Nathan, they are the sons of Mr. Marcadis. Um, Mr. Abe did something for me that I wouldn't have done for myself. It was, uh, Judge Henry, and that bond was extreted, that, I had got. He wanted him to do away with the bond that I had I got, um, because see I ( ) you know, I lost \$500, but anyway, Mr. Abe, Mr., all these people whose so important. So Mr., so the judge came out, we couldn't see him on the inside and so we waited, Mr. Abe told me to be there, we waited until 4:00 or whatever time he came out, I think it was around 4:00—

**SS:** ---out of the courthouse.

**MD:** Out of his office, and when he came out the door, Mr. Abe tried to stop him, to talk to him. And he kept walking and Mr. Abe kept following behind, walking behind him, uh, in my defense and, see I wouldn't have done that myself. See, I would've tried to talk to him and when he kept walking, I would've just said... So, I got to love that man.

**SS:** That's amazing, it's amazing that he, he—

**MD:** He did that.

**SS:** And he lost some business, I'm sure, but he made a friend.

**MD:** Yeah, yeah, he did that. He was my friend all the way, all the time.

**SS:** And tell me about the employment agency business. Uh, what kinds of

jobs did you, uh, did you line up for people?

**MD:** All kinds. Uh, I did a general, I had a general employment agency. So, I found all types of jobs for different people.

**SS:** And who paid you for that, the employers or the people?

**MD:** Uh, the people would pay me. However, most of the jobs were for, a lot of it was menial labor, you know, people looking for work. And they wouldn't have the money and if they made the money, they needed it for something. And it was something more of, uh, things that I did without making money on it. I was making money on my bonds and my other, my tax stuff, so I didn't get but so much. It was just a service, but I would ( )—

**SS:** Giving something to the community to help people out.

**MD:** Right, and also, in '62, I established this faith mission, and that was the same. And when the government pitched me out of my building, then I ( ).

**SS:** How is it they pitched you out of your building? Did they take the land for something?

**MD:** Yes, um, the government, they started this, um, eminent domain. And, uh, I was on one side of 7th Avenue and they took that building. And I owned the building across the street, so then, and it's my understanding, when they take your property, that eminent domain, it's supposed to be for public something, but it was not. That first property they took from us, a lot of us, the whole block of us. That's where you have the 7-11 store now. Uh, off of Nebraska on 7th Avenue, off of Nebraska, that there, that 7-11 store, that's part of our property. It's a private.

Then I moved across the street and this thing that you are interested in. I moved the day that they that they were doing all this fighting and burning and looting on Central, because of the Chambers boy had been shot and killed. Uh, and they wanted me, a lot of us, went to WTMP, the black radio station, to try to quiet the people. And, uh, then during my movin', they kept trying to get me to come. So, uh, I did stop and go, but I didn't say the things that I'm sure they expected me to say. See, I couldn't tell them to go home, things wouldn't be better. I didn't have the ability or the authority to see that things was better. And see, that's what it was coming, or fighting, because

huh, so I thought it was a terrible thing, to be shot in the back. So that was it, and, um, no, it did upset the city. And, uh, it, they lived in the projects and one of our ( ), therefore they didn't have any money to bury him. And I thought it was very generous of Jerry Franklin, he was a mortician that the average person didn't think too well of, for some reason or another, but he was, perhaps, the most um, compassionate one that helped. He was always helping. You got the body, you come to me and you got problems you come to me. Um, but he ended up burying this fellow. They took up money to help in the community. The money

***The money that they gave him to bury that boy, he took that money and gave it to his mother, to the boy's mother.***

they had been home. So they won't have me to talk too much, but that was my reason I wouldn't want to, uh, mislead my people 'cause we already misled too much.

that they gave him to bury that boy, he took that money and gave it to his mother, to the boy's mother. I don't know whether many people knew about it, but my thing—

**SS:** So, how did you first feel about the incident? When did it first become, uh, did people come over to tell you, say there's a problem over on Central Avenue and ( )?

