

NAME.....ALFRED PEPPERS DATE MARCH 24,1994

TRANSCRIBED BY GENE WOOD,PARK VOLUNTEER (BEGAN MARCH 28,1999--

I---STANDS FOR INTERVIEWER

INITIALS STAND FOR NAME OF PERSON BEING INTERVIEWED

NAMES OF PLACES AND PERSONS ARE SPELLED AS HEARD,BUT NOT NECESSARILY CORRECT.

WORDS WHICH ARE NOT CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD ARE IN BRACKETS []

TAPE IS IDENTIFIED BY THE LETTER "A"

I---TODAY IS MARCH 24,1994,THE TIME IS 11:45,WE'RE IN THE FORDYCE BATHHOUSE CONFERENCE ROOM,I'M RANGER TONI COOPER,AND I'M INTERVIEWING TODAY MR.ALFRED PEPPERS.

I---MR.ALFRED,WHICH BATHHOUSE DID YOU WORK AT ?

AP---PITHIAN BATHHOUSE.....

I---DID YOU WORK AT ANY OTHERS ?

AP---YEAH,DOWNTOWNER,SUPERIOR,AND LAMAR.....

I---OKAY.....

AP---AN' THE BAPTIST.....

I---WHAT OCCUPATION ?

AP---WELL,THE LAST ONES I NAMED WERE ALL BATH ATTENDANTS,I WAS A BATH ATTENDANT AT THE PITHIAN,BEEN THERE 15 YEARS,STARTED OFF AS A PORTER,THEN WORKED UP TO A BATH ATTENDANT....

I---OKAY.....

AP---YES....

I---THAT'S GOOD....HOW WAS THE AVERAGE DAY LIKE AS A BATH ATTENDANT ?

AP---WELL,SOME DAYS ARE SLOW,SOME DAYS ARE HECTIC,AND SOME DAYS ARE REAL GOOD,

I---OKAY....

AP---YEAH.....

I---COULD YOU TELL ME THE ROUTINE,YOUR JOB DUTY AS A BATH ATTENDANT ?

AP---AH YEAH,IT WAS JUST A REGULAR ROUTINE OF ANY BATHHOUSE,AH,BE

THERE AT SEVEN,NO YOU START AT SEVEN,AND YOU OFF AT 11:30,12 O'CLOCK,

FOR AN HOUR BREAK,AN YOU COME BACK AN WORK TILL THREE O'CLOCK,AN' THE ROUTINE,IS,WELL THEY GO TO THE DRESSING ROOM,COME DOWN DOWN WITH A SHEET OR A TOWEL OR A ROBE,SIT IN THE WAITIN' ROOM,WAIT FOR THEIR NUMBER TO BE CALLED,AN' AFTER THAT,THEY GO INTO THE TUB,AND STAY,UNLESS THEY HAVE A DIRECTION,TO STAY AS LONG AS THE DIRECTIONS

DON'T,KEEP THEM ON THE AVERAGE 'BOUT 15-20 MINUTES,TAKE 'EM OUT,PUT

'EM IN THE PACK ROOM,PACK 'EM,SEND 'EM UP TO THE COOLING ROOM,THEN IF THEY DESIRE A MASSAGE,THE MASSEUSE OR THE MASSEUR TAKES CARE OF

'EM,[WORDS UNCLEAR].....

I---YOU MENTIONED DIRECTION,DIRECTION,IS THAT A DOCTORS' PRESCRIPTION ?

AP---YEAH...

I---OKAY....

AP---YES.....

I---SO DID A LOT OF PEOPLE GO GET THE DOCTORS' PRESCRIPTION ?

AP---YEAH,QUITE A FEW...

I---OKAY....DID MANY BATHERS RETURN YEAR AFTER YEAR AND ASK FOR YOU ?

AP---WELL,YEAH,IN MY CASE AT THE PITHIAN,I WAS THE ONLY ONE.....

I---THE ONLY BATH ATTENDANT OR THE ONLY BLACK ?

AP---WELL,THEY DIDN'T HAVE BUT TWO,THEY HAD THREE AT ONE TIME, AN' TWO,LET'S SEE,ONE DIED AN' THE OTHER ONE QUIT, SO THAT LEFT ME.

I---WHERE DID MOST OF THE BATHERS TRAVEL FROM ?

