

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Lucile Ruby Woodard

COLLECTION: 4700.0826

IDENTIFICATION: Iowa native, LSU Professor Emeritus of Speech, LSU radio Program Director 1947-1957, advocate for the introduction of educational television in Baton Rouge and the state of Louisiana, Louisiana Public Broadcasting employee

INTERVIEWER: Jack Fiser

SERIES: University History – Distinguished Alumni

INTERVIEW DATES: May 27, 1997

FOCUS DATES: 1947-1997

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1185, Side A

Fiser's introduction of Woodard; her interest in speech from an early age; invited to go on the Chautauqua Circuit but mother couldn't leave farm to chaperone; childhood in South Central Iowa; experimental radio station at William Penn College; involved with radio at University of Iowa as a graduate student; many LSU speech professors were from the Midwest; people from the Midwest have a general American accent and like to talk; call from Dr. Claude Merton Wise led to a job interview at LSU; General Extension Division developing campus radio; Harley Smith, Dr. Joseph Brouillette and Ralph Steetle's involvement in campus radio; Woodard worked as program director and taught in Speech Department starting in 1947; LSU assigned an FM frequency; difficulty of early recording methods, wax discs and wire recorders; radio was housed in a building in a former cornfield on campus; early programs included LSU School of Music performances, other "good music"; participation in disc exchange with other universities; broadcasting to East Baton Rouge schools although many did not have FM radios; LSU financed station entirely; announcers were students, many went on to careers in radio; funding for LSU radio cut in 1957 but LSU continued to work producing programs for other radio and TV stations; Woodard represented LSU when the Southern Regional Education Board started promoting educational TV (ETV) in the South; worked with Governor Robert Kennon on ETV commission in 1952-53; represented LSU on the Louisiana Educational Television Commission (LETC) in 1954; LETC failed for lack of funding; two decades later, creation of Louisiana Educational Television Authority (LETA) where she also served as LSU's representative; involvement with these groups gave her first-hand education on, "how politicians think and act"; Monroe first city in Louisiana to have ETV station but it was short lived; before LETA, talks between LSU President Middleton and State Superintendent Shelby Jackson to create an ETV station in Baton Rouge; Jackson bought station in Monroe that failed; first successful ETV station was in New Orleans; on September 6, 1975, Woodard pushed the button to air the first

program on Louisiana Public Broadcasting (LPB) in Baton Rouge, “Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood”; TV studio in State Department of Education Building with huge pillar in middle of studio made filming difficult; group of volunteers that would come to be known as Friends of LPB sending out mailings on the channel’s program schedule; no office in studio building so meetings held at Woodard’s home, sorted mailings on her living room floor; difficulty of keeping station going after funding from large foundations dried up; majority of funding goes toward high cost of production or purchase of TV programs;

Tape 1185, Side B

Radio station at LSU was originally meant to teach elementary and high school courses and provide continuing education for adults; creation of the program, “Pursuit of Learning” featuring Dr. Giles Wilkeson Gray; program ran for eight years and featured professors discussing their field of expertise; LSU radio station is a practice station operated entirely by students; LSU Music School and Boyd Professors great subject matter for early public radio and TV stations; Woodard’s childhood in Iowa, her family’s pioneering past; ancestor settling in Iowa, getting 100 acres for \$1.25 per acre; area where she was raised had seven farms owned by Ruby family members, was nicknamed “Ruby Row”; her brother Willard went to Iowa State, worked on Manhattan Project and for Eastman Kodak Company, lives in same retirement home with Woodard in Baton Rouge; working together on tracing their family history; family came to America from England, possibly Switzerland before that;

Tape 1186, Side A

Interest in genealogy came from her father; he wrote notes on family events he remembered, she and her brother found them after his death; their desire to write a family history; visit to Family History Library in Salt Lake City; great-great grandfather living in Indiana in 1840, waited there until Iowa opened as a state in 1845; went directly to land he wanted and staked his claim; family stayed settled there through her childhood; men in her family were farmers; grateful that she grew up on a farm, taught her values that have stayed with her through life; her and her brothers paths in life; well-known LSU Speech Department that she worked for; Dr. Wise, Dr. Gray and Dr. Shaver were all distinguished scholars; positive attitude contributing to her long life.

TAPES: 2 (T1185, T1186) **TOTAL PLAYING TIME:** 1 hour, 8 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 36 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence (3 pages), Information on history of LPB and persons mentioned in interview (6 pages)

RESTRICTIONS: None