

Gloria K. Bradford  
An Oral History  
Interview



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TARLTON LAW LIBRARY



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An Oral History  
Interview

*Interviewed by William J. Chriss*

AUSTIN, TEXAS  
Jamail Center for Legal Research  
The University of Texas at Austin

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INTRODUCTION TO THE TARLTON LAW LIBRARY  
ORAL HISTORY SERIES

by Barbara A. Bintliff  
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*The spoken word is history's most fragile evidence, and its most evanescent witness. Through its recorded perspectives and insights, oral history illuminates, supplements, and adds new details to the material, the tangible, record.<sup>1</sup>*

In 1986, the Tarlton Law Library began the process of conducting and publishing oral histories of individuals who played significant roles in the history of Texas law and at The University of Texas School of Law. Originally funded with a grant from the Texas Sesquicentennial Commission, the oral histories are now supported by the University of Texas Law School Foundation and by sales of the printed transcripts.

The series continues to feature interviews with outstanding alumni and faculty of The University of Texas School of Law. Their recollections on the growth of the Law School and on the major legal and political developments in the State of Texas during the past half-century provide valuable first-hand testimony for historians and others. Their stories provide a rich context to the history they have witnessed and affected, and bring to life occasions and events that might otherwise be forgotten. We

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<sup>1</sup> Chet Orloff & Yvette Berthel, "The Spoken Word: Oral History in the Ninth Circuit," *Western Legal History* 1:2 (Summer/Fall 1988), 271.

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appreciate the contributions of all those interviewed in the Oral History Series, and are grateful they agreed to spend the time to record their memories.

Oral history requires a considerable investment of time and skill. The interviewer first conducts extensive research on the interviewee's life and times, prepares an outline for the interview, and selects a set of questions designed to put the interviewee at ease and to assist the interviewee in recalling past events accurately and meaningfully. The interview usually takes several hours, at least, and the interviewee is given great latitude in the direction the conversation takes, while always steered by the interviewer. This results in a unique record that reflects the skill of the interviewer and the contributions of the interviewee in his or her own words. The recorded interview is then transcribed and proofed by both interviewer and interviewee for accuracy.

Conducting oral histories entails obligations of preserving the interviews and making them available to the public. The Law Library publishes print copies of the interview transcripts for most of its oral histories, although selected interview transcripts, including this one, are published only online. In time, audio files, video excerpts, and transcripts will be available online.

Reading the interview transcripts, and hearing and viewing the oral history interviews, should deepen the appreciation of the contributions these outstanding individuals have made to the development of the law and the legal profession, and to the legal educational system, of the State of Texas. Future generations will reap the benefits of this time well spent.

October 2011



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

**Interviewer:**

William J. Chriss

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*Peregrinus* Yearbook 1954

**Series Editor:**

Elizabeth Haluska-Rausch





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*This is Bill Chriss for The University of Texas Law School, and I am here with Gloria Bradford to interview her. We're in the lounge of the Jamail Center for Legal Research, the law library at the University of Texas and today's date is December the 28th of 2006. Also present at the interview are Addy Sonder, and Mrs. Edith King, who is Ms. Bradford's sister, and Mrs. King's daughters, Anne and Frances.*

*BC: Ms. Bradford, just for the tape would you go ahead and tell us your full name?*

*GB: Gloria Katrina Bradford.*

*BC: And Ms. Bradford where did you grow up?*

*GB: In Houston.*

*BC: And did you attend public schools in Houston?*

*GB: Public schools in Houston. I went to African Elementary School, Booker T. Washington Junior High. For a two year period I went to school in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the seventh and eighth (grades) because that's where I was and then we came back to Houston and I enrolled at Booker T. Washington High School over on West Dallas (Street), and that's where I graduated from.*

*BC: And what year did you graduate from high school?*

*GB: 1946, January.*

*BC: Did you and your family relocate to Massachusetts because of your family's business or career?*

*GB: No.*

*BC: And how did you find the schools? Did you find the schools in Cambridge any different than the schools in Texas you attended?*

*GB: Well, of course, that was my first exposure to integrated schools. The schools there were integrated and there was no segregation, and I liked it quite well.*

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BC: *Do you remember the names of the schools that you went to in Cambridge?*

GB: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

BC: *What kind of uh ethnic or racial mixture was there at Longfellow?*

GB: There were probably twenty black students. No more; no less.

BC: *As opposed to how many white students, roughly, a couple of hundred maybe?*

GB: Probably eight hundred.

