

**SORORITY HOUSE COOK:  
VERLEAN CARUTHERS, RETIRED**

"I started cooking [at Tri Delta] when I was in high school [in] like about nineteen seventy-two. I was about 17 years old...It was an after school job. I started washing dishes. And I done that for about five years. Then I got kind of promoted up to the cooking."

**--Verlean Caruthers**

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**FULL TRANSCRIPTION:**

Verlean Caruthers, retired cook  
TRI DELTA & DELTA GAMMA SORORITIES  
@ University of Mississippi  
July 13, 2004  
Mrs. Caruther's Home  
Interviewed by Mary Beth Lasseter

MBL = Mary Beth Lasseter  
VC = Verlean Caruthers  
MAL = Mary Alice Lewis

Okay today is July 13. It is Tuesday afternoon, and I am sitting in Miss Verlean Caruther's kitchen. I called her about a week ago to ask if I could do an interview. Miss Verlean used to cook for the Tri-Delta houses on campus. As a great surprise today she had her mother join us, Miss Mary Alice Lewis. Miss Mary Alice used to cook on campus as well. So what we're going to do is just have a little conversation so I can find out a little bit about their experiences cooking on the Ole Miss campus, as part of the Southern Foodways Alliance oral history initiative. What I'll do is just ask each of you the questions so I'll identify you by name on this tape which is going to help me transcribe it later. So, Miss Verlean. Let's start with you. Um...could you please state your full name and tell me where you're from originally?

VC: My name is Verlean Caruthers and I've lived her in Oxford all my life.

MBL: So you were born right here in the ciy?

VC: Born right here in Oxford.

MBL: Now what is your birthday?

VC: 5-15-54.

MBL: Okay. So you're fifty years old?

VC: Yes m'am.

MBL: And where do you work?

VC: Now I'm working at Baptist Memorial Hospital. I've been there eight years.

MBL: And do you like it?

VC: It's alright. But I'm used to begin at Tri-Delta. I worked there 26 years.

MBL: So tell me about cooking at the Tri-Delt house. When did you start cooking?

VC: Oh, Lord. I started cooking there when I was in high school, like about '72 I was about 17 years old.

MBL: Now did you cook while you were in school as an after-school job, or...

VC: It was an after school job. I started washing dishes. And I done that for about five years. Then I got kind of promoted up to the cooking.

MBL: And what were your hours like when you were seventeen?

VC: Um, it was after school, so it was like from about 1 to whatever time we closed for the night.

MAL: Most times it was like 7 o'clock. (inaudible)

MBL: Working until 7? Now, Miss Mary Alice, did you work at the Tri-Delta house when Miss Verleane worked there, is that...

MAL: Well, yeah she started with me (inaudible)

VC: I started up under her.

MBL: And how long did it take you – when were you promoted to cook?

VC: Oh, it was like...a couple of years afterwards.

MBL: Okay, so you worked after school washing dishes. Alright. Can you tell me a little bit about that? Maybe some things you liked to cook, or how you got interested in it?

VC: I always loved to cook. I always have. And I come from a cooking family. My mom is a great cook. So I just come in to eat one time and I asked if they needed me to do anything and they just started showing me what to do and I just started cooking. Anything.

MBL: So who was showing you what to do?

VC: My mom, Mary Alice Lewis. And there was another lady. I can't remember her name. She worked there. And we cooked up under Miss Corsey. She was our boss lady.

MBL: Was she the Tri-Delta house mother?

VC: Yes.

MBL: Did Miss Corsey hire y'all, or did somebody in the kitchen hire you?

MAL: I'll try to think now about when I first went there. Lord knows I can't remember their names. When I first started there it was another lady there.

VC: But Miss Corsey hired me. And then Miss Alice Taylor came in. She took over. And I worked up under her for like about ten years. And then after she left I worked under Miss Baker who is still there now.

MBL: Yeah, she is. Actually, I talked to her earlier and she helped put me in touch.

VC: She is wonderful. But I loved cooking...

MBL: What do you like cooking?

VC: Oh. I like to fix spaghetti, meatloaf. Roast. Green beans. Macaroni and cheese. I've learned to make lasagna and stuff now from scratch. I know how to do that. I've done a lot. Most anything you can cook I can do it.

MBL: Do you cook differently at home than you did for the Tri-Delta house?

