

OH 1979.01.53

An Interview With
DR. NOBLE R. FRISBY
April 28, 1977

Interviewed by
Daisy Greene

Mississippi
Department of Archives and History
and the
Washington County Library System
Oral History Project:
Greenville and Vicinity

AU 27
OH 1979.01.53

Interviewee: Noble Frisby
Interviewer: Daisy Greene

Title: An interview with Noble Frisby, April 28, 1977 /
interviewed by Daisy Greene

Collection Title: Washington County Library System and the Mississippi
Department of Archives and History Oral History Project

Scope Note: This oral history project began with a grant from the
South Delta Development Planning District in December
1976. Roberta Miller and Daisy Greene were the project
coordinators until the project ended January 1, 1979. The
purpose of the project was to interview local residents
and record their views and recollections of Washington
County's history.

Items in this collection were selected to be digitally
remastered through the National Endowment for the
Humanities Civil Rights Era Recordings Grant in 2004.

MRS. DAISY M. GREENE: This is an interview with Dr. Noble R. Frisby for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History and the Washington County Library System. The date is May 6, 1977.

Dr. Frisby, will you give me your full name?

FRISBY: Dr. Noble Rucker Frisby.

GREENE: And the address of your Clinic?

FRISBY: 566 East Alexander Street, Greenville, Mississippi.

GREENE: The Doctor's clinic is the place of the interview. And give me your birth date and your birthplace.

FRISBY: October 8, 1901, Cannonsburg, Mississippi, Jefferson County.

GREENE: Your mother's maiden name?

FRISBY: Celeste Tyler. C-E-L-E-S-T-E.

GREENE: And your father's name?

FRISBY: Peter Edmond Frisby.

GREENE: Doctor, what induced you to come to Greenville to practice?

FRISBY: My sister, Mrs. Ophelia Threadgill, lived here in Greenville, and I promised her that when I finished I would come here to practice medicine. She told me there was a great need for Negro physicians in Greenville, a need of medical attention. For that reason, I decided to come to Greenville to practice medicine.

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MILLER: What was your association with Dr. Delaine? Give me his full name, too.

FRISBY: Leonadis Delaine. I came here in 1946 and practiced with Delaine until his death in 1947. Dr. Delaine was a well-respected physician, and well liked by most people. He was civic-minded, and did everything to encourage people to vote and register and become first-class citizens.

GREENE: Wasn't there some effort made to get Dr. Delaine's name on the Miller Memorial?

FRISBY: There was. Dr. Delaine struggled and worked hard to pay for the Miller Memorial, and inscribed Dr. Miller's name on it. Dr. Miller was the father of Mrs. Daisy Greene. There was some effort to have his name inscribed on it also, but after his death it was never completed. It is just "Miller Memorial, in memory of Dr. J. H. Miller."

GREENE: The building is not in use so much now?

FRISBY: Yes, it is in use, but not like it should be.

GREENE: What was the condition of civil rights when you came here? What year was that?

FRISBY: It was very difficult. Civil Rights were at a low ebb. It was hard to get Negroes to register, and very few, when I came here, were able to vote. They would

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be asked certain questions in order to be able to register. They were asked, "Do you believe in State rights?" or "Do you believe in outside interference?" or "Do you believe in Yankees coming down interferring with our way of living?" And, if you said you did believe in it, why you would not become eligible to register. Also, the NAACP played a big part in helping Negroes to become citizens, but one unfortunate thing about it was that the teachers in Greenville couldn't identify themselves with the NAACP. When they applied for a job as teacher, if they said they were a member of the NAACP, they were automatically disqualified.

GREENE: Do you know anything about the efforts black people have made to get a seat in the City Council?

FRISBY: Yes, I was the first one to announce for City Councilman. Although I lost, it did pave the way for other candidates to run. Since that time, they have had several others to run, Mr. James Edwards and James Carter, Attorney Leslie King, Louis Taylor, Rev. Newton, Louis Hill, Mrs. Beatrice Huddleston, and Joe Bivins. Now, George Lewis and Jimmy Thornton ran for County Supervisor, to become members of the Board of Supervisors. We have one black member of the City Council, Mrs. Sarah Johnson.