BC: *And you say you enjoyed that or liked that better... can you just give us your recollection of the segregated schools you attended in public school in Houston as opposed to your experience in Cambridge?*

GB: Well, when I went to Cambridge that was my first exposure to the arts and music. They gave tickets to the symphony away, and they'd have a drawing and selected students would be able to go to the symphony and to concerts.

BC: *And did you have an interest in music at that time?*

GB: Not really. I never played an instrument or studied music, but I was in singing groups all the time

BC: *Did you feel like you were treated equally in Cambridge or were there still some vestiges of...of racism?*

GB: No, I was...I was treated equally.

BC: *Getting back to your experience, I assume that the schools that you went to in Texas were all segregated up until probably...*

GB: Up until the university.

BC: *And what was that like?*

GB: Well, it was fun.

BC: *How would you compare the educational opportunity that you received in segregated schools to the one you received in Cambridge aside from what you've told us about the cultural benefits?*

GB: Well, the schools in Houston were very good surprisingly, and I couldn't find that much difference. In some areas, I was a little more advanced than others, and in some areas I was a little bit behind.

BC: *You mean when you got to Cambridge?*

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GB: When I got to Cambridge.  
BC: *Are you still in touch with any of your classmates from Booker T. Washington?*  
GB: No.  
BC: *So as far as you know, you don't know whether any of them went on to professional schools themselves?*  
GB: Well, I know some of them did.  
BC: *Well, before we get to your professional school training, tell me about your decision to go to college and where you ended up going to college.*  
GB: Well, I ended up going to Prairie View. I started out as a chemistry major and then later switched to political science and got my degree in history and political science.  
BC: *That's kind of an interesting switch. Why did you switch from chemistry to political science?*  
GB: I didn't have the mathematical background to do the equations.  
BC: *And what interested you about chemistry to begin with?*  
GB: Well, I was just always fascinated by it.  
BC: *And when did you get your degree from Prairie View?*  
GB: '49....the summer of '49...May 22nd, 1949.  
BC: *Did you participate...I guess you participated in graduation exercises?*  
GB: Mmm hmm.  
BC: *And of course Prairie View, at that time was also a segregated school?*  
GB: Mmm hmm.  
BC: *Was there any discussion of that at Prairie View...any movement to try to do anything about it?*  
GB: No, it was just an acceptance of the status quo. The Supreme Court ruled in *Sweatt v. Painter* the following year in 1950 that, you know, separate but equal was unconstitutional and that's when the university opened its doors.  
BC: *We're talking about The University of Texas?*  
GB: Yeah.  
BC: *Were you following the Sweatt case at all when you were in college?*  
GB: I was following it from afar.

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- BC: *And I think there was another case um I believe the man's name was Dixon...there was another case that was filed with respect to dental school segregation. I don't know if you remember following that at all...*
- GB: No, I don't remember that case.
- BC: *While you were studying as an upperclassman in undergraduate school as a history and political science major, were you already considering maybe going to law school?*
- GB: No, I really wasn't. I didn't become interested in going to law school until one of my classmates at Prairie View went to the University of Denver Law School, and she later transferred to Howard University... and I was working in Washington at that time in the government, and in fact, I was in Washington when the Sweatt case was argued before the Supreme Court. And so the thing of it that was fantastic was that tuition was only twenty-five dollars a semester, and any bachelor's degree got you admitted at that time. You didn't have the SAT, the Law SAT and all that, at that time. So whatever your grades were, if you had a degree, you could get in.
- BC: *There was no grade requirement?*
- GB: No.
- BC: *And no admissions exam?*
- GB: No admissions exam.
- BC: *Did you ever meet Mr. Sweatt?*
- GB: Yes. He was still enrolled my first year here.
- BC: *And you enrolled in what year?*
- GB: '51.
- BC: *I'm interested in what you said about being in Washington when the Sweatt case was being argued. What were you doing from 1949 to 1951?*
- GB: Well, the summer of 1949, I worked as an intern at the Library of Congress. That was quite interesting. Then following that, I went to work with an outfit called House of

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Plastics as a demonstrator/salesman, and I worked for them, oh about six months, and then I went back in the government, the next time the government called me.

BC: *And were you a civil service employee?*

GB: Yeah, I was civil service in the government.

BC: *And what job did you go back to after the...?*

GB: Cash accounting clerk...I was actually counting money.

BC: *And was that with the Department of the Budget?*

GB: Treasury... Bureau of the Public Debt.

BC: *Do you remember who the Secretary of the Treasury was at the time?*

GB: No, I don't remember.

BC: *So this would have been what 1950 or so?*

GB: 1950.