VC: Not really. It's basically the same. You just have to not cook a big portion of it. It's basically the same thing.

MBL: Now did you cook every day at the Tri-Delta house and then come home and cook a second meal at night?

VC: No. [Laughter]

MBL: Now how did that work, tell me.

VC: Well normally...well, my daughter stays here with me. She be done cooked. And then we were allowed if we wanted to pick up a little plate we could do that and take it home.

MBL: So you could take food home then?

VC: Yes.

MBL: So tell me about your family. You've mentioned a daughter.

VC: I have two sons and a daughter. She's my baby. I have a son 32 and I have a son 27 and my daughter's 22.

MBL: Now are they all in Oxford?

VC: No. My second son, Richard Carothers, he is in Memphis. My oldest son, William Frank Carothers, he works for the hospital now, too. He stays in Water Valley. He's married.

MBL: And what do they do for a living?

VC: My son work at the Baptist Memorial Hospital. The oldest one.

MBL: Okay.

VC: And the one in Memphis work at a factory. My daughter is not doing anything now.

MBL: She's just cooking you dinner at night?

VC: [Laughter] She has two boys.

MBL: Oh, do the boys live here too?

VC: Yes. 7 and 8.

MBL: Are those your only two grandchildren.

VC: Oh, no m'am.

MBL: Tell me, tell me how many grandchildren you have?

VC: I have seven.

MBL: And what are their names?

VC: Oh man. [Laughter]. Davontee, which is my oldest son's son. He's in Oxford. He got a daughter, Melody. She in Oxford. And then my son in Memphis – he got two girls. Hold on...[Laughter] Demeshia and Desone. And then my sons here, my grandbabies here with me is Kerry, Keshawn, and Kentavius.

MBL: Now do you teach them how to cook?

VC: They ain't got quite to the age, but they try some. They know how to come in and open up something and put it in the microwave. And they try to fix chow mein noodles on the stove. So they can...

MBL: Now did you children learn to cook from you?

VC: Oh yes m'am. And from they grandmother, Mary Alice Lewis.

MBL: Okay. We're going to get that story in a minute.

VC: She can cook. [mumble]

MBL: So do you have a specialty? Any one food item that your family just really loves?

VC: Yeah, but it's an old remedy [recipe]. I only cooked it at home. A neckbone and ice potato soup.

MBL: Give me that recipe please.

VC: [Laughter] It's just neckbones. You put your – wash your neckbones and just put them on. Put salt and pepper and the onions in it. And then by the time your neckbones get halfway done, put you some green beans in there. Peel you some ice potatoes and put them in there. And after that cooks. Your potatoes get ready, add your canned tomato paste or tomato sauce. And that's it.

MBL: And it's just a simple soup?

VC: Just add salt and pepper. And some onions.

MBL: And it's one of your family's favorites? Now what do you cook that the Tri-Delta's used to love?

VC: Oh, chicken and spaghetti.

MBL: And how do you do that? I'm sure you cooked it many a time.

VC: Uh. Cream of mushroom soup. Cream of chicken soup. Add diced tomatoes. I always put my diced tomatoes in a blender and just let it grind

up. Make a sauce out of it. Cook your noodles and dump all of it in there. It's just onions, salt, and pepper.

MBL: And you bake it?

VC: And then after you get your noodles and added to your to you, uh, all of your sauce, your cream of chicken, cream of mushroom, and your diced tomatoes and stuff...once you get that sauce made up, just dump your noodles over in there, put it in a big pan. Let it get hot. Put you some cheese on it.

MBL: Now was that a recipe that you created, or one that they asked you to make?

VC: It's one that they had asked me to make.

MBL: So how does that work? How did you set menus when you cooked at the Tri-Delta house.

VC: The boss lady, she always done that. She picked out a menu for the whole week and we just looked over the whole – the menu for each day and made sure we knew how to do it. And if we didn't, she'd find out for us.

MBL: Is the menu created with the idea of creating healthy well-balanced meals, or what the girls like, or how is that done? Do you know?

VC: She basically she just done the kind of diet that they wanted, how they want they food cooked, she basically went from that.

MBL: Do you think that your style of cooking at the Tri-Delta house was in any way different from restaurant cooking?

VC: Yes m'am.

MBL: How was it different?

