The Center for Public History Studies

Department of History — University of Houston

Oral History Project

Ernie Attwell

DESEGREGATION BROUGHT NO CHANGE TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The interview was conducted
by
Dorothee Sauter

at Ernie Attwell's home
on
November 22,

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PREFACE

The Public History Program at the University of Houston under the guise of Professor Dr. Joseph Pratt collects memories about Houston's past captured by people who lived through historic events and processes.

The purpose of my oral history project is to gain insight in the history of the Third Ward's rich past before, during and after the Civil Right Movements. Basis points of interest are the daily life for individuals and for different collective entities in a neighborhood distorted by racism. How was public and private life organized? What were the local patterns of social life? What were the celebrated events and where and how were they celebrated?

Through the understanding of peoples' past, changes in their lives, their sense of community, their hope in their children, and their religious thoughts, I intend to gain a heightened sense of this neighborhood's past.

In a next step the facts of this interview are aimed to assist with the redesign of Houston's Emancipation Park in the Third Ward, a thesis project at the University of Illinois, Department of Landscape Architecture, entitled "Visibility for Houston's Emancipation Park: the Development and Application of a Design Process inspired by Theories of Cultural Landscapes," which I intend to complete in 2005.

CRCUMSTANCE OT THE NTERVIEW

During my introductory visit Mr. Attwell started to talk easily and introduced me to some major circumstances in his life. I told him my interest in interviewing him is to get some insights about daily life for individuals and for different organizations in the Third Ward before and after desegregation. I also brought up some information about my life.

At the day of the Interview, November 12, 2004, six kittens were waiting in the front of his two story single family home, built in the sixties. Mr. Attwell had been to the doctor earlier in the morning. He has diabetes, an acute problem with his leg and very short eye sight. To warm his sitting area inside, where the coffee table and a part of the sofa was overloaded in a lose way with newspapers, cutout articles, brochures and planning documents, Ernie Attwell had a little electric heater running.

Mr. Attwell with a great sense of humor and in a warm hearted way welcomed me in two languages. He started the interview in a very organized way and precisely remembered my area of interest which I had outlined on my introductory visit. During the interview he was willing to talk, he also allowed laughter and side stones. Toward the end of the interview Ernie Atwell changed to a slower áe and his concentration became a little loose.

Ernie Attwell left me two news paper articles and two plans prepared by the City of Houston, Department of Planning and Development, looking at the Third Ward. He also let me copy two photos, one portraying his mother, the second a portrait of himself.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

Before the civil rights movement:

Growing up

Schools

How did your family deal with oppression/segregation?

Do you remember traditions or wishes and concerns of your parents?

Did your family enlighten goals for your lifetime?

Third Ward

Do you remember street life? What did people do? Important gathering points, stores, parades?

How and was work organized?

Transportation

Where did people spend leisure time; sport, clubs, music, church?

Do you remember special celebrations such as Thanksgiving, Juneteenth?

Civil Rights Movement:

Do you remember important events during Civil Rights Movement?

After Civil Rights Movement:

Did the desegregation bring change in your personal life, in your life at work?

What changes brought desegregation for your neighborhood, businesses, transportation?

What are events, important organizations, in your neighborhood today?

The view of an urban planner:

How did the Third Ward integrate into the larger city's picture?

Do you see a possibility for a progressive development in the future, one that mixes race, income and housing styles?

VITAE

1937	Born in New York.
1949	Arrived with his mother in Houston and lived at grandparents home.
1951 - 1955	Exodor, Preparatory School, New Hampshire.
1955 - 1959	Oberlin College, Ohio.
1960 - 1964	American Air Force, American Secret Service, mostly based in Paris.
1964 - 1972	Further studies at Oberlin, exchange year in Mexico City, works in New York.
1972	Back in Houston where he lives in the Third Ward with his second wife.
	Worked as a planner for Glf Coast Community Services Association.

THE INTERWEW

Sauter: A question about your upbringing. You arrived here with twelve years in Houston from New York, how did you adjust to the life in the segregated South?

