

"Pioneer Memory Days"  
Pioneer Village  
Transcript 1978  
by Bureau of Land Management Personnel  
Ralph Ben Jester OK

INTERVIEWEE: RALPH ANTHONY

INTERVIEWER: RALPH JESTER

SUBJECT: EARLY BLACK HISTORY IN BAKERSFIELD

DATE: OCTOBER 30, 1977

R. J: This is an interview with Ralph Anthony for the Oral History of the Southern San Joaquin Valley project by Ralph Jester at Pioneer Village on October 30, 1977 at 4:00 P.M. Okay, Mr. Anthony, I think you wanted to talk about early Black history in Bakersfield?

R. A: Yes, Ralph, I guess we can call each other Ralph here. And I think probably the best thing for me to do is sort of paraphrase an article that was in the Heritage of Kern regarding one of the first Black families in Kern County. As far as I know at this particular point, William Henry Pinckney, pioneer, was the first.

R. J: Could you spell the last name?

R. A: The spelling is P-i-n-c-k-n-e-y. Many times it's spelled, I think, even now at Pioneer Village, P-i-n-k-n-e-y, so the "c" was left out. but William Pinckney was born near Seneca City, South Carolina, on December 14, 1872. And his father David Pinckney and his mother's maiden name was Ildia Reese. I think they came with one of the first boxcar load of Blacks to Chattanooga, Tennessee where they met more families bent on coming to California to better themselves. And the Pinckney families and

others settled in Bakersfield; the rest went to Los Angeles, Fresno, Tulare, Stockton, and various other points of the San Joaquin Valley. And it's not generally known that cotton raising began around Bakersfield in 1884, but Carr and Haggin, who were land developers brought in the Black people from through agents in the east where they planted three sections between Wible Road and Kern Island Road. They even brought around sacks of flour and dropped them at the door steps as well as making arrangements for dropping off meat so that the laborers in the field had something to live on while they were working. However, so many did run away and would not work the cotton and it was abandoned after a year and beets were planted in their places. They were doing cotton experiments at that time. although, Pinckney said that, just remembering some of the history, that the city folks wasn't as good as the rural folks or the southern folks because they didn't want to do the work in the fields.

R. J: This is the city Black?

R. A: Yeah, the Blacks, right. The city Blacks versus the rural Blacks. When young Pinckney arrived in Bakersfield the city limit on the south was at 14th Street, and he remembered when it was extended first to 4th Street, and then to Brundage Lane. In the block where the present Elks Club building stands there was nothing but a jungle of willows where hobos hung out and camped. And at the west of the present city hall between Eye and "H" Street, there was a large blackberry patch owned by D. Weber. The Messina Hotel later stood on a part of this ground at the

southwest point of Eye and Truxtun Street. Pinckney, then purchased a small residence at 812 "H" Street in 1900, at which time a water ditch ran down "H" Street in front of his house. And in the next block north, location of the new St. Francis Church, there was an open area where families camped out during the visits to Bakersfield until as late as 1902. And this was in the Lowell addition, named for Wilmer Lowell; in fact, there is a park now on 4th and "P" Street called Lowell Park. In 1885, Pinckney was thirteen and he worked as a houseboy for Dr. Ellis Rogers at his home located at 18th and "H" Street. The site was Judd's--now I don't think Judd's exist I think Judd's is, is there still a Judd's? I'm not sure on 18th and "H"s. I think Judd's is out now too.

R. J: I'm not familiar with the name.

R. A: Seems like I can recall a Judd's and then there was Weill's and it may be still there, I'll have to...

R. J: There is a building there.

R. A: Yeah, 18th and "H". I can't quite--that's about one thing we can double check on. And in 1877-88 Pinckney worked near Tehachapi handling cattle and then came down to work for two years as a stockman for Brown's Dairy. According to Pinckney, in the article, it was in 1890 or 1891 that R. E. Houghton became the first--brought the first Holstein cattle into the Bakersfield area. He <sup>PASTURED</sup> passes them about where Kern Valley Packing Plant is today on Kern Island Road south of Bakersfield on his Berkshire Ranch. I think that's called now, it's still Kern Valley and it is on South "H" it's still located out there

because down the street further is another packing plant from a family that has been here a long time. All of a sudden, my mind goes blank.