VC: Because restaurants they have they own recipes on how they cook they food and they have different ovens. But basically we have to just maintain however oven we had...we had to just basically do it ourselves. Figure out if it was best to go on top of the stove or best to go in the oven.

[COUNTER 130]

MBL: Okay. What was the kitchen like there?

VC: Oh, the kitchen was nice. WE had ovens, stacked ovens. It was real good. WE had a lot of space.

MBL: Now how many people worked there?

VC: Seven.

MBL: Were they full time?

VC: Yes m'am. There was one person who came in in the evenings to help wash up the night dishes and mop the floors and stuff. He usually come in about 1 or 2. And then he stayed until closing.

MBL: When was closing time?

VC: Maybe 6:30 or 7.

MBL: So what was your typical day like?

VC: Oh. It was good. I mean, I was there all day. You know, we got an hour off in the morning and we got an hour off at lunch.

MBL: Now what time did you get there in the morning?

VC: 6:30.

MBL: Oh. That's early.

VC: [Laughter]. Oh, I know. But I loved it though.

MBL: So how long did you stay there, in all?

VC: 26 years.

MBL: And how did you make the decision to leave?

VC: Well, I just got a better offer and working at the hospital I always was a curious person on how they feed all the patients, how they feed the employees, and people coming in and out from the outside. I always wanted to know how they do that. 'Cause I had been in there a couple of times when I had my babies, and I was just curious. How did they get all these trays and everything to everybody? So I got a chance to experience all of that.

MBL: So did the hospital contact you at the Tri-Delta house?

VC: No. It was through a friend.

MBL: So you heard there was an opening?

VC: No. It was a lady who [inaudible]...she was retiring. So, um, Miss Nikki Fox had told one of my friends about it and I went...

MBL: Now, how did the girls react when they found out you were leaving after all that time?

VC: They didn't like it too good, but I told them I'm trying to better myself. I'm going to try. Because I was real curious on that, and I wanted to.

MBL: So do you think you learned everything you wanted with the change in the job?

VC: Yeah. It's really nice. I enjoy it. I learned a lot. And in nine months we learned – we came up under a new company – the kitchen part did and we had to learn how to cook from scratch just like you was cooking at home. And I got there [inaudible]

MBL: So, when you cooked at the Tri-Delta house, did you cook things from scratch then, or did you order in frozen foods?

VC: We mostly ordered frozen foods.

MBL: Really? For the whole 26 years that you were there?

VC: Mostly everything was frozen.

MBL: Now chicken spaghetti was a favorite. What other things did y'all cook for them?

VC: We cooked roast beef. Um, everything else was like frozen – like lasagna and French fries, stuff like that. It was frozen. We just had to cook it.

MBL: Did y'all ever – or did you often – make exceptions for students who had special diets, or were watching their weight?

VC: No, no. When cooking our food we know basically not to cook it unless they would eat it. And then, when we came up under Miss Baker, she came in there with new food...different diets...all kinda little strange noodles that you don't add the sauce and stuff to it. You just put them on the sideline. Now that was a big change when she came in. We had to learn to do that.

MBL: Now, where did she come from? Do you remember?

VC: As far as I know, Miss Baker's from here.

MBL: Okay.

VC: But...we learned a lot. We didn't cook with no whole lotta food...like I said, everything came frozen or in a can.

MBL: Now what were some of your favorite memories of cooking at the Tri-Delta house? Are there students you particularly remember? Or crazy events? Rush week?

VC: Oh, Rush Week be real wild!

MBL: Tell me about that.

VC: We out there early and be trying to...you know a lotta times they had these food [inaudible] with what they wanna eat before they go to bed. You know we had to be there to make sure we get it prepared for them and have it ready for when they get through with their last rush. So...

MBL: So y'all did the regular meals and the special meals.

[Phone rings]

MBL: Here, let me put this on pause so you can answer your phone. Do you want to?

VC: You can just shut it off.

[BREAK]

MBL: Okay. We've got the tape back on. Um, okay...so we were talking about how you had to cook special meals and special hours during rush week. What was that like? What special needs did the girls have then?

VC: It sometimes...they needed Subways, sandwiches and stuff. Different subs. They'll have their catering and they'll bring it there. Sometimes they'll bring in pizza. WE made some of these pizzas but then they'll order them out. And then down through the years...they may have a pancake supper. I'll go and do that for them. They'll have pancakes and sausage. Maybe 300-500 people. It was wonderful.