**SS:** This is Franklin?

**MD:** Oh, my land, you heard it everywhere. You see, 7th Avenue, is, um, and Nebraska, is not far from Central. Uh, stuff like that you hear, it's, uh, it's be the TV, the radio, the streets and all of that stuff.

**MD:** This is Franklin. My thing is to always to try to find if this is true and I go the source and ask, and he put him away beautifully in a gray, pastel gray suit. He did it all himself.

**SS:** How do you feel about the shooting, when you first heard about it? What was your emotional reaction?

**SS:** How soon did it take for the incident to erupt into the violence and the looting. Was it the same day, or...?

**MD:** Well, I felt it was wrong. I felt it was an awful thing, because they tell, they said that uh, Chambers was, there was a tall fence. And he was trying to get over that fence and he had his hands up like that trying to reach and he was shot in the back. Uh

**MD:** Oh, well, I can't be too sure about that. I should think it would be the same day or the next day and it was horrible. But, uh, and they never did, uh, put it back, you know, fix it back, the things that was destroyed. They burned and looted and then they had—

**SS:** Was it mostly young people?

**MD:** I would think it was mostly young people.

**SS:** They just angry?

**MD:** Yeah, they past angry, they're mad. They're still mad.

**SS:** They're burning their own community, too.

**MD:** Yes, that is something that doesn't make too much sense, but that's what they do, particularly if it's owned by some other race, they be sure to burn that down. And then, so that's what they usually burn down but it's usually in the community.

**SS:** What did the government do in the city and ...? The governor brought in the National Guard, didn't he?

**MD:** Well, I'm sure, at the time, but one thing that they did, they started what they call white hats and that was where some of the people uh, was trying to quiet down. I think Mr. Gilder, you heard his name...

**SS:** Bob Gilder.

**MD:** Uh huh. He was working with that and um, so more, but they got some young men...

**SS:** These are the white hat , the young men?

**MD:** Uh huh, yeah. To help quiet them down, you know.

**SS:** Go in and talk to them?

**MD:** Uh huh.

**SS:** Yeah. The white hats were so they could be identified and ( )?

**MD:** Uh huh. Uh huh.

**SS:** That's interesting.

**MD:** Yeah, they got a group of them together. I was trying to think of some

more, perhaps Moses White could have been one of the grown folks that tried to quiet it down. Mr. Fordham, Mr. Fordham, he was a lawyer. Uh, those, um, some of the ones that uh, Claud Kirk was the governor and he came down to some kind of a gathering they had.

**SS:** How long did it take for things to calm down? Was it several days?

**MD:** Now, I think it was probably more than several days; quite awhile and some of it, you know, they still talk about some of it in the community and now, it's still a thorn in the flesh. So anyway, back to my house, uh, so they took that building and, um, I didn't want to move 'cause I told them, I say, well, then I will renovate my place. Uh, they come and they condemned the place. I said well I will renovate my place, and they say, "No, you can't do that." They wouldn't let me do that and, so after I insisted on staying and, um, they came and they torn down my clotheslines and stuff like that and—

**SS:** This was the city or the county?

**MD:** The city. I was right there in Ybor City and, um, then, when I moved, that was in '68.

**SS:** Did they pay you?

**MD:** They don't pay you much, they just pay you enough to give you a down payment on a place and then you're stuck with the rest of it. A lot of people died, older people, uh, some hurtin' 'cause they had their houses paid for and the government take them and give you nothin' for 'em. And then they have to start back, you know, not working, they have to start back with the mortgage Um, so, taking a little something. It wasn't enough, but fortunately I had that other building and time I got over there, they wanted that. [laughter]

**SS:** What's there, what's there now?  
The 7-11 is at your old place and  
what's in the other...?

**MD:** The building and they say they're  
supposed to tell you what they're  
gonna use the land for, or whatever,  
for. They never did tell me. They never  
did tell me what they're gonna use this  
land for. That was in, they actually set  
me outdoors in '73. That's when they  
set me out and nailed up the windows  
and the doors. It took seven white  
men to put me out. They had two  
standing to the door with a gun, both  
sides. And then they had four men uh,  
bringin' the stuff. I always had a lot of  
junk, and they had four men bringing  
it out. And then, there would be the  
inspector and that was all ( ).