R. J: Let's see, that's not the Rudnick Plant?

R. A: Rudnick right, Rudnick Plant, right. Now, he said the big Bakersfield--he remembers vividly the big Bakersfield fire of 1889 and it was one of--and also the flood of 1893. And I heard people talk about the fire and the flood back in those times where they said--at that time downtown to get around you rode trolley cars. And I was shocked to find that they had trolley cars in Bakersfield. He remembered that a man named Barnhardt, who planted many of the umbrella and palm trees that still grow around the city, he remember when the Valley Road came into Bakersfield. And Pinckney played a tenor trombone in the Black band which was present on that occasion of the tree planning and it was known as the Kern Valley Band. Professor White was the first Black band in Kern County, I would assume from what I know. In thinking back further, Pinckney believed the first show in Bakersfield was the Nickelodeon located on the northwest corner of Chester Avenue and 17th. The admission price was five cents.

R. J: Is there a date for that? Does he know when that was located there?

R. A: Let's see, okay, no it didn't mention a date, but he said the pictures did not move but, were slides that were pushed in and out of a projector. And the skating rink was next erected on this property and after it the Beale Memorial Library. So,

maybe we can go back and check that when the Beale Memorial Library was built and the skating rink and then find out about the Nickelodeon Theatre. Also, remember oldtimers talking about that particular area. China, it was a little place on "L" and 20th Street and I think it was mentioned in Shotguns on Sunday.

R. J: That should be the New China Cafe.

R. A: Aah.

R. J: Or was that it?

R. A: Let me see. I think now it's just a parking lot for Brocks.

R. J: Right, because I think it is a couple of them in there. Wong's is near there. Also, according to Pinckney, there was a three story Grand Hotel that stood on the northwest corner of 20th and Chester and when Sheriff John Kelly closed up they played stud poker gambling in the Arlington Hotel and other places. The Arlington stood on the southeast corner of 19th Street and Chester Avenue and burned down in the big fire of 1889, and then rebuilt in 1890. I think Shotguns on Sunday was also--can verify that the gambling element threatened to kill Kelly for spoiling their business. Kelly used to live near Pinckney and often walked home with him after work until Kelly chanced to mention that they were out after--out to kill him. And after that the sheriff walked home alone. Kelly later became wealthy after the discovery of the Kelly-Rand Mine in Randburg area. Now, also according to Pinckney in the article, August Krantzmer made the iron chains that surrounded the grounds of the oil city hall in his foundry while he, Pinckney, made the mortar for the fence at the same location. He said in those days, men got

seventy five cents to \$1.00 per day for driving a team of two to four horses or mules. They received \$1.25 to \$1.50 when they drove a team of eight to ten animals with a jerk line. At that time, Miller was said to have had 100,000 hogs in the county. And in Pinckney's youth, Railroad Street, later Truxtun Avenue, was the main stock trail through Bakersfield. When cattle and sheep were driven in from the west to be loaded on the railroad in East Bakersfield, the dust was something terrific. To keep it down somewhat, straws were thrown on the road but, it didn't help too much. Now, I also recall a family, a lady I--she's deceased now, but this was about '77, about three years ago, and talking with her, she remembered the trails that came down from where Kern General Hospital is, where they had to ride a wagon and it took them all day to ride a wagon, no, I think she said a half a day to ride a wagon from where Kern Medical Center is to where she lived on Pacheco Road and they rode in horses and buggies like that. They used to go to town which was East Bakersfield to shop and everything. When the cowboys from Tejon, Miller and Lux and George Coffee outfits came into town on payday, they would ride in groups of fifteen to twenty. The red light district ran twenty four hours a day. Can you imagine that? And no matter what time these men reached town, they were sure of a good time, whether it was two or six oclock in the morning. They would often race up and down the streets, las-soing chairs off the sidewalks. I don't know if they had sidewalks--that must have been boardwalks.