MBL: Wow. So you cooked all the regular meals plus special events meals.

VC: Yes.

MBL: Did they have anything besides the pancake dinners?

VC: Oh.

[VC's daughter walks in the kitchen.]

MBL: [to daughter] Hi. How are you.

Daughter: Fine.

VC: They had a lot of catering done under these events. We were told some of the alumni ladies, they would fix dishes and stuff and bring to make sure that during the rush the girls would have something to eat.

MBL: So what was your work schedule like? Y'all cooked three meals a day, every day?

VC: Yes m'am. We cooked three meals a day.

MBL: Now was that only while school was in session.

VC: Right. Closed during the summers.

MBL: And so what did you do with your summers off?

VC: Basically be at home, and draw unemployment benefits.

MBL: Do you really? How is that set up, if I may ask? How is the compensation package set up. Are you a 9-month employee?

VC: Right.

MBL: And then, so in the summers, where do you have to go to arrange for your summer unemployment checks?

VC: You have to go to an employment agency here in Oxford.

MBL: And so do you have to do the same thing every summer, because I assume they know you're coming...

VC: Yes m'am. Yes m'am. We do it every summer. You have to go in every Tuesday.

MBL: For the whole summer? Even though they know that your job will start again in August?

VC: Um, hm. They stays in contact with you on that. You have – they send you a little 'ole slip of – a little card. You fill it out and mail it back in on a Monday. And then your money may come in on a Friday or Saturday. Something like that.

MBL: And how does that compare with working at the Baptist Health Plex? You're a twelve month employee? Not the HealthPlex, but the Baptist Memorial Hospital.

VC: Oh, that's a non-stop situation. You're constantly working there. The only time you'll be off...they give you one day off out of every week. And normally we'll have weekends off every other weekend, but now...but now we uh decide up on like we'll work different weekends and just have one day off a week.

MBL: Oh, so at the hospital it's six days a week.

VC: Totally different.

MBL: Now, at the Tri-Delta house – [grandson walks in] that must be your grandson. Now at the Tri-Delta house, did you work five days a week or seven days a week? Did you have to cook meals for the girls on weekends?

VC: It's basically mostly five days a week, but during rush we were working weekends and everything.

MBL: So what do the girls do on the weekends when y'all weren't there.

VC: They go out and eat. They eat a hamburger.

MBL: So you do you keep in touch with any of the girls. Do you remember any of them?

VC: No. I seen several down at the hospital.

MBL: Oh, okay.

VC: You know, in and out down in there and I remember their faces. But no m'am, I don't see any other than those.

MBL: Did they ever stop in the kitchens and...

VC: Oh, yes. They come in there and tease us when they come to the window and get their food and everything. [inaudible] They come in and try to speak and try to carry on a conversation and then walk back out.

MBL: Now what is your involvement like with the university? I know that you were an employee of the Tri-Deltas and not necessarily Ole Miss, but did you – um- come to campus? Did you ever take classes, or go to football games or any of that?

VC: No m'am. I don't like that. I have come out there to the coliseum before.

MBL: For basketball?

VC: No, just for graduation or something like that.

MBL: Going to see family graduate or going to see your girls?

VC: Family.

MBL: So did any of your children attend Ole Miss?

VC: No m'am.

MBL: Okay. Just extended family. Um...what was your favorite part about the job, when you worked there?

[pause]

VC: Just get in there in the morning and the Lord bless us and get that breakfast cooking and start seeing them coming down...

MBL: What were the serving hours like?

VC: Oh. We started serving at 7 and usually stop about 10. And then started our lunch. But they constantly coming in getting some juices and something like that if they wanted.

MBL: Now have you kept in touch with the people you used to work with at the Tri-Delta house?

VC: No m'am.

MBL: Do you know where they are? Are any of them still working there, I guess?

VC: I see them off and on. A lot of 'em done left. But I see them off and one.

MBL: Do you know where they left? Did they retire, or did they get other jobs like you?

VC: I don't know. I don't think a lot of them working period.

MBL: Really? So would you consider yourself a tight staff, or y'all had a working relationship and then...

VC: We had a working relationship with them. We all understood each other. We all knew what we come in there to do. So we just worked.