And they had started to put me out  
the day before. The city usually would  
do that but they say I had too much,  
and so they couldn't do it for the price  
they usually would do it for sheriff  
department. And so they stop and  
moved the little stuff out and then  
they told, they said they'd come back  
the next day and finish it. And they did  
do that.

But for two years they had tried to get  
me to move and everybody else had  
moved. They stay in the 20 acre place  
there with me. And my building was,  
uh, about the width and the length of  
the lot. It was a big building and it had  
a basement and our houses don't  
usually have basements here. But I  
had a basement. That's where I had  
the men's dormitory in the basement.  
And uh...

**SS:** This was for  
the mission?

**MD:** This was the  
mission and then  
the little old first  
floor there was my,  
um, chapel and  
dining room and commercial kitchen.  
And then upstairs I lived and, uh, then



I had, I guess about twelve or  
eighteen rooms up there, and that's  
where I had my office was up there.

**SS:** Big house, then.

**MD:** Oh, it was very large. And they  
only thing they gave me first was the,  
uh, \$26,000, something like that. And,  
uh, and they went and got a house for  
me to move in, a frame, this was  
block. And they got a frame house,  
with perhaps five rooms, or six rooms  
in it, I don't know, there on Florida  
Avenue. All torn up and things fallin'  
off the shelf, things fallin' off and all  
that stuff. So, but anyway, that's,  
that's what happened and, uh, now  
they're in the process of something  
with that land. They just, uh...

**SS:** So basically, it's been naked for  
twenty years, twenty-five years?

**MD:** Oh yes. Oh yes, yeah. So, that  
had been, uh, my experience and, uh,  
I think that. I'm still here.

**SS:** I could imagine I would not be too  
happy with the city did that.

**MD:** Oh no, I'm not happy, uh, with  
the way they treat us. Uh, not at all  
and, um...

**SS:** And you thinks it's, it's still going  
on.

**MD:** That's the bad part. I heard, uh,  
some of the talk of people callin' in  
today, on Channel, Fox about, uh,  
Olympics and what all they're gonna  
do and how they're gonna move and  
how they're gonna... And see, and then  
I heard, I heard, who was that Mr.  
Buckhorn? I heard him say that, of  
course, there is some lady who is ( )  
and, uh, she was saying how they  
were gonna uproot the people in the  
infrastructure and the this and that  
and what have you. And he said, and  
I'm gonna be talking to him or  
somebody about it, he said he's for the

Olympics. But he said, they could have, oh the, the greenery and the trees and all that kind of stuff, she said they would do away with a lot of that, and he said, "Oh no." That part, the infrastructure's already set up, that's when you're comin' into the city, so why they gonna uproot us? Go in there, out in the green part there. So that's reason they're gonna get it. But this year I'm against it.

And, um, so, that had been and with the city. The, when I was in the bail bonds business, I had to pay \$200 a year for my house. And when I started off, I had borrowed that \$200 and, uh, they got in touch with me, the city got in touch with me. At a point, after I'd been in business for eight years, the city got in touch with me and told me I had to buy some more license before the year was out. And I wanted know why did I have to buy some more license and the year wasn't out. Um, and they had a hard time trying to get it through my thick skull why I had to buy the license.

***They would tell me, "Oh you got a good case here. Come back and get in touch with me in about three weeks."***

Finally they sent me to Mr. Bob Carlton, who was one of the city lawyers. Um, and he finally got it through my head. He said that the bonding company, Pan Am, um, were going out of business. And that's the thing that was making me have to pay, buy another license. He said that Pan Am had paid for the overall license, which was Mr. Abe's license, Abe Marcadis. And, um, we, we were supposed to be paying \$50. So then, then I said, "well you all was charging me \$200" and they weren't supposed be taking \$200 from nobody but the security company. So then I say you all, you all owe me \$150 for eight consecutive years and I'm still trying to get it [laugh]. I looked at Mr. ( ) who was the controller and he told me I would never get that money back. I

told him, "Well, I'll be trying as long as long as I live," and I'm still trying. It is...