GREENE: Do you remember how long it took before we finally got a black in?

FRISBY: An eight to ten year struggle to get someone on the City Council.

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GREENE: You told me on another occasion about a traffic accident.

FRISBY: Oh, yes. After the election, we had a meeting at my house, to plan our strategy for the next election, and Dr. Saint Hille, who lived across from me, was coming over to join the meeting. While crossing the street, he was struck by a car. He never regained consciousness. He died a few hours later; but one of his great dreams and desires was to see a Negro elected to City Council.

GREENE: Will you spell his name?

FRISBY: S-A-I-N-T H-I-L-L-E. It is pronounced "Santeel".

GREENE: Now, his initials were?

FRISBY: H. J. Saint Hille.

GREENE: Dr. H. J. Saint Hille. He was from one of the Islands?

FRISBY: He was from Haiti.

GREENE: What about the "COFO" Organization, Doctor?

FRISBY: COFO was a group of well-respected, intelligent individuals mostly from Massachusetts. Its members came here to encourage and instruct the Negro how to become a first-class citizen; to teach him how to register, how to vote, and to educate them so that they would be first-class citizens.

GREENE: Were there any youngsters in COFO?

FRISBY: Yes, there were several. In fact, most of them were young. A few were in their teens, but most of them

were in their twenties. Most of them were from Massachusetts, but a few were from New York and Philadelphia.

GREENE: Do you think some of them, the younger ones especially, were just trying to escape from home?

FRISBY: No, I don't think so. I think they were very sincere. They were very intelligent and highly respected people, interested in seeing that the Negro became a first-class citizen.

GREENE: Were they paid for this service?

FRISBY: No, no. They were not paid. They paid their own expenses. Everything was paid by themselves.

GREENE: Well, as far as you know, did blacks help with housing and feeding them?

FRISBY: Oh, yes. We helped the best we could. I remember we had a picnic on the 4th of July, and we had the gathering, including quite a few whites, in the back yard. We ordered some food from one of the black places here, and told the owner to bring it to my home. When he came, he got somewhat frightened and started away. We had to overtake him and tell him that he was in the right place.

GREENE: Did you know Dr. Howard, who lived in Mound Bayou?

FRISBY: I did. Dr. Howard was a well respected surgeon; he would operate on you, treat you, and not ask for money. I remember he had a patient at the Nursing Home on Broadway. He came all the way from Mound Bayou here, with his

assistant and nurses, to operate on the patient. Didn't ask anything about money. If they had money, that was all right, and if they didn't. And he would sit there and see that the patient was conscious. There were no recovery rooms then.

GREENE: That was the Sarah Williams Nursing Home on North Broadway.

FRISBY: Dr. Howard also had a big place at Mound Bayou. He had a swimming pool, a park and a recreation center, and every year he would bring an outstanding black person down, - Dorsey, the Congressman, Mahalia Jackson, Thurgood Marshall. I remember Thurgood Marshall said, "We are going to put a Negro in Ole Miss." I thought he was kidding. Some years later James Meridith did graduate from Ole Miss. There was bloodshed during the time James Meridith was admitted. One person was killed. Governor Ross Barnett and his assistant, the Lieutenant Governor, stood and tried to prevent him from being admitted, but President Kennedy sent the National Guard and had them to admit Meridith to Ole Miss.

GREENE: I should have given the meaning of COFO earlier when we were talking about it. It is the Council of Federated Organizations. That's the meaning of "COFO".

FRISBY: Oh, yes.

GREENE: What has become of James Meridith?

FRISBY: He is still practicing law, and he is still active in politics. He also lectures once in a while, and still

hopes that he will be a Congressman.

GREENE: Besides taking an active part in Civil Rights movements, you have done quite a bit in sports and recreation for our young people.