MBL: Now did you get to know staffs from other houses on campus?

VC: Oh, yes m'am. If we need to borrow something we usually go to other houses. Cause I worked at Delta Gamma before it got burned down.

MBL: Oh, really. So is that – did you work at Delta Gamma before you worked at the Tri-Delta house?

VC: After.

MBL: Oh, after. Okay. So you went from Tri-Delta to Delta Gamma to the hospital?

VC: No. [Laughter] I worked for Tri-Delta. And I left there after maybe about ten, twelve years. I went to Delta Gamma and stayed there maybe about three or four years and the house caught on fire. Then I got back – just came back to Tri-Delta. I got my job back there.

MBL: Okay. What made you decide to move from the Tri-Delta house to the Delta Gamma house?

VC: I don't know. Just try new experiences.

MBL: Had somebody told you there was an opening, or did you go...

VC: Yes m'am. I had some friends that worked there, too.

MBL: It sounds like there's sort of a network. The folks in the kitchens know what's happening. [Laughter] Keeping y'all straight...

VC: It was a good experience.

MBL: Now you mentioned that your son worked with you for a little while? How did he get involved? And what did he do?

VC: He came out there and he helped wash the dishes in the evenings once he got out of school like about 1 or 2. He'll come in and stay and just clean up. He'll wash the supper dishes, put them up. Then after we leave and everything he'll mop the kitchen and lock up the place.

MBL: So your mother worked there and your son has worked there. Do you have other family members who have worked on campus, in kitchens?

VC: Oh, yes m'am. I've got two other sisters who work there. One of them works at Delta Gamma.

MAL: Kappa Gamma.

VC: Kappa Gamma.

MAL: And Gracey works at Phi Mu.

MBL: Okay, so you have a sister at Kappa Gamma and a sister at Phi Mu. What are their names?

VC: The one at Kappa Gamma is named Emma Grace Lewis.

MAL: The one who works at Kappa Gamma is Elizabeth Lewis.

VC: Okay.

MAL: Grace works at Phi Mu.

MBL: And are they still working there now?

VC: Yes m'am. They've been out there for years.

MBL: Are they interested, like you, in trying new places? Or are they happy with what they're doing?

VC: I guess they're happy with what they're doing. I've tried to ask them, you know, did they want to come to the hospital. No. But they're comfortable where they are. They want to stay there.

MAL: [Inaudible] Now there's a woman called [inaudible]. That's where she started [inaudible] at Tri Delta also. I mean Kappa Kappa also. I mean she was, you know, still in school too when she started.

MBL: Okay.

MAL: When I retired from there she just stayed on.

MBL: She stayed on. So, you've got three girls who started working at the houses while you were there, and two of them have stayed on and one stayed on a good long while.

MAL: Um hm.

MBL: Do you...did you ever experience any difference in the kids? Could you tell a difference between Mississippi kids or maybe kids that came from other states? Did they like different foods, or...did you notice?

VC: I didn't notice that. Of course when they go out there for supper we don't go out there.

MBL: So y'all don't go out into the dining areas?

VC: We just...we cook the food, and dish the food up in dishes. They have like eight houseboys from fraternities come over there and serve it to them. They'll put the food on the table. Put the drinks on the table.

MBL: Okay.

VC: And then once they sit down at the table, you know, even one of the students – the girls, wanted something, they'll raise their hand up and the guys will go to them and go and get whatever they want from the kitchen and bring it back to the table.

MBL: Okay. Do you think that system was set up to make work easier on y'all so y'all didn't have to run back and forth?

VC: Yes m'am.

MBL: And do you like it, or did you wish you could get to know the girls?

VC: No, no. I love it. [Laughter]. They was a big help cause they come in their and they eat. They take all the girls their salad, put the ice in the tea, take it out there to the side. It's nice.

MBL: Did you notice any difference between the Tri-Delta house and the Delta Gamma house, you said? What was the difference between the houses that you noticed?

VC: There wasn't really much difference [inaudible] except that the Delta Gamma house catch on fire.

MBL: How did that house catch on fire?

VC: I don't know. When we got there a little after 6 one morning, we just hear popping noise in there. So we unlocked the door, we could hear the fire. So we just – there was another lady and I – we just started running through there and telling them to get up the house was on fire.

MBL: Oh, so y'all are the ones who discovered the fire?

