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Professor Jersild

Hist 201

Oral History Research

For my Oral History report I interviewed my Grandmother, Joyce Ann James. I have interviewed her many times as oral reports are a common thing amongst history courses. So, I practically know much of her history as well as my family's history by heart. I do enjoy retelling the history as I feel a closer bond to my own family. I split the interview into three categories: Early Childhood and Family Background, Teenage Years, and lastly Adulthood.

I. Early Childhood and Family Background

My grandmother was born on the 4th of September 1958, as the 13th child of her family of 7 boys and 6 girls. Her family lived in a one story four-bedroom house, with a living room, dining room, kitchen and two bathrooms. All girls in one room with bunk beds. By the time she was born some of her brothers and sisters were grown. If you do the math you would see that my grandmother is 60 years, which to many people's surprise is roughly the same age as some people's parents. Just like all her brothers and sisters she was born in same place El Paso, Texas. What's interesting about this is that all her children (my mother & aunt) and nearly all their children would be born in El Paso. Both of my grandmothers' parents were born in Texas also. Both were from east Texas. Her father was from college station Texas her mother was from Eastland Texas. When her parents got married, they migrated to El Paso because of railroad work and started the foundation of the family. Her parents both found jobs quickly her father was a security guard at the El Paso natural gas airport and her mother was a cook at lubys cafeteria

and elementary school teacher. While the parents were working it was the responsibility of the older kids to not only clean and manage the house but also had to take care of the younger children. Her family was extremely close knit as they were always around each other and connected by deep Baptist beliefs. Most of the time when they weren't at church or working around the house, she and her siblings would play games like spades, poker, and dominos. These games are still a staple of our family as you can't go to any reunion in Texas and not see someone playing one of these games. If she wasn't playing games with her siblings she would play with her friends in the predominantly black and poor neighborhood, Mallory Richardson, Mary Spears, Evon B, and Linda Winn. On school days my grandmother always looked forward to her science class with her favorite teacher Mr. Walker. She remarked that he was a good teacher, who spoke and dressed like a cowboy. Often, he would use his fingers to clean out his ears and put his fingers in his mouth to clean them. Mr. Walker influenced her to want to become a teacher. My grandmother also participated in FBLA and was an average student just trying to make it through high school and be successful.

II. Teenage Years

Since my grandmother was the youngest of thirteen children, she was very spoiled. This is not to say her parents didn't love all their kids as they family would always have big celebrations around holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving. Birthdays were awesome as my great grandparents always found away to get their kids gifts. They also had a tradition that the birthday boy and girl got to pick their favorite food to eat for their birthday. My grandmother kept a very close relationship with her parents and she never really ran into conflict with them. They supported her dream of becoming a school teacher, a very popular career at the time. Her

parents only wanted too to raise their kids right make them dependent on only themselves. My Great grandparents fully supported her in wanting to work at a daycare if she maintained her academics. My grandmother made good on her promise and ended up graduating early from high school.

III. Adulthood

My grandmother originally had no plans or intentions to leave El Paso. All she wanted to do was to finish college, become a teacher, and live life. She ended up getting her associates and not pursuing a career in teaching as she isn't fond of kids. She ended up divorced and with a daughter. Things changed when she met my grandfather Andrew James between 1981-1982 while he was stationed at Fort Bliss in El Paso, Texas. She remarks that he was drawn to her. They would get married a year later and move in together. She says to wait a little longer before committing to someone. Their marriage is still going strong too this day so there was luck there. Seven years after my mother was born, my aunt would follow. I asked my grandmother what the hardest thing about life during this time and she was remarked that it was the constant moving around as she would find a job and right when she got comfortable, they would have to pick up and move somewhere new. I then asked her what the hardest thing about raising children while moving around. The hardest thing was managing my mother who was the problem child. Doing anything and everything to cause my grandparents to sit up and worry about her. My grandma feels she turned out well as my mother is hard working and responsible which leads into my next question about "What is the most satisfying thing about raising your children?" She remarked that I should know, because my grandparents raise my sister and myself in the same way as my mom and her sister. So, to explain it better she remarks "The best things about how we raised them, and you were how we lead by example always working and doing the right thing and

making yall rely on no one but yourself and not anybody else.” This resonated with me as it wasn’t till, I got to college that I truly appreciated the way I was raised.

I enjoyed re-interviewing my grandmother on her life from when she was born till now. I as a history major. I took the time out to ask her what she finds different from back then and now? She remarked that the world is more prejudice nowadays and her family didn’t really experience racism and prejudice till they moved from home across the country. So, it’s an important lesson to remember that people experience things differently and that the least expected may happened and change your whole life.

Bibliography

Family History Sample Outline and Questions. Accessed March 07, 2019.

<http://oralhistory.library.ucla.edu/familyHistory.html>.