BC: *And how did it come about that you decided that you were interested in going to law school?*

GB: Well, they used to have bull sessions in the apartment, and they'd ask these questions, especially in bills and notes, and I would know the answers, so they would say "you ought to go to law school...you ought to go to law school."  
So I applied and the rest is history.

BC: *Tell me about these bull sessions...In the department of the Treasury?*

GB: No, these were law students...

BC: *Oh...*

GB: See, my roommate was a law student at Howard University and she would have bull sessions in the apartment. They would have bull sessions on the law school questions and whatnot...

BC: *Now was this roommate of yours the same woman that you were telling me about that ended up going to the University of Denver Law School?*

GB: Yeah.

BC: *Okay, what was her name?*

GB: Charlye Ola Farris. She was the first African-American woman to pass the state bar.

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BC: *She had graduated from Prairie View as well?*  
GB: Yes.  
BC: *Was she also from Houston or was she from somewhere else?*  
GB: No, she was from Wichita Falls.  
BC: *Which bar did she pass?*  
GB: The Texas bar.  
BC: *And was she the first African-American woman to pass any bar exam?*  
GB: To pass the Texas bar.  
BC: *Oh, the Texas bar. Okay, and what did she do after she passed the bar?*  
GB: She practiced in Wichita Falls. I've lost touch with her, but uh barring the unforeseen, she's still around.  
Ms. King: She still practices.  
BC: *In Wichita Falls?*  
GB: Mmm Hmm.  
BC: *When you say you were familiar with bills and notes, was that from your experience in the Treasury Department?*  
GB: Yeah.  
BC: *And uh so they kept telling you that you should go to law school and you finally believed them...and what made you apply to The University of Texas Law School, just that you were from Texas?*  
GB: Well, I was a resident. I maintained my residency. You know the poll tax was still alive, and I had bought a poll tax and uh they tried...they, what they first tried to do was question my residency, and I told them that I was a registered voter in the state of Texas.  
BC: *Who was the "they?" The law school administration?*  
GB: Mmm hmm.  
BC: *Excuse me. Could you explain how the poll tax worked for those... for those people who are younger?*  
GB: It was a receipt given to you. Cost a dollar and a half and it entitled you to vote. You couldn't vote without one. Just a simple requirement.  
BC: *At this point you were, I guess, still in your twenties.*  
GB: Mmm hmm.

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BC: *And sounds like you were pretty well attuned to current events and to civic duty and concepts like that. To what do you attribute that early on in your development: that you were interested in public affairs?*

GB: To my grandmother.

BC: *Tell me...tell me about that...*

GB: She was an elementary school teacher, and she always instructed us in bettering yourself and being aware of your surroundings and just participating fully in what was going on around you.

BC: *And was this your maternal grandmother?*

GB: My paternal grandmother.

BC: *And what else can you tell us about, you know, sort of formative experiences or mentors that you had in your life?*

GB: Well, I was very active in the student Christian movement, the Y.W.C.A. and Y.M.C.A., and my senior year I was the fourth vice president of the national Y.W.C.A., and this was my first formative experience with integrated settings in school. We'd have up in the Hill Country...we'd meet and uh have camp up there, and then we'd meet in Wisconsin and have camp for the nation, the entire nation, and this...this was the most formative.

BC: *Any counselors or people that you remember from the Y.M.C.A. that were of any particular influence?*

GB: Fern Babcock

BC: *Vern Babcock?*

GB: She was a secretary, and I remember her.

BC: *At...at the Y.M.C.A. in Houston?*

GB: No, at the southwest regional Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A.

BC: *Where was that located?*

GB: Uh, I think it was in St. Louis at the time.

BC: *And the Y.M.C.A. student division, was that a high school or a college thing?*

GB: College.

Ms. Sonder: Y.W....

BC: *I'm sorry, Y.W.C.A. You said Y.W.C.A., right?*

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GB: Yes.

BC: *And that kind of brings up an interesting question, which is you not only were dealing with being an African-American, but you were also dealing with being a woman, and what can you tell us about the difficulties that you faced as a woman during the 1940s and 1950s trying to get ahead?*

GB: Really none that I was familiar with. When I was an undergraduate I was a photographer and uh always out in the lime-light. My daddy used to say every time somebody goes up there it was “Bradford, I saw your daughter,” and would just take a back seat, you know...

BC: *And your father and mother, can you tell us a little bit about them?*

GB: Well, my father and mother divorced when I was twelve, and we were given in custody to my father, and remained with his mother throughout high school.

BC: *And this was the school teacher?*

GB: Yes.

BC: *And what kind of work did your father do?*

GB: He was a doorman at the Rice Hotel.