FRISBY: Oh, yes. I built a park on North Theobald called the Frisby Stadium. They played ball night and day there, day games and night games. We had such players as George Scott, who is now with the Boston Red Sox, Frank Barnes, former Major League player with the White Sox. He is retired from baseball now. There were several Barnes brothers, Tom, LeRoy, Frank, and Isaac Barnes. In fact, they had almost a Barnes Team themselves.

GREENE: Are any of the Barnes Brothers here now?

FRISBY: Frank Barnes is. He is in business for himself. I might say further that we had other players like my sons Don and Michael Frisby, who were good ball players. We developed quite a few good ball players at the park.

GREENE: During your practice, have you come across dope addicts who threatened you at your office, Doctor?

FRISBY: I had some dealings with them, but they never threatened me. They came in and wanted certain prescriptions. I would say that I didn't write that kind of prescription. That was the end of it.

GREENE: Until lately, you've had long working hours.

FRISBY: Oh, yes. I was living at 576 Alexander in 1952. I was living there and also had an office there. People

would come in day and night. I had a night nurse and day nurses also, and I would treat them equal day and night. It was quite strenuous. Sometimes I look back and wonder how I did it.

GREENE: You have a very fine apartment building on Alexander.

FRISBY: That is the site of the old Colored Kings Daughters. It was one of the two black hospitals here, the nursing home on North Broadway and the Colored Kings Daughters. The old Kings Daughters was at one time the hospital for blacks. Its cornerstone is on the ground at the apartment right now.

GREENE: Well, I hope no one will destroy it. Those names on the cornerstone are precious. And your home on North Theobald Street was on a historical site also.

FRISBY: Yes, Bishop Edward Lampton was a friend of your father's, and he was known all over the States; in fact, all throughout the United States. When I first came here, I stayed in his former home.

GREENE: You have two sons?

FRISBY: I have two sons. One, Donald Frisby, practicing medicine in Washington, and Michael Frisby, who is the present Program Director of WDIA Radio Station in Memphis, Tennessee.

GREENE: Do you think Donald will ever come back to Greenville to practice, Doctor?

FRISBY: I don't think so. I've given up hope of his ever coming back to Greenville. I've tried, but he seems to like to stay where he is. So I've given up hope.

GREENE: Have any of your dreams come true?

FRISBY: Yes, some of my dreams have come true. First of all, when I first came here I was hoping that the Negro would become first-class citizens and respected, whether or not they had money. When I came here, it was unheard of for blacks to go to such places as the Holiday Inn and the Downtowner, but now, if you have the money, you can go to those places. But, as I say, there is further room for improvement.

I do hope to see that the city will be separated into wards where every candidate would be selected from that particular ward. In that way, they would get more Negroes on the City Council and in other offices here in the City of Greenville. I hope to live to see this not only in Greenville, but throughout the state and in other states.

One other thing I might mention is that Mr. James Edwards and I had to go to Jackson once to testify before the Civil Rights Commission concerning the conditions in Greenville as compared with other cities in Mississippi. They asked us what was the condition as compared with other cities in Mississippi. We told them that they could be better and also there was improvement, but due to the fact that we had

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certain people here like Hodding Carter, Mrs. Brent, and two white ministers, conditions were better than in most cities in the state.

GREENE: Tell me, how is it that you went to high school so far away from Mississippi?

FRISBY: My preference was to enter Howard University. I finished first at Natchez College, and after I left, I went to Washington to enter Howard University. They told me that I hadn't finished high school, and I had to go down to Dunbar High School and stayed two and a half years before I was eligible to enter Howard University. After that time, I entered Howard and finished.

GREENE: This is a reflection on our southern schools, isn't it? Wasn't your father a minister?

FRISBY: Yes, he was. At one time he was President of the General Baptist State Convention here.

GREENE: Thank you, Doctor, for your time.

FRISBY: Thank you, Mrs. Greene.

(End of Interview)

(Transcribed by Alice C. Nagel)

FINAL
10/20/77
A. C. N.