AP---AH,MOST OF COME FROM WHAT YOU CALL THE MIDWEST....

I---OKAY...

AP---CHICAGO,MOSTLY...

I---OKAY...DID YOU EVER BATH ANYBODY FAMOUS OR WELL KNOWN ?

AP---YEAH, JERSEY JOE WALCOTT,AH,LET ME SEE,WHAT'S THIS PITCHERS'

NAME,ON THE DODGERS,DON NEWCOME,ROY [CAMPANELA],UMMM.LET'S SEE,HUH,WELL MAYBE SOME MORE WILL COME TO ME,YEAH.....

I---WELL,DO YOU BY CHANCE HAVE ANY PHOTOS OF THESE PEOPLE ?

AP---NO, I DON'T.....

I---OKAY....

AP---NO,UH,UH.....

I---ALRIGHT.....HOW HAS THE BATHIN' BUSINESS CHANGED DURIN' THE YEARS

THAT YOU'VE WORKED,DO YOU THINK IT'S DIFFRENT,OR HAS IT SLOWED DOWN,OR....?

AP---WELL,IT HAS PRACTICALLY STOPPED WITH THE EXEPTION OF THE HOTELS,

I---OKAY....

AP---YES....

I---WHY DO YOU THINK THE BATHHOUSE BUSINESS HAS DECLINED,OVER THE YEARS ?

AP---WELL,AH,SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO FORMERLY CAME HERE,I GUESS THEY DIED OUT,AN' THEN THEY GOT NEW MEDICINES,AND THE DOCTOR TELLS THEM THAT THEY CAN TAKE THAT,AN' THEY DON'T HAVE TO COME TO HOT SPRINGS,

SO,AH,.....

I---WERE YOU STILL WORKING IN THE BATHOUSES AT THIS TIME OR ?

AP---NO,RETIRED...

I---HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN RETIRED ?

AP---ABOUT NINE.....

I---ABOUT NINE ?

AP---UH-HUH...

I---DO YOU REMEMBER THE YEAR WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED IN THE BATHHOUSE ?

AP---1952....

I---1952 ?

AP---UH-HUH....

I---AT THAT TIME,DID THE SUPERINTENDANT AND THE STAFF COME AROUND

THE BATHHOUSES TO CHECK.....?

AP---YES, THEY DID,YEAH,YEAH.....

I---COULD YOU TELL ME WHAT THEY WERE LOOKIN' FOR WHEN THEY CAME INSIDE ?

AP---AH,CLEANLINESS,AN' YOUR PROCEDURES IN BATHIN',AH,TEST,TESTIN' THE TEMPERATURE.....

I---WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF SOMETHING WAS WRONG,OR IF YOUR WATER WAS TOO COLD ?

AP---WELL,YOU WAS WRITTEN UP,

I---OKAY....REPREMANDED ?

AP---YEAH,RIGHT,UH-HUH.....

I---CAN YOU THINK OF ANY DRAMATIC CASES OF HEALING THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH ME,CAN YOU THINK OF ANY ?

AP---HEALINS'? WELL,NOW,I'VE HEARD ABOUT A LOT OF 'EM,I NEVER HAD NO

EXPERIENCE,NO,NO,UH-UH.....NO.....

I---DID YOU TAKE THE THERMAL BATHS YOURSELF ?

AP---EVERY DAY,

I---EVERY DAY ?

AP---EVERY DAY,UH-HUH.....

I---DID YOU TAKE 'EM BEFORE YOU STARTED WORKIN' OR AFTER YOU?

AP---WELL,I TAKE 'EM A LITTLE BEFORE I GO HOME.....

I---OKAY

AP---UH-HUH.....

I---WHERE DID THE BLACKS,WHERE WERE THEY ALLOWED TO BATH AT,
WHICH

AP---AH, THE ONLY TIME WHEN THEY HAD SEGREGATION,OH,THE AFRO-
AMERICANS OR BLACKS,WHATEVER YOU WANT TO CALL IT,AH,THEY
BATHED

EITHER AT THE PITHIAN OR BAPTIST.....

I---OKAY.....

AP--- THAT'S THE ONLY CHOICE THEY HAD.....

I---RIGHT.....

AP---UH,YEAH..UH-HUH...