Attwell: Well, Dorothee, there were adjustments to be done as a child, almost a teenager, coming from an integrated part of the country, New York, New Jersey, to a segregated South. At the time I came, the South was legally segregated, that is separate ethnicity residence, businesses, - by law. Segregation was law, which meant, going to school; elementary school was entirely African American. If you went to junior high school, than high school was African American. At that time, Texas State, what is now Texas Southern University, had began as a college, but it too was totally segregated at that time. Businesses were mostly segregated. However my grandmother was light skinned, her skin color was almost white, anglo that was because she came from Louisiana, mixed kind a race. She was a teacher; her husband was a school principal, my grandfather, so she was well known as Black. Places like Foley's department store would allow her to come shop there early before the store opened. So that she could try on, actually put physically clothes on, that she might be interested in buying. Otherwise, if she came during the

regular times, they would not allow Blacks to try on the clothes. — Just as an example of some segregated problems. - So there were adjustments to be made, but because the law is pervasive, it is there, there wasn't much you could do about segregation, since it was the law.

Now, along comes something called civil rights and a striving of African Americans for equality, then we start to go against the law. In order to go to Woolworth lunch counter and sit down with Anglos and eat, you had to go against the law, So we staged sit- ins, that is to sit in a place which was against the law. Food places, you could not typically eat with the white folks. So you sat in, as an agent of change. You had to go against the law, because the law was segregation. The power structure, in order to try to keep segregation, they would change the term to separate but equal; so that didn't appear that one was segregated. One was being separated. One was being put in a tin can and could not go beyond the tin can.

Sauter: Was it personally hurtful to sit in that tin can? Were you afraid?

Attwell: Well, you would be somewhat frustrated, if you felt, that you were pretty smart and could go everywhere yourseIf because in my instance living in New Jersey and New York you could go everywhere. You were never restricted in the North where I was born and lived, but you were restricted to certain things here, well about everything. — If you wanted to go a Hamburger, you had to go to a Hamburger shop, that was owned by

Blacks, for the most part. You could go down town though, to the great big stores and buy clothes and stuff like that, you know, you could do that, but you weren't to go to their restaurants. You weren't to go to their coffee shop in Foley's. You could go to the Foley's coffee shop and order, but you had to order it to take out. You could not sit down order your Hamburger and coffee and sit there and eat it.

Sauter: That felt hard. I mean there must be some feelings hurt.

Attwell: Sure, sure, but also, there is a kind of, you get used to. - You know by law, you can't sit down and eat. You also know by law you can't order the food to take out; you know that, so you go along with that. It was a kind of a go along with. Versus I' m gonna tear this place apart. Let's stop. –

Okay, but, so you had to go the law changed to "be able" to sit down and eat the hamburger with Anglos. So the way to strategically change the law was to act against the law. That's what sit- ins and things like that in restaurants did. When the civil rights act of 1964 came about, which was really an amendment to an already existing civil rights act, that amendment, only everyone thinks, that desegregated everything legally, o, it didn't do that, what it did do was desegregate public, if you will, and governmental entities. For an example, when I used to go to *Exeter* prep school, I took the train to New Hampshire, to go to school, high school.

Sauter: How did that come? You were here in school. Who came up to install you to go there?

Attwell: A phone call came to the house and the man, by the voice, you could say he was an Anglo, and he was from the South, you could tell his southern accent. He said to my mother, he was, he himself a professor at Phillips Exeter Academy, that a person who was a very very close friend of my fathers, living in New Jersey, and my father worked in New York, called. This friend of my father told the alumni department, at that time *Exeter* was trying to recruit African Americans, because Exeter is the top preparatory school in the country, college preparatory, it isn't now, but it was than, so the men wanted… to they gave my fathers name, said he passed away, his son is in Houston in Texas,… he needs to be here at Exeter.

Okay, this was this man. His name was Thadeus B. Lloyd; he came to talk to my mother and to meet me. We talked two or three days. Then he recommended to the scholarship something committee of Exeter, that they should extend to me a scholarship to come to Exeter. So that's how I got there. (witty smile)

Sauter: So did the segregated school here prepare you to be a fabulous student? Who prepared you?