VC: Yeah.

MBL: Was it in the kitchen?

VC: We couldn't tell exactly where it was cause the floor – it was upstairs – and like on the back wing of the house. There was some girls down there and we had to run down there to get them and we could feel the heat coming up under our feet so we don't know. I don't even know where it started from.

MBL: Was there any sort of alarm that went off?

VC: No.

MBL: So y'all just ran through and...

VC: We started hollering, "Get up, the house is on fire."

MBL: Well did any of the girls come out and thank you for having done that?

VC: Maybe one or two. I had a picture of all of them. I don't know where it is. But... We didn't get anything. I mean, we had a couple of phone calls saying they wanted to interview us, and that was it.

MBL: Really? Did the house mother do anything as far as recognition?

VC: [shakes her head no]. Nothing.

MBL: So how did that make you feel?

VC: It made us feel bad. I wish we coulda got something. But they didn't do a thing.

MBL: And how long was the house closed after the fire?

VC: Oh, gosh. It was closed for years. Years. I don't know how many years, how long it took them to build the house back.

MBL: Did they make any arrangements for y'all as far as work goes when the house was closed. What did y'all do?

VC: We all draw unemployment for a little while, and then I don't know what the rest of them did.

MBL: And you went back to the Tri-Deltas?

VC: I went back to Tri-Delta sorority. They didn't do anything.

MBL: What, um, what was it like working on campus? How did you, you know, did you afford insurance, or?

VC: We liked working there but the main thing is that there's not any benefits there. So those 26 years I worked, those were wasted years. I didn't get anything.

MBL: No retirement?

VC: No m'am. Nothing. When I left there, when I told them that I was leaving, they gave me a \$200 check and that's all I left with.

MBL: So how do people feel about that, generally? People who are working up there?

VC: I mean, it hurts, you know, the staffs. It hurted us. Cause we had nothing to go home with. I don't know what the cause was the alumni ladies that was over the sorority houses.

MBL: Had y'all ever gone to the house mother and asked for some sort of benefits package?

VC: There was nothing she could do about it...got to go to the alumni.

MBL: So the alums control then...

VC: Right. I guess because when students come there and they stay for the year and graduate and then another group come in, I don't know why.  
[inaudible]

MBL: So do you see a lot of employees leaving the Greek houses to go to jobs like you've done, where you get insurance benefits and things?

VC: Yes m'am. Yes m'am. See you have to realize that you're working there all these years and then when the time comes to retire, when you make it to retirement, you ain't go nothing to live on. Nothing.

MBL: So a lot of people then leave and do things like you're doing.

VC: Yes m'am.

MBL: Well is there anything in particular that you want to tell me about? Any special memory, or anything you want to share about the time you worked in the Greek houses that maybe I haven't asked?

VC: No. I just really – I enjoyed working there. It was just because we didn't have no benefits and I just had the opportunity to get out and I left. But I miss all of them. Cause they know at Halloween I'm scared of masks and they come in there with they rubber masks on and I have to run in the bathroom and lock up. [Laughter]. So, I enjoyed it.

MBL: Did you have, um, did you enjoy your relationships better...do you feel that you were closer to the kitchen staff that you worked with or do you feel that you were closer with the girls?

VC: I was closer with the kitchen staff. Because, you know, if you didn't come in the kitchen or say good morning to us you're not going to see them.

You know, cause you're coming in [inaudible] and they're coming in and a lot of them...other than when they come in and eat lunch or dinner or something and they go back to the dining room. So some of them are so friendly they come in and keep a conversation with you and we loved that.

MBL: It's good to have that interaction.

VC: Oh, yes m'am.

MBL: Okay, well, so – I'm just trying to figure out. What years did you work for the university? You worked for 26 years

VC: That would be in 70? [inaudible]

MBL: 71? Well let's see...if you were born in '54 and you started when you were 17, that leaves me at about '71, right about 1971.

VC: Okay.

MBL: What are some of the major changes you noticed either in the kitchens or the girls between 1971 and then when you retired 26 years later?

VC: You see a lot of changes in the girls because see they all graduating. And they're done. Then we have to get used to the next group that comes in.

MBL: Was that a major adjustment every year? Did they change a lot from year to year?

VC: Yes m'am. Yes m'am. Yes m'am. They does.