INDEX
OF DR. NOBLE R. FRISBY

Alexander Street, 1, 7, 8
Barnes, Frank, former Major League player, White Sox, 7
Barnes, Isaac, mentioned, 7
Barnes, Leroy, mentioned, 7
Barnes, Tom, mentioned, 7
Barnett, Ross (Governor, Mississippi), 6
Bivens, Joe, candidate, City Councilman, 3. See also City Council
Board of Supervisors, 3
Boston Red Sox, mentioned, 7
Brent, _____ (Mrs.), 10
Broadway (Street), mentioned, 5, 6, 8
Cannonsburg, Mississippi, 1
Carter, Hodding, 10
Carter, James, candidate, City Councilman, 3. See also City Council
City Council, Black candidates: Dr. Noble R. Frisby, 3;
James Edwards, 3; James Carter, 3; Attorney Leslie
King, 3; Louis Taylor, 3; Rev. Newton, 3; Louis Hill,
3; Mrs. Beatrice Huddleston, 3; Joe Bivens, 3; mentioned,
4, 9
Civil Rights, conditions of, 2; movement, mentioned, 7
Civil Rights Commission, 9
"COFO" (Council of Federated Organization), 4-6
County Supervisor, 3
Delaine, Leonadis, doctor, 2

Dorsey, _____, Congressman, mentioned, 6

Downtowner, hotel, mentioned, 9

Dunbar High School, 10

Edwards, James, candidate, City Councilman, 3, 9. See also

City Council

Frisby Clinic, 1

Frisby, Donald, son, doctor, Washington, 7, 8

Frisby, Michael, son, Program Director, WDIA Radio Station-

Memphis, Tenn., 7,8

Frisby, Noble Rucker, Dr.: born Cannonsburg, Miss., 1;

medical practice with Dr. Leonadis Delaine, 2; views

on and role in Civil Rights, 2-7; candidate, City Council

Council seat, 3; role in sports and recreation for

young people, 7; owner, apartments, 8; testimony,

Civil Rights Commission, 9; schooling, Dunbar High

School, 10; Natchez College, 10; Howard University, 10

Frisby, Peter Edmond, father, minister, President, General

Baptist State Convention, 1, 10

Frisby Stadium, park, 7

General Baptist State Convention, 10

Greene, Daisy, 2

Haiti, mentioned, 4

Hill, Louis, candidate, City Councilman, 3. See also City

Council

Holiday Inn, mentioned, 9

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Howard, _____, Dr., surgeon (Mound Bayou, Mississippi), 5, 6

Howard University, 10

Huddleston, Beatrice, candidate, City Councilwoman, 3. See
also City Council

Islands, the, mentioned, 4

Jackson, Mahalia, mentioned, 6

Jackson, Mississippi, mentioned, 9

Jefferson County, 1

Jonhson, Sarah, black member, City Council, 3. See also
City Council

Kennedy, _____, President, 6

King, Leslie, attorney, candidate, City Councilman, 3

Kings Daughters (Colored), hospital, 8

Lampton, Edward (Bishop), 8

Lewis, George, candidtate, County Supervisor, 3

Marshall, Thurgood, 6

Massachusetts, mentioned, 4, 5

Memphis, Tennessee, 8

Meridith, James, 6

Miller, J. H., 2

Miller Memorial, 2

Mound Bayou (Miss.), 5, 6

NAACP, 3

Natchez College, 10

National Guard, 6

New York, mentioned, 5

Newton, _____ Rev., candidate, City Councilman, 3. See
also City Council

Ole Miss, 6

Philadelphia, 5

Saint Hille, H. J., Dr., death, 4

Scott, George, player, Boston Red Sox, 7

Taylor, Louis, candidate, City Councilman, 3. See also City Council

Theobald Street, mentioned, 7, 8

Thorton, Jimmy, candidate, County Supervisor, 3

Threadgill, Ophelia, sister, 1

Tyler, Celeste, mother, 1

WDIA Radio Station (Memphis, Tenn.), 8

Washington, mentioned, 8, 10

White Sox, Major League baseball team, 7