Atwell: I would say, let's say the Lord, God, you know, because I was pretty smart, I got straight A's from Kindergarten to whatever. I mean I was

pretty smart, I am not bragging. I'm saying in the mental department, dumb, but smart. (laughing) That also made Exeter raise its eyebrow, my grades were very good. - I am glad you brought that up.

Sauter: Before we go to Exeter I am curious about the situation of your mother; you lived with the grandparents, it was early fifties

Attwell: Exactly 1949 and on.

Sauter: What did your grandparents do, and your mother, at work, in organizations, I mean they prepared…

Attwell: I got you. Okay. First of all, my mother also was a teacher. As a matter of facts, in that side of the family everybody was a teacher. Her father, my grandfather, he was a principal of an elementary school in the Third Ward, which is just down the street on Holman. My grandmother was a teacher in the Fifth Ward. She was head of he English department as an English teacher. I guess in her raising my mother, that's all my mother saw as a child, - she became a teacher. So did her brother, her brother became a school principal. Her other brother, although he went a different way, he went to be a medical doctor. He began as a general practitioner, but he also was appointed the medical doctor of the Jack Yates High School. He still couldn't get out of education. He became the medical doctor of a football team. So my grandparents and parents they are all, their entire kind of being was all in education. And they expected me to be in education, to become a teacher.

Sauter: Were there movements in the early fifties to defeat segregation in schools?

Attwell: Yes. I would say yes, but my mother could only deal in, and be effective into desegregation by being her in the school system, because the school system was segregated. My grandfather was a principal. When the superintendent would have a monthly meeting of all teachers of the Houston school system, he had to have two meetings, one for the Anglo teachers and in the afternoon a meeting for the African American teachers, same meeting, but he had to have two meetings.

Sauter: So your mother

Attwell: Okay. The civil rights act of 1964 was passed. What that started Dorotheee, in the United States was, it made everyone, no matter what race, everyone could put integration a necessity to desegregate and to integrate. It put that concept in front of everybody's eyes that we have to do this.

The school system in Houston, instead of fighting the federal government, to say we are not going to integrate, we are going like Arkansas, they brought it to the nail to stay segregated, I mean literally, but Houston operated differently. The city and the school system said we have to integrate. We are not goña fight this. So they formed a special commission to work out the school integration. So you know, you just can't all of a sudden say we are going to integrate and have black folks over at the

white folks, like today if you do that, you real get shut. You will physically get shut. So the Singleton Commission, which my mother was on, formulated how to desegregate the school. Singleton, a judge headed this committee. She was very important in the desegregation of the school district. So that was my family's taking part in the integration.

My wife, at that time, she would do the sit-ins, and organized the sit-ins into the Foley's and the Woolworth eating and lunchroom establishments. And my cousin, she and her husband were the first African American's, to eat in a white restaurant in Houston.

Sauter: Where was the restaurant and what was the name of the restaurant?

Attwell: My cousin's name is Jane F. Gaines and her husband is Arthur Gaines. And he too, see the whole family was in education. She was a teacher, Arthur was a teacher, but became a principal very quickly. He worked up in becoming the assistant superintendent of HISD. But at the time, the restaurant was over here, it was a very popular restaurant by Whites called "Sonny's". Sonny Looks, that's what it is. That was the full name of the guy who owned it. It was a steak house. They went there for steaks and stuff like that. Also he personally, the owner, enjoyed sea food and stuff You know you could go there and get two dozens oysters, two dozens clam or something. Well, they went there to desegregate.

Sauter: Did they run in troubles? Or did that go smoothly?

Attwell: Let's say they were not put in jail, but again, making white folks aware that we are going to change. The city is going to change. — So my family has been involved one way or another with integration.

Even my going to Exeter, I was one of all the eight African American students at the entire academy. And the academy had 750 kids. But I was one of eight.