BC: *Tell us about your siblings.*

GB: I have two sisters. This Mrs. King is one of them. She’s the baby of the bunch. I’m the eldest, and I have another sister who lives in Zachary, Louisiana, who’s a nurse. She’s retired, and uh she couldn’t be here.

BC: *So as a result of the bull sessions you applied to the law school, what happened or how did they approach you? How did the admissions people try to dissuade you by asking you about your residency? Just give us the details of how that worked.*

GB: They just tried to say that I was a resident of Mississippi because my mother was living in Mississippi, but I pointed out that I had always been in the custody of my father until his death and that since his death I had bought a poll tax and I was a registered voter.

BC: *And how old were you when you applied to the law school?*

GB: Twenty-one.



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BC: *Now the discussions that you had with the law schools admissions people, were these over the telephone? Was it by letter?*

GB: By letter.

BC: *So they wrote you questioning your status and then you responded in writing?*

GB: Yes.

BC: *So what happened then? Did they finally have to...did they finally admit you?*

GB: They finally admitted me.

BC: *And I guess you received a letter to that effect?*

GB: Yes.

BC: *And um, what did you...what did you do in terms of preparing to come to the university? Had you ever been to Austin?*

GB: I just got on a plane. I had been to Austin because I had been active in the Y.W.C.A. and the Y.M.C.A. student Christian movement, and Block Smith, who was the executive secretary of the Y.M.C.A., was a good friend of mine. So I had some rapport on the campus before I ever reached the campus.

BC: *I'm sorry, Mr. Smith's name was...?*

GB: Block Smith.

BC: *Block? And was he the executive secretary of the Y.M.C.A. in Austin or?*

GB: At the university.

Ms. King: Rosa Lee Oaks.

GB: Yeah, I never met Rosa Lee too much. She was after my time.

BC: *Now when you came to the law school at The University of Texas in 1951, were there already African-American students besides yourself who were enrolled?*

GB: Yeah. Sweatt was enrolled. He had flunked out the first year, but he was repeating the first year. George Washington, Jr. was enrolled. Uh, Virgil Lott was enrolled...Ollis Malloy. Another girl named Vivian Brooks, she dropped out after the first year.

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BC: *Did you ever meet at some point the, I think they're called the original seven, the first African-Americans to ever be admitted or attend the university as a whole?*

GB: No. I was familiar with them, but we used to see each other in cafeteria and places like that, catching rides home and what have you.

BC: *Because they I guess were...they had come to the university not very long before you guys had been admitted to the law school, is that right? So they were still here?*

GB: Well, the school that had the most students was the School of Social Work, and as I recall, they enrolled about the same time in '50 that the law school enrolled, but they graduated students earlier because that program was a two year program, and the law school was a three year program.

BC: *Was there any kind of association or group, formal or informal, of African-American students?*

GB: No.

BC: *Of the fellow students that you mentioned, I noticed Mr. Malloy and Mr. Washington's pictures in the yearbook, The Peregrinus there.*

GB: Mmm hmm.

BC: *Which ones... did all of them graduate?*

GB: Yes.

BC: *And Vivian, Vivian Brooks, have you stayed in touch with her?*

GB: She dropped out. She's in California. I've seen her since I've been out there, but I haven't seen her recently.

BC: *Do you know what she is doing out there?*

GB: She's a housewife.

BC: *And how about Mr. Sweatt? Did you have discussions with him about his case or was he kind of a well-known figure?*

GB: He was a well-known figure.

BC: *And Mr. Washington, Mr. Malloy, did they go on to practice in Texas, or did they leave the state?*

GB: Yes, they went on. Mr. Malloy went into the district attorney's office and Mr. Washington practices in Houston.

BC: *Is he still practicing in Houston?*

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GB: Yeah, I think he's still practicing.  
Ms. King: He died.  
GB: He's dead? He died? Oh really?  
BC: *Describe for us your impressions when you first got here to the law school.*  
GB: Well I was real impressed. You know, it was a tough program, and they didn't take any nonsense. You know, if you were unprepared, you'd excuse yourself and leave the room if you were unlucky enough to be called upon to recite, and I enjoyed it.  
BC: *And you graduated in the customary three years. You completed the program.*  
GB: Yes.  
BC: *Did you feel like any of the professors in particular were harder on you than they were on other students either because you were female or because you're African-American?*  
GB: Well, I didn't have those professors. I'd uh, you know, you had the choice of taking Property under Buck Bailey or Property under Gus Macey Hodges, and I felt Gus Macey Hodges was a better shot.  
BC: *So, given that this is a historical interview, um who were the professors that you wanted to avoid? Who had the bad reputations?*  
GB: Buck Bailey was probably the most outstanding one. I don't care to mention any others.  
BC: *That's fine. Did you learn by sort of word of mouth which professors to avoid?*  
GB: Yeah.  
BC: *And...*  
GB: People gave you the "inside" so to speak.  
BC: *And how did the white students and the few Hispanic students that were at the law school... how did they treat you? How did you get along with them?*  
GB: They treated us well.