R. J: Is there a location given for that, where the red light district was at that time?

R. A: Uh, let's see. They didn't give it but you know, I'm gonna take a guess that the area that was downtown bordered by 'L' and 19th no, yeah, going north it would be 18th and then 19th, I'd say between 19th and Railroad--I mean well, Truxtun, if I remember, probably, I'm sort of thinking of Shotguns on Sunday and what some of the other people had told me that I talked with. All they said was town, I guess at that time, town was the red light district because this was a pretty interesting place and sort of dangerous still. The last of the dangerous cowboys lived here as far as--in that, which was verified through Shotguns on Sunday. I understand that book was held up from printing and the guy that was trying to write it got run out of town on several occasions and had to wait before he wrote it. Now, this is something, a new twist, Pinckney also remembered when English remittance men came into the Rosedale area, the Southern Hotel management required them to make a deposit before having a party to be sure of getting payment for damaged furniture and other equipment. He said those are really the wild times, so I imagine, if they stayed open all night and guys rode in on their horses were ready to party, it didn't matter. In 1899 Pinckney married a widow, Mrs. Amanda Randolph, and part of the Randolph family is still here in Bakersfield. I am presently trying to make contact with them. From 1916-1945, when he retired, he worked for the city of Bakersfield Street Department as a grader man and for a number of years, he owned a small ranch in the mountains above Lorraine where he kept a few head of horses and cattle. His last years were spent mostly between there and his

home in Bakersfield where he resided with his stepdaughter, Hinda Randolph, until his death in March, 1954. In March 1954--I started high school in 1954, in June, now I do know some of the Randolph family and then there are some other families that came shortly after the Pinckneys that I know of, maybe we can get into later on, Ralph.

R. J: Go back and give a few details, you said the Blacks arrived in 1884 for the Haggin and Carr's cotton farms. How many came at that time?

R. A: Well, they said twenty car loads came to California that he knew of. I don't think there was any others around at that time because this was shortly after freedom was declared for Blacks and many of the Blacks who left the south going to the cities to find employment and when they started the transferring former slaves and their siblings from the rural area where there plantations and such, from Chicago, your urban areas, these were really about the times that Blacks starts in hordes but, there is history of Black cowboys. Now, that goes back even further, that goes back I think the latter 1700. I was trying to think Beckworth, William Beckworth, Backworth's Pass or Path. Now, I don't know if he got near Kern Valley or Kern County per se but, he was known for his tremendous ability of cattle drives, particularly in California and Arizona. so, but as Beckworth's Path, I can't think of his first name now, B-e-c-k-w-o-r-t-h, if I'm remembering correctly and there was one more like in--okay, we'll go back to 1600's and it may be in the 1800's also where the governor of California was Pio Picoi, he was a Black and

Mexican heritage. so we can really say that the first Black governor of California was in 1815, something like that, I can't quite--

R. J: I think he was the governor in the 1840's. The Americans managed to take it in the war.

R. A: Right. And that's the farthest that I can go back at this particular point. Now Walter and Mary Low Massie, some of the people I talked to then there's Mrs. Davis who I helped to get here. She's been here over fifty two years and then Bessie Owens where the school was named after--elementary school, Bessie Owens. Then there was the Lowery family who lived across the street in the area of the Pinckneys. Pearlie Mae Winters Lowery, she was an opera singer. So, the Abernathy family and I want to say Scott-it may be Scott, they live somewhere on 22nd Street, they have been here, part of the family has been here a long time. And also, Railsback family that I'll have to try to recontact. Now these people are--I would say are in their 70's or 80's now.