Sauter: If we remain in Houston, can you visually and locally tell me something about where the black owned business Street was before segregation?

Attwell: Dowling Street.

Sauter: How did it look like there? What were the businesses owned by Black people?
Attwell: Many, *many* businesses, I mean small businesses, we are not talking about Foley's department store; we are not talking about that. We are talking about small launches, you know, like a beer *lounge*. At most of these lounges, you could also order food there as the name would sometimes tell you. A major one on Dowling was the East Texas Café. That was open maybe 24 hours a day. But you would go not just for the beer. There were two reasons to go there, for food and to play pool, to shoot pool. But at most of the *lounges* you could at least get a hamburger or something. The cafes were actually the diner type. And you had stores, like clothing stores. They had special things like shirts, stuff like that. It would also

have small businesses owned by Anglos, but that might have African American workers.

Sauter: Jewish owned?

Attwell: Correct, and, I don't know exactly where, it must have been Jewish owned or Italian owned. - All in this area would have been Jewish owned along Dowling, because that was the business corridor, and Scott Street was the business corridor. But Dowling was primarily the business thing. Let's say, possibly the Jewish ownership of small businesses may be South of Elgin. North of Elgin, if the businesses were owned by Anglos that would be Italian.

Sauter: Was there a movie theater? And what about the Eldorado Ballroom?

Attwell: The Eldorado Ballroom was strictly a social, that was Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and what they called Blue Monday. Blue Monday is a situation where, like you went out over the weekend. Saturday, you said to yourself, I am only going out on Saturday, so you took your lady and went out to the club, but had such a good time, that you go Sunday night, after church. You know (laughter) you got your church first, and then you went out Sunday night. Okey, you are supposedly going either to school or to work Monday, but your are kind of a little sluggish…

Sauter: We were in the Eldorado Ballroom, Sunday night and probably even Monday night.

Attwell: So they had a special, just the name of the event, if you will, would be Blue Monday. Cause you w'ld be still kind of sluggish, may be still a little blue, so they said; come on back Monday we'll pick you back up again. That's what's called Blue Monday.

Sauter: What was the event, was it music?

Attwell: Yes. Yes. The Eldorado Ballroom had, remember segregated times, so at the Ballroom, they had live bands playing, you know, it was not a liquor club, but all those nights, life bands would come play. So it was all full with tables, it did sell beer and you brought your own liquor. It was active hke a club so to speak, that was the entertainment. That was some of the best Jazz and Blues playing at the time in Houston. That was at the Eldorado Ballroom.

Sauter: Did the white folks come over?

Attwell: Few, that was okay. Because everybody knew that you were there for the music. You weren't there to raise hell, beat people up or something. So that's what happened there. And then you had a place in Fifih Ward called the Club Matinee, again, jazz band, blues, live band music play. In both areas were African American residents.

Sauter: What about the movie theaters, was that an important event?

Attwell: Only in the sense, remember segregation, remember separate but equal. They wouldn't let us in to the movies down town. The white movies down town, we could not go. Separate but equal, so they built movie houses in

black neighborhoods. So to say they would not have to come down town to our movie houses, they have movie houses.

Sauter: Did they play the same movies?

Attwell: Yes. Friday and Saturday, believe me, it was cowboys, cowboy movies. Tex River and Gene Autrey, Ron Rice, Ken Robins, those characters would have played movies that night. They also had what was called the chapter pictures which meant, let us say, a character. We now play Dorothee Sauter, she is a private detective and we want to show her for the whole winter. So every week there will be a Dorothee Sauter detective. This weekend would be chapter one and then next Friday is chapter two. Next Saturday is chapter three. - It would be continuous chapters of a whole story. — Superman, Batman, all of that would be chapter pictures, what we kids called chapter pictures, but the correct term is serial.

Sauter: Where these the same serials as for the white kids? White characters?

Attwell: Yes. All white. Well, there was a time then they tried to deal with getting black actors and black news, but unless you got somebody like Louis Armstrong, somebody like that, it didn't work out to well.

Sauter: Your feelings about that?