MBL: Um, do you have a fondness for the Tri-Deltas. I mean, do you ever drive by the house and miss them, or

VC: I drive by there sometimes. My friend and I we be riding on the campus and we come through there and just look. But I hadn't never been back out there yet.

MBL: Oh, okay.

VC: But I want to, though.

MBL: Good. Do you ever, do you spend a lot of time on campus for other things? Do you or your family go to the sporting events, or?

VC: No m'am. We usually go to the Grove sometime when they have something in the Grove.

MBL: Um hm. So what do you do here in Oxford for enjoyment?

VC: Well we come back home and ride around with my family. I have a lot of sisters and brothers. We're all really get together and have cookouts.

MBL: Now how many sisters and brothers do you have?

VC: I have three sisters and seven brothers living. There's eleven of us still living.

MBL: And how many?

VC: There was twelve. One's deceased.

MBL: And y'all were all born and raised here in Oxford?

VC: Yes m'am. We all...

MBL: I'll get Miss Mary Alice's story in about two seconds [Laughter]

VC: Yes m'am. She's still here.

MBL: So when y'all gather, is food a major component.

VC: Oh. When we do that people just, my brother and everybody and they wives and their friends or whatever. We may get together and fix up and put something on the grill. And everybody just comes right here and goes to the grocery stores and comes back and cook it.

MBL: Does everybody have a specialty? Does everybody make a certain dish, or?

VC: Sometimes, like on Father's Day the sisters and sister-in-laws, we have to fix for the men. There'll be a yard full, and then on Mother's Day all my brothers and friends then cook for us ladies. It's real nice.

MBL: Now where do y'all gather. Do you host it here in your house, or –

VC: Sometimes I cook out here and I have two brothers stays out at here [meaning trailer park] so, we're back and forth and [inaudible] are at my mom's house, Mary Alice.

MBL: Okay. [to MAL] You have a big space to host them all?

MAL: Yes, I do.

VC: Yes she do.

MAL: I got a large back yard. Country.

MBL: Well, Miss Verlean. I've got one or two more questions for you. Where did you go to school when you were here in Oxford?

VC: In Oxford Elementary, Bramlett, and then I graduated from Oxford high school.

MBL: And did you ever take cooking or home ec in high school?

VC: I took home ec.

MBL: You did? And did you...ever thought about running your own catering business or-

VC: No m'am. I help. [Laughter]. I help. I used to help different people. Miss Morgan. I used to help her.

MBL: Did she have a catering business here in town?

VC: No, she usually just have little cookouts and things at her house and she'll give you something to help here do it up. But no m'am...

MBL: Not gonna run it? Now who were some of the house mothers that you worked with over the years? Can you just tell me a little bit about them? What you remember?

VC: Miss Carothers. I don't remember too much about her. I know she was a nice lady. Miss Alice Taylor, the one that just came before Miss Baker came, she was a sweet, a real sweet lady. She still stays here in Oxford.

MBL: Okay

VC: And I used to go to her house and see her sometimes. Then Miss Crawford, one of the alum ladies, I used to help her on special occasions at her house.

MBL: Oh, okay. Did you do that with some other alums who may live locally? Do you ever go and help them out with any of the events they put on? Do any of them call you sometimes?

VC: No m'am. Just Miss Crawford. And Miss Morgan. [inaudible].

MBL: Well I thank you very much for speaking with me today, and now we're going to turn this tape over and talk to your mom and see what she's got to share.

[Inaudible mumbling in agreement]

MBL: Well this will conclude...[inaudible – phone rings – answering machine picks up – VC's daughter walks over to turn it off]

MBL: Well, just real quickly, I forgot to ask, or maybe I did ask...I can't remember now. Did you remember the names of any of the other folks that you've worked with? Maybe if we're looking to contact other people to interview them – folks who might still be in Oxford, even?

VC: Um, Annie Caruthers. She was one of my cooks.

MBL: Now is she any relation?

VC: No, just good friends.

MBL: Okay. Does she work around Oxford anymore.

VC: I don't think she works anymore. I don't know how to get in touch with her. Patricia Pegues. I think she still works there washing dishes.

MBL: Okay.

VC: And Miss Lucille Lewis. As far as I know she's still there.

MBL: Alright. Well I will try and get in touch with them.

VC: Okay. Thank you very much for your time today. It was great to see you.