R. J: Did they mention anything about what their reception was in Kern County when they got here:

R. A: Well, I'll tell you what I do recall some saying that when they did come to the cotton field that at this particular time where a lot of the fight came from the south, the poor whites had moved out in the area and they discriminated against the Blacks in the cotton fields. I guess it's a matter of economics, but I think it was always--they had to always play an inferior role. Okay, but, there is one family, and I still think it's part of

the Lowery family they owned a business, a furniture store downtown. Then there was the Houston family; one man was a barber and not to sound negative but--no I shouldn't say anything if it's hearsay--that he didn't want to be known to be Black and they say there are several families that passed for white while they were here so, I don't want to get off into that unless I am trying to, you know, start doing some research. Just keep that as hearsay, but all that can be researched, I assume.

R. J: Did any of them mention what the rate of pay was in the field at the time?

R. A: Okay, now the only thing I can allude to is what we were kind of mentioned earlier is \$.75 a day for driving a mule, team of mules or horses. Gosh, I can't imagine what they were paid in those days for picking cotton. Now like what he did mention, Pinckney mentioned himself is that he felt it was wonderful arrangement since meat was furnished as well as their housing and they had use of the farm animals and he thought it was good of those folks to bring by flour and drop it at the doorstep and it cost them nothing. So that was the only thing that he mentioned so, it may have been a form of sharecropping just for a living. I don't know if they had anything extra, but that would be very interesting to find out.

R. J: I understood that there was considerable backlashing on the white laborers where this--

R. A: Cotton and different jobs--. Well, that's--I say the only thing I can allude is where--it's sort of a comical remark today when

you start talking about the early days and that the Blacks felt that it was discrimination then. Even in the labor market--in the cotton fields and so it just transferred on. As you know, Ralph, downtown itself really started hiring Blacks a little bit more right about '59 or '60. And that's also the time when Blacks started getting into the oilfields. When I say that, a lot of people say, well, there was one, you know, and all that, I'm not talking about super one or the exceptional one, I'm talking about as far as being open to Blacks that weren't known. Where before a Black could be hired someone had to know him personally. He couldn't just walk in and get a job unless there was a great need or so. But, there was a--competition as far as the labor market was and there was discrimination against the Blacks regardless of whether if they could do the job or not. But, some history shows that, well, when things were wide open, if a person had the ability to do, well, then they could succeed. But, after they succeeded and there was more control measurers going well then, they were forced out. Business was stolen--you know it's a lot of claim jumping going on and all over the district. Water controls, you know, all of our--even some of the problems we have today, sort of Nixonite type happenings, if I may use that term. Now, all that's conjecture. It's not fully a fact, it is hearsay until--need to searched out.

R. J: Let me see, it's my understanding that the Klan was fairly active in Bakersfield in the 1920's, do you have any information on that?

R. A: Okay, I'll take off from the latest incident that happened in Taft about a year--two years ago when Black students were run out of Taft. Due to some of the rougths in town, whatever way they want to say it, but it is true from what I have--from my own experience from going to a cafe, and this was about in 1952 and it may--I think it was in '52, well, I'll say between '52 and '54, they did have a sign on one of the restaurants on Union Avenue, it's a little cafe and I believe it was between California and 4th Street and they did say, and I think some of these people that I am talking about can verify it themselves now, I'm going by what they told me. But, there was a sign at the end of, I guess the Bakersfield city limits then, between here and L.A. that they didn't want Blacks, Jews, and other coloreds or something moving into town. Now, this is what I had understood. There is some still say and maybe the F.B.I. and C.I.A. would know this but, I doubt that they'll give out the information that there is still organized Klans groups that exist in Taft right now. And I had heard, it not as valid as the one from Taft that there may--some of them may exist in Oildale. but, that's supposed to be today. But, then it was open then because I think Marion Anderson came into Bakersfield in 1910 or 1920, I can't remember the years, I'd better back off of that, but she couldn't get a hotel in Taft and I think she had to come to Bakersfield. A lot of carporters then, they had special places they had to go to when they got off of working on the trains. And they had porter houses, I call them porter houses set up where they knew they could go to be safe and get food, board,