Attwell: Didn't have any feelings. I mean, it just didn't work. We didn't have enough money. See the whole thing is about power. Segregation is about power. It's about; I have power over you. You can not go to Foley's

restaurants; they just made it legal to keep you out at Foley's restaurant. That's power. - See, that's about power.

Sauter: Do you have other observations about this situation, about the power structure?

Attwell: You asked about non profit organizations or any organization. As a black society our power was twofold: one the church, - the church that was a big deal. (noise, paper) Other entities were gathering places, such as Pilgrim Temple in the Fourth Ward Where were meeting points for Blacks, you have, YMCA. At that time, at segregated time, YM was not in full existence, but the YW was. We had a segregated YW, which was down on McGowen. I was there, entertaining kids at the YW. They had programs for all children cause we didn't have a YM. So YW, kind of took over the children programs, boys and girls.

Sauter: How come/hat you took children over there?

Attwell: I knew everybody. Again, my grandfather was going to Blackshear Elementary School, so all the Blackshire school kids I knew. My grandmother taught in Fifth Ward, so I knew Fifth Ward children. My mother taught in Fourth Ward, so I knew Fourth Ward children, so that's why being active with children.

Sauter: What were the programs offered for these children?

Attwell: Well, first of all, the YW that Blacks built there had a swimming pool, that was unusual, even then for a White and particularly for an African American child. We had swimming. Because they had to have programs for boys and girls, they also had, don't ask me there they got the term, a cantine. Now a cantine, first people think, something to drink water out of like if you are in the military you would have one, one of the pieces of the equipment would be a water cantine. Don't ask me where they got the term cantme for a dance. So we had dances. We had all kinds of sport things. We had a baslce)all court. All kinds of sports. (somebody at the door) Just all kinds of youth's programs.

Sauter: And for the adults? Who was served at the cantina?

Attwell: No, the cantina was basically for teenagers, teenage kids. But sometimes on a very big type of event, on a special occasion, but the most part it was just an average type of get together for the youth.

Sauter: Do you remember a big event there?

Attwell: You might have some big dance prior to the Thanksgiving Day football game between Jack Yates High School and Phyllis Wheatley High School. What they called, "the turkey day classic". So they might have a big dance before that event. As the year would go on some type of events would come up and be called a special kind of dance.

Sauter: Do you have other memories about special events for the Black community, I am thinking whether you mentioned Thanksgiving, what was Thanksgiving?

Attwell: Thanksgiving was a big deal, the biggest deal of the year, because of this football game. Again remember segregation. Okay, you had this big football stadium out there which was called the high school football stadium. However, segregated times, the Blacks played on Thursday nights against each other. Schools from out of town came to play. There were only three black high schools at the time. The Whites played on Saturday, so that's even. But Thanksgiving Day obviously played on Thursday, right, I mean Thanksgiving was a Thursday. So the biggest rivalry among black neighborhoods (laughter) in Houston was Third Ward against Fifth Ward. That means Jack Yates High School against *Phyllis Whearley* High School in Fifth Ward. That football game had 25 000 people in the stadium. They had even to bring in individual school chairs and things like that and build a deck and put those chairs to hold the number of people that were coming. White folks came to that game. Everybody came to that game. That was the biggest day happening in HoustorTexas. People came from all around the country to see that game. Because they rather graduated from Phyllis Wheatley and moved to New York or Colorado, they would have come back to see that game. That was a biggest thing that would hit Houston.

Sauter: Concession stands, who sold the food there?

Attwell: Blacks.

Sauter: So a business day as well?

Attwell: The business probably was not owned by the Blacks. But they would be the salespersons.-.

You had questions about Juneteenth.(remembered question I outlined during my introducing visit) It was not as celebrated, but you know it was obviously known and honored.

Sauter: How was it honored?