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BC: *Can you give me some examples, or are there any particular incidents of discrimination that come to mind that you can describe for us?*

GB: Well, of course all the facilities were available and open, you know, I mean football games, things of that sort, and of course the fraternities and sororities were not available, and we didn't have any African-American sororities on the campus at the time.

BC: *Were there law school fraternities at the time that you were excluded from?*

GB: Well, PAD and uh what are the others?

BC: *Phi Alpha Delta is the PAD you referred to?*

GB: PAD... That's PAD.

BC: *I'm not familiar with the other ones, but were you excluded from those?*

GB: Yeah, you were excluded from those. The professors were going to see that you made C's, you know, low C's.

BC: *How did that go? Did the professors grade you harder, you and your other?...*

GB: I think so.

BC: *What about the administration? Who was the dean when you were here?*

GB: Keeton.

BC: *So, Professor McCormick who had been the dean before, was he still here?*

GB: Yeah, he was still teaching.

BC: *And he was teaching evidence, and do you recall what else?*

GB: No. I don't.

BC: *Did you ever have Professor McCormick?*

GB: No, I never had him.

BC: *What professors do you recall that you had?*

GB: Uh, Mr. Thoron (sic), uh ...Mr. Williams, Mr. Hodges, Mr. Huey, Mr. Smith...

BC: *Were there any professors in particular that uh sort of helped you or that you felt like were of more assistance?*

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GB: Well, Mr. Maxwell was the one that was particularly helpful to me. I seemed to do well in Property. I don't know why, but it was one of my favorite subjects; and Mr. Smith in Evidence.

BC: *I realize that law students don't have a lot of spare time, but uh what did you do in your spare time when you were at the law school?*

GB: Well in my spare time, surprisingly enough, I shined shoes at a shine parlor in the ghetto where I lived, and uh, that was most of my spare time activity. And shining shoes, that was at a pool hall and I learned how to play pool.

BC: *What was the name of the hall?*

GB: I don't remember.

BC: *Where did you live when you were going to the law school?*

GB: Uh, in the ghetto, in the black neighborhood over in East Austin.

BC: *And did you live with other law students? Did you have roommates? Did you live by yourself?*

GB: No, I had roommates. They went to Huston-Tillotson University.

BC: *So the housing in Austin at that time was also segregated?*

GB: Very much so.

BC: *And what about the job market? Were you just unable to get another type of job besides...*

GB: No, you couldn't get a job.

BC: *You could not get a job...*

GB: The only place you could get a job would be the Post Office.

BC: *Some kind of federal employment?*

GB: Mmm hmm.

BC: *Tell me some more about your life in Austin during law school, things that posterity should remember about your time here.*

GB: Well, I don't know that posterity should remember too much more than that I enjoyed it.

BC: *Well, once you graduated from the law school, what did you do then?*

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GB: I went to practice in Houston with a firm called Dent, Ford, King, and Witcliff. This was a firm of black attorneys, and I worked with them for about four years.

BC: *What type of work did you do?*

GB: General civil and criminal.

BC: *After that four year period, what did you do?*

GB: I went into partnership with two other attorneys and opened an office on my own.

BC: *And did your practice areas change at all?*

GB: No, it was primarily the same general civil practice.

BC: *And are you still in private practice in Houston?*

GB: No, I'm living in California now, and I'm retired.

BC: *Where do you live in California?*

GB: Oakland.

BC: *How long were you in private practice in Texas?*

GB: About six years.

BC: *Why did you leave the private practice?*

GB: I had a chance to move to New York and I moved to New York and went to work with a research outfit there and worked very often in uh sales.

BC: *And who did you work for?*

GB: Law Research, Inc. It was the first computerized research firm in the country. Computers were new in the 60s.

BC: *And this was before Westlaw, Lexis?*

GB: Mmm hmm.

BC: *What was that like? You were sort of present at the creation of computerized legal research.*

GB: Right. Yeah.

BC: *What did you do for them?*

GB: Sales representative.

BC: *And what has become of that company? Is it still around?*

GB: I don't think so. I think it probably went out of business.

BC: *How long did you work for them?*

GB: About four years.

BC: *Did you stay in New York after that?*

GB: Then I moved to California.