I---WELL,WHEN YOU WERE WORKING,MR.PEPPERS,WERE THE
BATHHOUSES

OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK ?

AP---NO,I WASN'T WORKIN' THEN,I HEARD ABOUT THIS,YEAH....

I---DID THE HEAT IN THE BATHHOUSE EVER BOTHER YOU,OR DID YOU GET
USED TO IT ?

AP---WELL,YOU NEVER GET USED TO IT,BUT YOU LEARN TO PUT UP WITH
IT...

I---OKAY....YOU JUST PUT UP WITH IT ?

AP---YEAH, UH-HUH.....

I---DID ANYONE IN YOUR FAMILY,LIKE FATHER OR MOTHER,DID THEY
WORK IN THE BATHHOUSE ?

AP---NO,NO,NO,NO.....

I---OKAY...HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT THE BATHHOUSES,HOW DID
YOU ACTUALLY GET STARTED ?

AP---AH.....ELROY PUGGET TOLD ME THAT THEY NEEDED SOMEONE TO
WORK AT THE PITHIAN,AN' THAT'S HOW I GOT STARTED.....

I---WERE PHYSICALS REQUIRED AT THE TIME YOU WERE BATH
ATTENDANT,DID

YOU HAVE TO TAKE A PHYSICAL ?

AP---YEAH,THEY WERE REQUIRED,THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN REQUIRED,AN' I
DON'T

KNOW WHETHER THEY ARE NOW OR NOT,BUT,AH,THEY WERE THEN.....

I---WHERE DID YOU HAVE TO GO FOR YOUR PHYSICAL AND WHAT WERE
THEY LOOKIN' FOR ?

AP---WELL,SOME PEOPLE WENT TO PRIVATE DOCTORS AN'OTHERS WENT DOWN HERE TO WHAT THEY CALL THE LIBBY MEMORIAL.....YEAH....

I---NOW,WHEN YOU BECAME A BATH ATTENDANT,DID YOU HAVE TO GO TO SCHOOL,I HEARD THEY HAD TO GO TO SCHOOL AT THAT TIME ?

AP---AH,YES,YES,YES,UH-HUH....

I---WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL ?

AP---AH,AT THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.....

I---DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR.....

AP---UH-HUH....YEAH....

I---HOW LONG DID YOU HAVE TO GO,DO YOU REMEMBER ?

AP---I THINK ABOUT TWO WEEKS,MORNING AND NIGHT.....

I---TWO WEEKS,[EVEN AT] NIGHT ?

AP---UH-HUH, YEAH.....

I---DID BATH ATTENDANTS DEPEND ON TIPS ?

AP---YES, THEY DID.....

I---DID YOU MAKE GOOD TIPS ?

AP---WELL,NOTHIN' LIKE I'D LIKE TO MAKE,BUT,YOU KNOW,FAIR.

I---RIGHT...

AP---YES....

I---OKAY,DO YOU HAVE PICTURES OF YOU,[AS YOUR WORKIN'] INTO THE BATHHOUSES,OR PICTURES OF BATHHOUSES,LIKE THE NATIONAL BAPTIST OR THE PITHIAN ?

AP---NO,I DON'T.....

I---NO PICTURES....

AP---NO,NO,NO.....

I---CAUSE WE'RE LOOKIN' FOR PICTURES.....

AP--UH-HUH...NO,I DON'T HAVE ANY....

I---DO YOU HAVE ANY FRIENDS THAT WORKED AT THE GOVERNMENT FREE BATHHALLS ?

AP---NO.....

I---DURING THAT TIME PERIOD ?

AP---WELL, I WOULDN'T SAY THEY FRIENDS,SOME AQUAINTANCE,YEAH,UH-HUH...YEAH....

I---WELL,SOMETIME SOON,IF YOU COULD THINK OF THE NAMES,CAUSE WE WOULD LIKE TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THEM.....

AP---WELL,ALL THOSE PEOPLE ARE DEAD.....

I---OH,OKAY.....OKAY...THAT ANSWERS THAT QUESTION !!!
WELL,MR.PEPPERS,

I THANK YOU FOR TAKIN' OUT THE TIME IN YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE TO BE INTERVIEWED AND I APPRECIATE YOU,THIS IS TONI COOPER,THANK YOU....

AP---YES.....

END OF INTERVIEW.....