[END OF TAPE 1, SIDE A]

[START TAPE 1, SIDE B]

**MD:** Um, it's horrible that, the way the city treats the people and, um, so I, um, I wrote a letter, using the people and took it to various lawyers and when they first read the letter, they would want to know who wrote this letter. And then they looked down there and then they see my name and, uh, they, they would tell me, "well this is good letter. You come back." Because, when I went back to the licensing department, uh, Ms. Atwaters, Ms. Alice Atwaters, she said that I told her that I did not want to pay \$50 for the license, I want to pay \$200 [laugh]. I got that in my letter.

**SS:** Okay.

**MD:** She say, I wanted to pay \$200 and I didn't have it, so that's what she

said and that's what they hold, that I said that I wanted to pay \$200. And in my letter, I'm saying that if wanted, um, a whiskey license and I had all the money, would they give me the whiskey license? See at that time, they had uh, \$750 and then they so many other requirements on me and see if I didn't meet the other requirements, then I wanted to know would they still give me the whiskey license, the liquor license. Because I didn't meet all the requirements at this bonding thing, 'cause I wasn't over the bonding and they was, so that was my argument. And so it, I went so many places with it, and when you are against the city and these people, the lawyers, uh, timid about it, they don't want to bother it. They would tell me, "Oh you got a good case here. Come

back and get in touch with me in about three weeks." And go back in three weeks and they say, "well I won't be able to bother it but you got a good case." But at one time, Mr. Gilbert, Don Gilbert, was one of the lawyers. And he said that, um, he would've ruled a decision to give me the money. And he said when he went to get the money, I said, when he made the decision and told the city about it, he was assistant attorney, Mr. Reese Smith, and then I believe he had all these names where people be ( ) these people who has a different idea about it. Mr. Reese Smith, uh, who was the attorney, um...

**SS:** For the city?

**MD:** Uh-huh, and Reese was assistant, uh, said that they couldn't give me the money back because if they give me my money back then they'd have to give other people their money back. And then what I, my say is, if the city had wrongfully taken anybody's money, I'm tellin' you this, give it back, but they don't do that. And I carried it to Tallahassee and the lawyer there told me that they had something similar in Miami, with a lot of millionaire people where the city had taken their money. And they had a suit and the judge, uh, said that, um, and said, if the city owes you, they don't have to pay you. And if they did that to all those rich white people, [laugh], you might as well give up. Said he didn't want to fight anymore. So I never got money, but I use it anytime I get a chance, I do.

**SS:** But I hear if you make a claim to yourself say it enough times, maybe somebody will give you the money back.

**MD:** I'm trying.

**SS:** ( )—

**MD:** And I'll tell you the first time, uh, well, when this happened, really, Mr. Nuccio was, uh, mayor, but then when Mr. Greco became mayor the first time, I went to him and he said, "Why Mary, this is stealin'." He said, "We'll see about getting the money back." Uh, he said he will see about it. He said, "this is stealing." I said, "That's what I know." So, after the three weeks, I don't know why they give three weeks, to get back in touch with him, and when I got in touch with him he said that Mr. Reese Smith said they didn't have, they couldn't afford to give me that money back. So that is what happened with Mr. Greco the first time and he, um, offered me a job.

**SS:** Did you take it?

**MD:** No, I don't want no job. I was working for myself, but he did. I appreciate it. And, but this time, he got be the mayor, I told him, I wrote and told him I'm still trying to get that money back. He didn't even talk to me. He turn me over to some of the, uh, his assistants and so they say it had been long and so they didn't have to. He didn't talk to me this trip. Uh, but every Mayor since that time, every one of them, I would write this letter to them. I would write 'em a letter and send them a copy of the original letter that I wrote, so those have been some of my experiences. Um, but in a lot of cases, bein' black has helped me.