care. Cause, you know, at that time, I remember, this would have to be--now, I got here in Bakersfield in '48 and went right to the cotton fields. It had to be in '50, around '50, because I was elementary age and may have just began junior high, which was in '52. I remember talking to a man that had his degree in engineering and he couldn't get a job and he said they hadn't opened the field up for Blacks at that time. The only job that he could get would be a porter's job and he didn't want that said he'd rather work in the fields than to waste his talent that way. A lot of the Blacks that did have an education there were forced to work at jobs that were considered for coloreds. Porter jobs, service jobs, maintenance.

R. J: Let's use that as a comparison. How much were you paid in the fields in '48?

R. A: Okay, in '48, I think we worked then primarily for shovel contractors, Joe B. Johnson, contractor. In fact, they called him King Cotton. He was the largest labor contractor and, I think at that time, in '40's, we were getting from \$2.50 to \$3.00 a hundred--hundred pounds of cotton. And if, or you can say \$.02 to \$.03 per pound, would that be per ten pound--I always thought about it in hundreds--\$2.00 to \$3.00 a hundred for a hundred pounds of cotton.

R. J: Three cents a pound.

R. A: Yeah, three cents a pound. According to the cost of living that was good. Picking potatoes used to get from six, naw, from five to eight cents a sack or five to eight dollars a hundred. See, I became very proficient in picking cotton and potatoes. I

picked over 500 pounds of cotton. The average person would pick 250 to 500 sacks of potatoes the average person would pick, men, about 250. But, that was because my little personal challenge to. No brag, just facts.

R. J: What about the efforts on the parts of the Blacks to work against discrimination in the--in this period, in the 1880's to say the 1920's?

R. A: I think the only thing that was going for Blacks at that particular time was survival. Many accepted the subservient conditions. It was better than slavery. As far as organized activities around Black causes, they really didn't get under ground until in the 1900's. For instance, the NAACP was formed when the Niagara Falls movement in 1909, your Black Masonic fraternities were formed in the 1900's. It may have been one that dated back. Prince Hall, I was trying to think of that, I forgot what year. I think it was in the 1900's. I don't think anything dates back, at least, there's no record of it. Most Blacks have moved out from the south were fragmented and had to scuffle for themselves and families often moved together to do the same type of work. And I think that's also why in the 1800's, 1884 and 1890, and such the Blacks moved and went to different places and they found conditions unbearable or they were being misused or abused. They just took off and split. There was almost, I guess you can say, maybe equivalent to what the depression days did to almost everybody where they just had to move around until they found something solid. But, far as I can recall in stories and so on, a Black man's life wasn't worth anything and mostly complied and that was the way of survival.

R. A: Well, everytime the--the general economy is better, it's usually better for the Blacks, but it is still on the lower end of the totem pole. Many of the gains that Blacks had made, even from the early--say in the 1500's, not 1500's excuse me, 1600's when the first Blacks came into America, 1619. Okay, the ship that landed in Georgetwon and it was '19, the first birth was in 1619 James Tucker--William Tucker. From those times on, from Benjamin Banneker drawing out and laying out Washington D.C., from DeSabo discovering Arizona, I'm trying to think of the year that there was a colony of Blacks, Spanish, and Indians discovered Pueblo de Los Angeles, which is Los Angeles and I can't quite pull it--and then Estebanico was a Black slave that actually discovered Arizona and New Mexico which is now called Arizona and New Mexico. You know, it's strange when you say discover, the native Americans were here all the time, the Indians helped them as well. That's a question we always have to deal with in discovery. But, I imagine you can say discovery as far as written history is concerned.