BC: *So you've been in California for a long time?*

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GB: Mmm hmm.  
BC: *What did you do when you got to California?*  
GB: I was a sales manager for *Encyclopaedia Americana* in the military division.  
BC: *And how long did you do that?*  
GB: About fifteen years.  
BC: *That would take us up to the nineteen seventies, the early eighties, somewhere around there. When you were working for the Encyclopaedia Americana, were you in northern California, also?*  
GB: Yes, northern California.  
BC: *So you've been in northern California pretty much the whole time?*  
GB: Pretty much the whole time.  
BC: *How would you compare California in the sixties to Texas in the fifties?*  
GB: Well, California is California and Texas is Texas. Texas was the biggest state in the Union until Alaska was admitted, and California was the second biggest state, so there's a lot of rivalry between Texans and Californians. There's a lot of rivalry between Californians and Texans.  
BC: *I guess you were still in Texas practicing in Houston when Alaska was admitted as a state?*  
GB: Yes.  
BC: *Do you recall anything in particular about that? Texans' reactions to that?*  
GB: No, I can't recall anything. I'm sure there was some reaction, but I can't recall what it was.  
BC: *Let's take a break for just a second.*  
GB: Okay.

[At this point a rest break was taken and then the taped interview resumed.]

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BC: *Ms. Bradford, can you just kind of tell me about some of the famous people that you've known?*

GB: Well, I had a chance to meet Thurgood Marshall my freshman year. He was attending the state convention here, and everybody was quite upset that Heman Sweatt had flunked out, and he told me, he says, "You're going to make it." You know, and that was encouraging.

BC: *So you did not meet Justice Marshall prior to coming to The University of Texas Law School?*

GB: No.

BC: *Because there is a sort, I guess since you're saying it didn't happen, an urban legend that holds that he had something to do with trying to get you to apply to law school. I guess that's not true?*

GB: No, that's not true. That's totally untrue.

BC: *Well, we've just established one of the historical things about the interview then. Did you ever have a chance to talk with Justice Marshall again, later?*

GB: Yes, when the state moved against the NAACP and shut down the NAACP, they were appealing the case, and I was employed to work on the appeal.

BC: *Which firm were you with at the time? Was this your firm?*

GB: Yes.

BC: *And was it Justice Marshall who employed you?*

GB: Yes.

BC: *Because at that time, he was still the head of the NAACP...*

GB: NAACP Legal Defense Fund.

BC: *How long did you work on that case?*

GB: I worked on it about three months. I concurred in the regional counsel's decision that it shouldn't be appealed, and the appeal was dismissed.

BC: *What was the basis of your opinion in that regard?*

GB: A lot of people didn't want it appealed because they didn't want a precedent set for the plea of privilege in Texas being upheld.



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BC: *Can you describe that litigation for me with respect to what the relevance of the plea of privilege was and what the nature of the case was?*

GB: Well, they moved against the NAACP somewhere around Tyler, Texas, and the plea of privilege in Texas allows a defendant to be tried in the county of his residence and there are many open questions on the plea of privilege that the regional counsel didn't think should be litigated.

BC: *Who was the plaintiff in that case? Who was suing the NAACP?*

GB: John Ben Sheppard was the Attorney General at the time.

BC: *What was the state's complaint?*

GB: That they were guilty of barratry and champerty.

BC: *Oh. So did you do some research on the barratry and champerty statutes in Texas? That would have been what the late fifties?*

GB: Yes.

BC: *And what was it that you were looking at appealing, the denial of the plea of privilege?*

GB: Yes. They had seized the records and what have you.

BC: *And the lawsuit, do you remember where the lawsuit was filed? Was it Tyler?*

GB: I don't think it was Tyler. It was somewhere near Tyler. I can't remember the town exactly.

BC: *Do you remember where it was the NAACP was requesting the privilege to be sued in?*

GB: I think Dallas.

BC: *Do you remember what the final result of the case was?*

GB: Well, they let the NAACP back in business.

BC: *Any other occasions where you had either a chance to work with Justice Marshall or to talk with him?*

GB: That was the only time.

BC: *Were you involved in other cases in the late fifties-early sixties; other cases-civil rights cases?*

GB: No.

BC: *No other work for the NAACP?*

GB: No.

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BC: *Were you involved in the litigation trying to open up the undergraduate admissions at U.T. and Texas A&M?*

GB: No. I filed a suit that was not resolved.

BC: *What suit did you file?*

GB: One involving my sister.

BC: *Okay, when was that?*

GB: In 1954.