**SS:** How's that?

**MD:** I think, some of y'all just felt sorry for me. I'd be tryin' so hard and so I think that's it. Um, like a, like a lot of them, a lot of them help me. Um, like I said, like Mr. Abe and, uh, sometime I would

**SS:** And a woman, and a woman, in a man's business...

**MD:** Uh huh. And I know when I was comin' back from, um, a trip, not the trip around the world, the trip I was coming back just for that time from Europe. European trip and I was so glad to be black. Um, I've, um, the American ships had um, was on strike. And, uh, only, uh, Hansiatic ship of, uh, Germany, I was over in Germany, I had a brother in the military there and I had a sister and her husband that were all teaching over there. And, in um, I would, um, I flew over there on Pan Am and I wanted to have the experience of coming back on a ship. And, uh, so therefore, all the Americans too, who was trying to come back um, they had to ride the Hansiatic. And they was, uh, it was crowded and, by me being black, nobody wanted to be with me. And I was so happy, I got a cabin all to myself [laugh]. And I'm the type who like to have my privacy. And the others were stuffed in like sardines, they told me, you know, we had our sitting at um, the table, and they would be ( ) and I was on for two or three days, I was the only black on the whole ship. I wasn't aware of it, but later, I got on at South Hampton and when we got in to France, a black family got on. And they were the ones who told me that, they say really wasn't letting us ride, but everybody's pushing us back and we pushed ourselves up, too.

**SS:** Now, when did this take place?

**MD:** Um, this was in '66, coming from, um, from Europe. And in '74 was when I circled the world. But anyway, I was just so glad and in late day when we would be eating they would be fussing about how there were stuffed in there like sardines. And then one of the ladies who, we talk to them at the table, she said, "Mary Alice, how many in your room?" [laugh] And I told her the truth. I said "I have my cabin in the back". She said, "Well, that's not fair. I'm gonna sue." And I said, "But I

think they're gonna put someone in there."

'Cause I told her, "I think they're gonna put somebody in there". And she was sayin' ( ). That was one of the times and so many times, even here, as I say, when I'd go downtown, the different things um, um that would happen, but through it all, I didn't feel that it was me, per se. I felt that it was because I am black.

**SS:** Was there a big difference in the feeling of being on a ship in 1974 versus 1966? Was the atmosphere a lot different, um...?

**MD:** Well, I guess the atmosphere is always the same. [laugh] To get back to ( ) in '74, I get off in '74 and then come here. I understood, uh, I think I had the experience of the ship, uh-huh, in '74. But then people would help me and, um, like my cousins, they all feel that I'm off in the head always talkin' about God and dyin' and this type stuff, and see, um, when I got into Okinawa, that's where I have a cousin and his family. And of course, he is like a nephew, so to speak, but when I got there, and you know, you go into Tokyo, you get off the plane and, uh, then you catch a bus to go on to, you know, airports. And there were ladies, there are people, you know, want to help me. I been ( ) on there trying to help me and talking to me and trying to carry me home and this kind of stuff. And, Egan, that's my nephew, our cousin, and he say, he didn't understand why these people cater to me like they do, because over there, the Japanese didn't bother with you. You know, they didn't try to help you. They didn't notice that, uh, I said, I keep telling you about God.

**SS:** And you think it's a matter of personality?

**MD:** I don't know, I just feel that, uh, I just feel that uh, God somehow,

that, I don't know, ( ). I can't explain it, 'cause I just feel that it's God, His divine nature, uh, in my travels and, uh, when I, really, during that time I went, when I was on Guam, I looked for the hotel. I had to stay the night and catch the next plane. And there was a lady sitting there and she said uh, I went to her, and I asked her if she could tell me how I could find a hotel. Of course, at that time, she told me they didn't have any hotels on Guam, at that time, and she said, I just built uh, we just built a new home. She had ten children and she said, "You can stay with us." And, uh, so I, I said is going to alright with your husband, she said yes, "Oh, yes, he works for the city." ( ) All that day and night to her house she kept saying, she didn't understand why she did that, [laughs] she said because they didn't like Americans. She said because on the island the island was clean it didn't have all this crime until America came over. Then they have all this lootin' and stealin' and drugs all that stuff and she keep saying she didn't understand how she could do that invite me to live in her house. And I could only smile, I could only say, I felt it was God. I've had a lot of those experiences, all in my travels. And people were gracious, they were most gracious to me.