R. J: I'd like to go on and continue about the efforts of the Blacks in the local area and talk about Friendship House.

R. A: Okay, Friendship House was started in 1957, although there were efforts before that, I think it dates back to '55, to where the migrant ministry which is now known as the Southern Conference United Church of Christ, thought that they would be able to help the people out in the area, that was primarily Blacks in the area, and there was primarily migrant workers. Everybody was working in the fields. Maybe, before I even go into it further,

you remember in the late '50's and early '60's when the cotton machines came into existence. Many of the Black families were automatically out of work. Hoards of people were put out of work and this has--it still has an impact upon our welfare system that became larger and larger as technology puts people out of work, particular those that were dislaborers or semi-skilled and they had to find other areas to make a living. Now, before the '60's, people were living in the Carversville-Crystal Height areas and the Watts area. It's three areas, it's bordered by Brooks and Brundage, from Lakeview well, Cottonwood Road to Union Avenue. Even today, it's a 41% poverty level area and about 45% unemployment rate particularly with the young Black male. Anyway, the Migrant Ministry felt that they needed to do something about the situation because in Carversville-Crystal Height is where most of the Blacks stayed and right across Planz to Watts. Watts was named after Mr. Watts, who died about two or three years ago. Mrs. Watts is a teacher at Casa Loma--Casa Loma School which is also in this area bordered that I mentioned. Mostly white people that lived in--they were doing real fine--in the area except for that cross Planz. That was Black town or Carversville-Crystal Heights. So, then it was the--more Blacks came in and they had to open up the schools where the Blacks couldn't be confined to going to Lincoln which in the late '40's and early '50's it was an elementary and junior high school mixed together. The--as they opened up the schools and more Blacks started moving in different areas, then, there was the white flight and it never has recovered from that

because when there is a large mass of people moving in and out of the area then there is no dollars turning around in there to keep the buildings up, to keep stores going, to keep money turning in to keep the community developed. Well, with the backdrop of all that Friendship House came in basically for the migrant--to help the migrant laborers and as these patterns changed then it became an area of--like I say, high poverty and low income. It was formed to help individuals, families and the community to do things collectively to better the environment. Okay, first besides the social services, there were programs established, baseball teams, day care center and later in '69 or '70 a swimming pool that was built by a group of downtown businessmen Operation Friendship.

R. J: Where was that located and where is it?

R. A: That's located at Friendship House facilities at 2424 Cottonwood Road. Since the building wasn't contemplated in '57 or '56, finally, an old barracks was moved there which we use now. Still Friendship House. Then another wing was added on which was a part of an old church, a classroom wing and those are the structures that are there now. This is why we are in a large refurbishing process because the buildings are old and problems have increased and its having an effect upon the services that are being provided. The thrust is for educational development where we have the Friendship House-Cal State Tutoring program. There are adult literacy classes using the Laubach method--each one teach one, teach the senior adult reading. Just to give you a little story there was a 74 year old man that walked in last

or year before and I had known him about seven years but, I didn't know he didn't know how to read or write. so he's presently enthusiastically going through class now. We have another man that came in last year, he was diabetic, and they had classified him as being dangerous to himself and others, but the way the bureaucracy handled him that just created more problems. We were successful in working with him to the point that he's in the adult literature learning to read and write. He had been a hard worker all his life and was injured on his job, so he is now a good citizen. I can just go on and tell you a lot of stories-individual stories that are fantastic and need to be heard so that some of the youth in the area can find out, no matter what the situation you are in, you can still do something about yourself. You don't have to go down just because your outer environs are not that conducive for development. That goes in line with the philosophy that we have on top of Friendship House, this writing "A man can be a man no matter where he finds himself". Now, I have been trying to get some feminist language in there to balance it off, but, it's kind of hard to get that impact of what it's saying. There were programs established now that are going on today like, 4-H, Boy Scouts, Bicycle Club, we're trying to get a mini bike program going that's what the kids really-youths really want. Campership during the summer where they get away a week and this is been going--I don't know how long the Campership program has been going, I think it started in the '60's. I just can't remember what year. But that's been going on every year. Presently, I think it was

a couple other programs in there I didn't quite--just won't come off, roll off my head right now. I'll pull my little brochure out. Well, basically, that's some of the background in history of Friendship House.