BC: *So, when you were here from 1951 to 1954, were there African-American students in the undergraduate school or not?*

GB: No, the only thing they were in... They were in the Architecture School as graduate students.

BC: *But there weren't any undergraduates?*

GB: No undergraduates in the Architecture School.

BC: *Do you remember any of the names? Was Charles Miles one of the students in the Architectural School??*

GB: No, Chase.

BC: *Mr. Chase?*

GB: What's his first name? John Chase.

BC: *He is an architect in Houston?*

GB: Yes.

BC: *Let me stop this.*

[At this point a rest break was taken and then the taped interview resumed.]

BC: *Were you involved in politics at all when you were a young woman?*

GB: No.

BC: *Were you involved in the Young Democrats, for example?*

GB: I was in the Young Democrats.

BC: *Tell us about that organization.*

GB: That was actually at the university where I first became exposed to the Young Democrats, and Fred Sackett was a very Liberal person and I was the only black in the Young Democrats at the time.

BC: *Are you talking about statewide or in Austin?*

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GB: No, just in Austin.  
BC: *Did you ever get to meet Ralph Yarborough?*  
GB: Yeah, I met Ralph. His son was in law school with us.  
BC: *What was his name?*  
GB: I don't remember. I was just looking there in the yearbook.  
He's in the yearbook.  
BC: *Was he a year behind you?*  
GB: I think he was a year behind me.  
BC: *How did you meet "smilin' Ralph?"-Ralph Yarborough?*  
GB: Just on the campaign trail.  
BC: *When he was campaigning for governor or senator?*  
GB: Senator.  
BC: *You would have been in private practice in Houston at the time?*  
GB: Mmm Hmm.  
BC: *What about Lloyd Bentsen?*  
GB: I never met Lloyd Bentsen.  
BC: *Lyndon Johnson?*  
GB: I met Lyndon Johnson.  
BC: *Tell us about that.*  
GB: Well in the 1960 presidential campaign, Lyndon Johnson was appearing in New York City at New Rochelle College, and Mr. Givens was his black spokesman and he got me a ride on the campaign bus to the New Rochelle rally, and I got- which I kept for a long time until it got away from me- one of his souvenir hats as a memento of the 1960 campaign.  
BC: *What was Mr. Givens' first name?*  
GB: Dr. Givens, I can't remember his first name.  
BC: *Where was he from?*  
GB: Austin. He practiced dentistry in Austin.  
BC: *Do you recall if Dr. Givens was ever involved in litigation with the university about admitting African-Americans to dental school?*  
GB: No, I don't know that he was. That is not to say that he could not have been. Students were admitted to the Medical Branch at Galveston at the same time they were admitted to the Law School.

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BC: *Did you know any of those students?*

GB: Yes. Barney...I can't think of his last name...Barney Burnett. He's dead now. He was the first graduate of the university (Medical Branch).

BC: *We were talking about this before and I want to make sure that I've got it straight for the record. When you arrived at the law school Mr. Sweat was already enrolled at the law school?*

GB: Mmm hmm.

BC: *Were there other African-American students already enrolled in the law school?*

GB: Yes.

BC: *Were Malloy and Washington in your class or were they already here?*

GB: Malloy was in my class and we had two or three others. I can't remember their names, but Virgil Lott and Washington were in the class ahead of me.

BC: *And then also when you arrived at the law school, you were talking about black students who were already here but those would have been only graduate students, is that right?*

GB: No. They would have been students from the first class.

BC: *So the African-American students in the School of Architecture that were admitted, were they admitted in 1951, the same year you were?*

GB: That's when Chase came.

BC: *Okay, so Mr. Chase came to the Architecture School, so basically all the African-American students that came and were admitted as graduate students would have come in the 1951-1952 term?*

GB: That's right.

BC: *And then it wasn't until significantly later that the undergraduate schools were desegregated?*

GB: Right.

BC: *And your recollection of that...you may not know the exact year?*

GB: I don't know the exact year.

BC: *Did it happen while you were at the university, the law school?*

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GB: No.

BC: *So it would have been after 1954?*

GB: After 1954.

BC: *I think we had taken your career up to when you were working for the Encyclopaedia Americana. What did you do after that in California?*

GB: I did some sales work for a company that put out promotional books for banks and I worked for them for about two years, and then I retired.

BC: *Do you remember what year you retired?*

GB: Oh, about 1980.

BC: *What is your most vivid memory about being a student at The University of Texas Law School?*

GB: Well the camaraderie of the law students was something that went past the segregation problem.

BC: *What was it that you think caused that level of camaraderie?*

GB: I don't know.