Attwell: In Third Ward that was Emancipation Park. Both, inside the building there would be some kind of dance there, and they were activities outside. Outside, people were sitting around and there would sometimes be a program. See, Juneteenth, that date, the reason they stage Juneteenth is because it was June 19th 1863. Remember that was back in the eighteen hundreds, there weren't any e-mail's, weren't any computers to get the message to you, you know, you can email your family in Switzerland when you get home and in a second they will get your message. So then President Lincoln said, everybody is free form slavery. Remember this was slavery, but it took a while for a message to get here and it came by boat of the Gulf of Mexico into Galveston. Then a man had to come by a horse to Houston, to tell that you all are free. So that's what Juneteenth represents. It's a freedom thing, freedom knowledge that you are free from

slavery. Therefore since it was in honor of freedom for Blacks form slavery, it was honored.

Sauter: Were there speeches?

Attwell: Yes, and stuff like that. You know they might get us do something… addressed from President *Lincoln*, that was the speech that freed the slaves.

Sauter: Was the speech held outside?

Attwell: Well, yes. - There is a building, there was always a building.

Sauter: What was in that building?

Attwell: It was basically a basketball court and dances were held there, and stuff like that.

Sauter: Did you decorate the building for the event?

Attwell What ever the creative dignity saw at that time. So Juneteenth was an event that was honored other than the several state holidays, they were all honored. There were a couple, several you know, like the state of Texas was at first colonized by Mexico, by the country of Mexico. Sam Houston, General Sam Houston, who was a soldier and won and beat the Spanish at what they called, the battle of San Jacinto, which is not to far from here, from Houston. There were some state holydays that also was celebrating Sam Jacinto Day. There might have been some "civil war holidays" such as the president of the South and then the general of the South, Robert E. Lee, was a day. So that day too would have been celebrated. You wouldn't have to go to school. We weren't jumping up and down celebrating Robert

E. Lee, but it was a Holiday. And you know we went along with… (take that off)

Sauter: So you came back to Houston, and lived in Houston after 1972.

Attwell: Okay, 1972, all right.

Sauter: Do you have observations after the Civil Rights Movements? You were on and off in Houston, you had some distance.

Attwefl: But because my family was involved all the time I kept a premise of almost everything. Basically integration did not come to the Third Ward. But I think we were helped as a residence, the help came in the integrating of costumers down town, going to Foley's, going to… , now being able to go to put on the clothes, you know try on the clothes to buy. Or eating at … and buy olives and apricots, and try integrate at lunch counters. That came about … so we could go downtown and sit down and eat lunch at the department stores or the drugstores. At the Than drugstore, we could eat. Into Montrose, where you live now, the restaurants that are around the Montrose area, the Westchester area, we can go eat and we could also go to the bars. So because I got a very good place over on Montrose that would in my days, when I came back, from military and college and everything, but that was what helped the resident, we could go to places where we could not go before.

Sauter: What about work? Did that open new ways?

Attwell: Well work opened possibilities, yes. Because then we could get better jobs down at the ship channel, down on the docks, other than be carrying cargo of the ships. We could get better jobs. We could get jobs in offices down at the docks, at the shipyards and stuff

Sauter: And what did you do, you were a fabulous student? - Where did you go after *Exeter*?

Attwell: The college that I attended was Oberlin College in Oberlin Ohio, I majored in romance languages. I speak French, Spanish, Italian. I went on exchange to the University of Mexico, in Mexico City, and I went to the Sorbonne in Paris on another exchange. And even though, it took me about ten years to get my degree from Oberlin, because I got married, I left the campus. Then because I left Oberlin with my wife, they immediately, what is the word they called it, if you were in college you did not have to go into the military, but the minute I withdrew from college, so did my exemption from going to the military, immediately I got welcome from ncle Sam. I choose to go to the Air Force where *I became a counter intelligence agent for the office ofspecial investigations in Northern France.*

Sauter: What was your degree from Oberlin?

Attwell: Romance languages.

Sauter: Than you came back to Houston and looked at these new possibilities for work everywhere.

Attwell: New possibilities are wrong, for work, yes.

Sauter: What did you do here, you went to the military, worked in New York, had this degree, what was your possibility?