R. J: How many people are involved in working there now?

R. A: Okay, presently we have a regular staff of two. We have part-time senior citizens outreach worker, we have an employment outreach worker through the CETA Title I program and CETA's Comprehensive Employment Training Act, the Manpower Division of the Kern County of Kern. We also, have a Title VI program which is the pilot recreation program which includes maintenance and improvement of facilities. We have a proposal in for the Friendship House Education Development program that was sponsored by Cal State. Hope that goes through. We also, have some proposals that we are submitting on self-economic sufficiency. Employment training program also, this is through Manpower. Through the Carter Economic Stimulus Program where we hope to train sixteen to nineteen year olds in the area of fiberglass technician and molders. So, if all that goes through, we're on the way. We did have another program where we would lease sixty acres of land and sub-lease it to a farmer hoping to derive some income to help build the facilities and such. but, the persons that owned the land decided to sell it the second year so that shot that effort. We have a viable 4-H program, a beautification project where trees and shrubbery were planted to start the beautification and we have some assistance from private land developer, Reeder Corporation, besides other private enterprises

that see the problem and want to be involved like Gottlieb's painting, contractors, Jost Floor Covering Company and things like that. Besides getting individual, for example, the United Pick-up Club which is a group of young men from the area that have also volunteered their expertise and labor and material to helping to refurbish part of the facilities already. Then, we use the youth group to do some of the parts too. Trimming the hedges, cutting the lawns, planting certain things, we'd had bad experiences in planting so we really need some experts in there and this is where Farm Home Advisors office has also assisted. So, it's a thing that acquires participation, contributions, finances, expertise from everybody in the community, not just those people out there because the people live in the area need their help.

R. J: You mentioned that the--you mention Blacktown and there was Carversville-Crystal Height, how did it get that name?

R. A: It was named after George Washington Carver. I thought that was interesting in that there was an effort made by the residents sometime ago to change the name of Cottonwood Road to Martin Luther King. I think that effort is gonna resurface unless they want to call George Washington Carver Lane or something of that nature. But there is an annual activity to the country through his scientific genius of dealing with the peanut, potatoes and other plants that we all are blessed to even be having today at our disposal.

R. J: Was there much opposition to the starting of Friendship House both in the Black community and in the white community during the '50's?

R. J: How many people are directly served on--I understand you serve the entire Black community and portions of the entire community, how many people are directly served?

R. A: Okay, let me start that by saying that the primary area is probably about 85% Black, about 10% Chicano, and about 5% white, so, that's the clientele that we have primarily, programmatic. Now, for instance, personally I see on the average of forty persons a month in my office. Not counting outside and all the other things that I have to stay involved in, but, our employment outreach worker would involve himself with probably thirty five employment contacts and again that's just--these are the ones we directly take time with and deal with at that point. During the summer, our swimming pool utilization would be up to 250-300 youths a day; I'm not counting the evenings when we have twilight swimming. I would have to say that sometimes we may have about 500 youths there. Christmas we had a historical mark last year in where we served, gave gifts, bags of goodies, to over 500 youths. Through our regular programming we try to do the ideal thing of having one adult to ten youths or children. That ain't the case. We've got one to twenty five so we need a lot more volunteers and we are making a special effort to get a lot of the parents living in the area more involved. Although, it's even a little more difficult 'cause we have a lot of parent families. Basically, a lot of them are low income. We have a high rate of senior citizens, and then a high rate of children--elementary age and junior high, and senior high. Now, when you put that together, I would say, and I'm guesstimating because

R. A: I don't think that there was much opposition, even today. I would say there is no opposition. It's just ignorance, people that don't know and don't want to be disturbed out of their comforts may become part of the problem until they open their eyes, they can become part of the solution. I think another thing we exemplify is the fact that with the ethnic mixture of our Board of Directors our Corporate Board and executive committees which is comprised of Blacks, Whites, Chicanos, Indian, and is open to all that are interested in doing something. I think the interesting thing is they exemplify if you are not part of the problem, then you are part of the solution. So that gives people some wide choices doesn't it. And--go ahead.