BC: *Was the curriculum such that all the classes were taught using the Socratic method?*

GB: Yes.

BC: *And were all the classes such that the students would be called upon to stand up and recite?*

GB: Yeah.

BC: *Describe the sort of ordinary classroom experience of the 1950s when you were here. What was it like in a law school classroom?*

GB: It was rough. I was surprised how good the University Law School was. I never knew its ranking until I was actually enrolled in law school.

BC: *When you say it was rough, can you just kind of be more specific and paint us a picture of what it was like being in class?*

GB: Well if you tried to filibuster, the prof. would say, "Would you call yourself prepared?" And then you'd have to say "no," and "please excuse me from the room."

BC: *So you actually had to leave the room?*

GB: You had to leave the room if you were unprepared.

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BC: *What were tests like? How did you determine what your grade was going to be? Was it one final exam?*

GB: One final exam, and some for class participation, and some classes we had a paper to do.

BC: *And for exams in those days did they have bluebooks?*

GB: Yeah.

BC: *Did you ever think about, as a career choice, becoming a law professor?*

GB: No.

BC: *Are any of your former partners still practicing in Houston?*

GB: Witcliff may still be practicing. I didn't contact any of them this holiday, but Dent is dead. Ford is dead. King is dead and Witcliff is in bad health.

BC: *I want to ask you a series of questions about firsts. Were you the first African-American female to file a lawsuit in federal court in Texas that you know of?*

GB: I might have been. I don't know.

BC: *Do you know of any African-Americans who were admitted to practice in federal court in Texas prior to the time that you were?*

GB: Charlye Ola Ferris was admitted.

BC: *Do you recall what year you were admitted to federal practice in Texas?*

GB: Well I was never really admitted to federal practice. I appeared in federal court by motion.

BC: *Pro Hac Vice? And tell me about studying for the bar exam. What was that like?*

GB: Well I took the review course and it really prepared you.

BC: *Do you remember which review course it was?*

GB: Mitchell's.

BC: *Arthur Mitchell?*

GB: Arthur Mitchell. Arthur would tell you "The first lesson is: Don't quit! Stick it out" and I stuck it out with him.

BC: *Tell me about Arthur Mitchell, what recollection you have of him. Did he teach the whole class himself?*

GB: Yeah. He taught the whole class himself.

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BC: *What was he like?*  
GB: He was very thorough. Very thorough and very fair.  
BC: *So did you take the review course here in Austin?*  
GB: Yes.  
BC: *And how long was the bar exam in those days?*  
GB: It was two or three days.  
BC: *What was that experience like?*  
GB: Rough, but Charlye Ola gave me inspiration. She said “You don’t have to answer every question right.” She says “I know I answered a certain question wrong and I still passed,” but I made a seventy-seven out of a highest score of eighty.  
BC: *That’s excellent. And Charlye Ola, when did she take the bar? Was it the year before you or earlier?*  
GB: Oh, earlier. She, you see, was two years ahead of me in law school so she took the bar two years before I did.  
BC: *And did she graduate from Howard?*  
GB: Howard University.  
BC: *And then she came back to Texas?*  
GB: Mmm hmm.  
BC: *Any other individuals that you recall that you met through Charlye Ola or otherwise that ended up being African-American lawyers that you knew in Washington, D.C., when you were there?*  
GB: Well they went back to their home states to practice. I can’t remember the names of them, but you know it’s been fifty-five years ago.  
BC: *What advice do you have for, let’s say, young women who are considering the law as a career today?*  
GB: Go for it!  
BC: *And any particular lessons that you’ve learned that you would pass on to young people today from your experience living in the forties and fifties and facing what you faced then?*  
GB: Stick it out.  
BC: *Tell me about the physical location of the law school. Where you started and where you ended up.*  
GB: Well the old law school was on the main campus, and the second year we moved to this building where we are

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now situated which has been considerably expanded.

BC: *What was the move like? Was there any trauma associated with that?*

GB: No, everybody was glad to be getting a new building.

BC: *Do you remember about where the old building was?*

GB: I can visualize it, but at the same time I can't remember it in detail.

BC: *Was the new building any larger than the old building?*

GB: Oh yes, it was considerably larger.

BC: *Were you part of any law school organizations? You told me the Phi Alpha Delta excluded African-Americans. Were there any other organizations in or around the law school that you were a part of?*

GB: No.

BC: *Did you maintain your affiliation with the Y.W.C.A. while you were here?*

GB: Yes.

BC: *What about the NAACP in Austin? Were you ever part of that while you were here?*

GB: No.

BC: *Thank you very much. It has been an honor, Ms. Bradford.*





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