Attwell: It was everything, but I didn't know quite where to go. But I did start off being a social service analyst in the largest non profit agency at the time in Houston. And I moved into social service planning. That planning started, since I was so much out in the neighborhood and planning in large entities, large areas of the city. I became a planner for the Gulf Coast Community Services Association. I became head of that planning department, and that moved me into urban planning. From the social planning to the urban planning, and from there to working for community development corporations. I am getting up with planners, no matter what, I am a planner. Don't have your husband and you call me, to come fix the shingles on your roof I will not be somebody to do that for you.

Sauter: As a planner, in the seventies, how did you look at this neighborhood? For this neighborhood, what was the change that desegregation brought?

Attwell: There was no desegregation. - Two major things happened. One, yes the law came into being the act, civil right act. The other act, at the same time, was an amendment to the transportation act. Believe it or not, prior to the amendment, tax dollars, could only be used to construct highways, like from one state to another state, the interstate. But they couldn't use federal dollars to build roads *inside the city*.

Sauter: We were with the question about the transportation act in the seventies, the highways came.

Attwell: Inside the city you couldn't, prior to the change of the law in 1965, same year, you couldn't use federal dollars on the construction of roads inside the city. It had to be gone across the country, the interstate. However came an amendment to the transportation act that could use federal dollars to construct roads through the city. That does not sound like that that does hit urban development. Except right up the street there you came, either under it, or used it to get here, which is the 288 highway. The change of the law made that that highway 288 could be built using federal dollars. Again that doesn't sound like a problem in urban development, but except once you look at that highway, and see that it is depressed, below grade level. You forget that all that land was even. What was on the land? Human beings, houses, businesses were on the land. When the highway came to move the highway, and also US 59, part of that is in both black areas, Third and Fifth Ward. Part of that displaced 3O 000 people.

Sauter: What did that do to your neighborhood?

Attwell: That about killed it. Instead using transportation, resolving a transportation problem as a positive resolution, it made a negative resolution in

development. Because now, if you own the hair style place, you have no people coming to your hair style place, right, you moved 30 000 people. You have nobody coming to your grocery store, you moved 30 000 people. That set the Third Ward back. It caused a knock down, an abandoning of many houses and many buildings, other than the roads that they had to knock down. In the Third Ward you have a larger ratio of undeveloped land to the total land than you normally have. That was conveyed by the displacement of all the houses and everything that you had to move or knock down for the 288 and 59 highway. That transportation problem became a development problem for the Third Ward.

Sauter: What about the integration of the Third Ward?

Attwell: No integration came. No. There was, where you sit right know, there was a little while of integration in this area. Because this was totally Anglo. Than blacks began "creep in". I guess that's one thing of integration. If we were medical doctors, I am using the term in the sense of income; you could now go buy your house by law, not maybe in reality, but by law. If you have the money you could go buy a house anywhere.

Sauter: And the Blacks with this money did they buy in the Third Ward?

Attwell: They came here, this is an extension now, "not a formal extension" of the Third Ward. Third Ward stops at Alabama, but because Blacks began to

move into areas, probably you have been here enough, to hear the term White flight, what that meant was, like right here.

Sauter: What happened here was Blacks moved in this area, Whites moved out?

Attwefl: Whites go. No, no, we can't have them to go to school together. We have to move. And so there was White flight. That's why on this street everything you see is Black. Black owned.

Sauter: Today is there a vivid church, any vivid organization, or do you not need these organizations anymore?

Attwell: Believe it or not, in the black area, because the colleges and the universities we went to were black, now, they might not be here, but even like going to Howard University, like you showed me the thing here, talking about Scotty Bryant. (showed the Houston Review, volume 1, number I on my introductory visit, because I thought his mother was on a picture) She is still alive, and she was highly estimated in the black progress because her husband was principal, Dr. I. B. Bryant. Thelma Scott Bryant, they lived on Holman, and she still lives there on Holman Street, she is about 95, maybe closer to a hundred, but I knew her, she knew my mother very well, she knew my grandmother all that you know. What was I talking about?