R. J: I was going to ask you what kind of expansion do you have planned, you mentioned some of them earlier.

R. A: Basically, what we are doing it's--we're into sort of a very bad tailspin in expanding our services, we also need to get our facilities there because their buildings are old. We have a plot plan that was drawn up by a Black architect, Larkin Macky, where having the existing facilities that need to be refurbished and plus an auditorium and picnic ground, camping ground, baseball, tennis, and basketball courts that could be built on a five acre lot. By the way, that was deeded to us from Tenneco. I think at that time it was Kern County Land Company. I think we're all familiar with the vast holding of the pioneers, Kern County Land, Tenneco. That's how--that's also made it available for the five acres that we directly operate on, and I think we have the capacity to expand to other acreage.

we've put no stats together in our statistics. I would say that in a years' time that we actually serve at least about 5,000 people in different programs and so on, 5,000 to 7,000.

R. J: When did you get involved in Friendship House?

R. A: I was on the Board of Directors for about three years before, say in '71 and the position of executive director became open and I decided that rather than stay in the insurance business, since I had one foot in the business and the other foot in the community, that I needed to make a decision so I accepted the directorship of Friendship House in August of '74.

R. J: Has that made much of a difference on your own personal life style?

R. A: No, because I was doing this already. I was with a Black owned and operated company, Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Company that was started in 1925 in Los Angeles and after nine years with the company, again I said I always had one foot in the community and one foot in the business. but, my community experience starts as a child in church, my father was a minister. I am from a family of fourteen--nine boys and five girls--and because we did have hard times economically, these things I learned as a child and also through my schooling I've studied it. I was a major in anthropology. Mixed with the personal experiences as well as some of academic aspects of it, I thought, and religious experiences of it, I thought a mixture of those would help. I've always been going in that direction and seems like I can't get out of it, so I haven't tried. I just stay in it and try to do my best and I try to urge everyone else to do their part.

R. J: Was your father a minister in Bakersfield?

R. A: Yes, he is presently pastor of St. Peter, Missionary Baptist Church, which is an outstanding story within itself. He moved here in 1948 and I think he had just accepted the ministry then or a little after he was here. He started the church from the soil up, he built a tent after the land was--it wasn't donated to him, he had to buy it, the church had to buy it. But, he started a tent and the wind and the rain would knock it down and we would go and put it up. The wind and the rain would knock it down and we'd go and put it up. Everybody thought we were crazy, in fact, we started thinking he was crazy too. But, right now he has over 500 people membership and in itself that's an example in the community that something can be done if you are working together.

R. J: He's still at the same church then since 1948?

R. A: Oh, yeah. Right. It was established in 1952; he's still there and a very solid example for the community. It's been in the same area

R. J: Sounds like something good to go into next week.

R. A: Yeah, that would be quite a story. I'll have to say that for sure.

R. J: Well, do you have anything else you would like to add?

R. A: Well, Ralph, I won't do that right now but, we start talking on things like this I can probably just ramble on and ramble on. but, I think it's important to establish Pioneer Memory Days and one of the most important aspects to doing anything of this nature, is that it be filtered through all of our educational

channels, our public channels in awareness in that planning whether it's for technology advance and economic advance in political or social, whatever, definitely should include input from the multi-cultural aspect, all ethnic groups, that will eliminate the negatives that is stereotyped towards infants and move right.