There was one, she had a boy, a teenage boy, named Joseph. And he got so connected with me until he didn't even want to go to the airport to see me off. And uh, she kept saying, "I don't know why he did that, why he did that." And um, and they treated me like a queen. She had a, a big beautiful delicious dinner fixed for me. And, and it, and it was the same way in Jamaica, a lady told she didn't understand, her inviting a stranger in her house and all I could do is smile 'cause I know it had to be God. And He has done this and He takes care of me now because it's ( ). I'm still happy as a lark.

**SS:** You've been here for 50 years, what are the biggest changes you've seen in Tampa.

**MD:** The biggest changes have been, uh, moving people around for the Expressway. And, and, and particularly in our area, the little businesses that we had down on Central Ave. And then they came and eventually took all of that for the Expressway. And to me, that had been the biggest change. And then we have done some of the things ourselves. Other business and things that did, um, come up, we didn't support it. So as a result, integration, supposedly integration, hasn't done but so much as far as I am concerned.

**SS:** How do you mean?

**MD:** Uh, we had two theaters that was predominately black, with integration they're gone. We had two hotels ( ) and that would make it three and they're gone.

**SS:** Are they in Ybor? In that area?

**MD:** No. Uh, Central, the Rogers Hotel was on Central. That was the Rogers Hotel. And they took that, you know. Black businesses, there was a lot of businesses, black businesses, and they took all of that. And they got the Expressway, there. And then we had uh, well I mentioned about the theaters. And then we actually even had a ( ). Uh, we started a bank here. uh, Rev. Lowry headed it up and it's gone. Um, so there was, there was . . .

**SS:** You don't consider ( ), to lose those black businesses, black-owned businesses. A lot of it is because it's getting bigger, of course, Bank of America, Nations Bank, one big giant bank now is eating up all the small banks.

**MD:** Yeah, yeah, this is true! So that uh, that, so that hurt them. And now

our undertakers, our, whatcha call it, funeral homes, they're being gobbled up. I think only one person owns theirs now, I understand. I think a new one is coming, say that they own theirs. Uh, so these have been negative things, uh huh, and then, and then our schools, um, I don't think um, I think the curriculum was better for the blacks in the black schools.

**SS:** Why do you say that?

**MD:** Because things that we were taught, uh, these, these it appears that they aren't being taught these things. And about our history and see that makes a great difference when you know where you are coming from. It'll kind of help you to know where you are going. Uh, but if you don't know where you're coming from, and see, we don't have too much to know where we come from, 'cause they aren't teaching it. So, that, I feel that the integration of the schools have been good as far as the plant was concerned, got better books, better um, buildings, that type parking lots, that type of stuff.

**SS:** I tell you, you think in the early 50's, "separate but equal" wasn't really equal.

**MD:** Oh no, it's never been equal [laughs]. It's never been that, it's never been that. Uh, and I don't think that it will be separate but equal. And this is what it seems to what they're going back into now. Uh but I do feel that the curriculum for the black is much better. For example, uh, there was a song we call the Negro National Anthem that we sing. And at our school we used to, all of us had to memorize it. It gives us strength, incentive. And now the children don't know because I'm sure if the teachers

went to talkin' 'bout the Negro National Anthem, they would frown. And we don't know that song, Lift Every Voice and Sing. We don't know it. And so it's things like that and I do, I disagree with Dr. Spocks and all in society and all these other people uh, who don't believe in whipping a child. I believe in corporal punishment. And see, in our schools, we got corporal punishment and it made a difference. It would get more respect from it than they do. I go before the school board and tell them that, all the time. They don't pay me any attention, but I go and tell them [laughs].

**SS:** ( ) can't resist.

**MD:** Uh, they told me why, people tell me why they think they've done away with it, but it's needed. The bible says you spare the rod, you spoil the child. I write out an article and put it in the Sentinel and in the newspapers. Some of 'em print it, some of 'em don't print it. Most of 'em don't print it, but uh, these are some of the things that your integration has bought about that I think is a no no.

**SS:** Um hmm, any good things?

**MD:** Well, I would say the plant, uh, the parking areas, uh, the painted buildings, uh the new books, that type stuff.