Sauter: Organizations

Attwefl: Scotty Brown went to Howard. I met Bryan at the Howard's. We all, we Blacks, went to like Fisk University, Howard University Talladega,

Tuskegee, and Prairie View University, which is up 90 miles the road. Because of that, the organizations other than the alumni were the sorority or fraternity, so there were about eight black sororities and fraternities in my childhood here in Houston, which started off, obviously as a college entity, but it continued. So there was an alumni of that sorority or fraternity. My mother was the president of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. That was, again a social organization that moved into… or they might make scholarships for your son to go to college. So they became a little bit more meaningful as time went on.

The biggest organization was the church. The church although supposedly not supposed to be political, it was the only political thing we could really count on. It was the politics. Once we were able to start voting and everything, we voted what the Reverend told you to vote. We voted, what's your name, what's your husband's name, we voted for Josef to be city council president. You know, that's how, that's the politics.

Sauter: Still today the church is the most important…

Atwell: I would say, yes. See you got Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church and they have done verything. That's Reverend Bill Lawson. He "called himself' retired but that, no. The first thing I saw in that… , is that first thing with the law. Here was Bill Lawson supposedly retired. Retired, no. But churches are still powerful, St. Johns. The Lady cross the street

passed away, she has a funeral at St. Johns. So I got a call that I need to be at the funeral at St. Johns on Monday…

Sauter: I have a last question. Do you see a possibility for a progressive development in the future, one that mixes race, income, housing style, in this particular area?

Attwell: No. What you'll see is something like what happens cross the highway 288, all those town homes and everything over there by Elgin and all the way back to downtown. There's duplex, that's Charles LeBlanc, that's Midtown. See, even though, those are postage stamps to live in, in terms of size, that's what my mother called them, those minimally are 250 000 dollars. So what that did, was to displace the low- income people. The area was already kind of abandon, but there were low- income people living there. But the Perry Homes Urban Lofts, all those big companies, moved out the low- income people and put in mostly Anglo. But remind you; historically that was still an Anglo area. — But what I am saying is, were is not any integration in that, there might be a few African Americans, but I doubt it, I mean not many. In order to buy a 250 000 dollar house relative you have to be gona making a million. Because you gona be paying more than 250 000, that's only a third you gona be paying, the 250 000. So integration is gonna be difficult.

Now there is an entity called the CDC, a Community Development Corporation, those entities will determine affordable houses, you know an 85 000, 90000, 100 000 dollar house.

Sauter: For the Third Ward, so there is a possibility?

Attwell: The areas of low income housing do exist. The most important, new housing needs to be constructed. Yes there is a possibility.

Sauter: You believe in this possibility for the Third Ward? What will be for the Third Ward, possibilities in the future? There will be four to five Community Development Corporations. I am on the board of one. We are, see, they totally now how to promote. See we are in the newspaper. (shows paper)

Sauter: Airight, tell us about this organization you are in, for the development in the Third Ward.

Attwell: Yes. I started being on the board of Project Row Houses, which is a public art facility. They also deal with gallery type and studio type for artists, which we'll having a big celebration on this Saturday and this Sunday, which you may come and see the artist installations. And also it has the history of the project Row Houses, And it does mention the CDC, the Row House Community Development Corporation. In the paper, they say a sister organization. Its gona say people who started Row House started the CDC. But this just tells you that we are in the paper. And this (shows plans from CDC)

Sauter: So there is hope for that Third Ward, that it's not completely erased, and not only town homes will come?

Attwell: Correct, correct, we might have to deal with Duplexes, but it won't be what Charles Le Blanc has in Midtown. it won't be like that.

Sauter: You wanted to add because the Third Ward.

Attwell; Because of the… of Community Development Corporations is, what I have said earlier, is why housing, new housing for low and moderate income families will be constructed and help to develop the Third Ward into an improved layer then it currently is. There are about five Community Development Corporations that are now basically constructing in the Third Ward area including Row House CDC, Mac Gregor area CDC and Neighborhood *Recovery*, those have large entities building in the Third Ward area.