

Community Archive Center Oral History Project Transcript
Cynthia Tucker, Interview date: 4/21/2022

Cynthia Tucker: 00:05 Let me know when you're ready.

dindria barrow: 00:07 I'm Ready.

Okay. My name is Cynthia T. Tucker. My name, spelling of my name is c y n t h i a. T stands for Tay, t a c y e, Tucker, t u c k e r. Today's date is April 21st, 2022. And today's location is Tacoma Pierce Library, Main Branch, digital media Lab.

dindria barrow: 00:41 So my first question for you will come off of the blue sheet. And then I'm just gonna use the white sheet to do supplementals.

Cynthia Tucker: 00:49 Okay..

dindria barrow: 00:50 It's my cheat sheet. I just gave you my cheat sheet.

John Hargis: 00:53 Is everybody's cell phone turned off?

Dindria barrow: 00:55 Oh, that's a good question.

Cynthia Tucker: 00:59 Gimme, let me turn it off

dindria barrow: 01:00 Think it right before the movie starts, Right?

Cynthia Tucker: 01:01 Yeah. <laugh>.

dindria barrow: 01:05 Thank you John.

Cynthia Tucker: 01:11 Power off. There we go. I'm shutting down.

dindria barrow: 01:14 That's a nice case. I have to get a new one from my phone.

Cynthia Tucker: 01:17 I love that one cause I can leave my purse and just sling it and carry it.

dindria barrow: 01:23 So, um, my first prompt is name some of the places people or things you call home.

Cynthia Tucker: 01:31 Some of the places. My husband is ex-military. He retired from the military service. So I was born in Westchester, Pennsylvania, and I lived there most of my life. Then we moved to Downingtown, Pennsylvania, which is maybe about 20 minutes away. That's where I went to school. I played hockey, had friends. And when I left Downingtown, I moved back to Westchester where I was born and I lived there. I worked at Pepperidge Farm Frozen Foods, and I did pretty good there because I'm talking about Sixties, late sixties

- Cynthia Tucker: 02:18 I was making \$8 an hour. Now \$8 an hour in the late sixties was pretty good. Pepperidge Farm was an elite company and they really took care of you. Every five years you got a check. And every five years, either you got a chair or a watch or something from them. They, they were very good to their employees. So, after my husband joined the military, because we dated for about five years, and then after he joined the military, then I started traveling with him. My first place was Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Um, I had two sons born there. It was a nice place. It was peaceful. It was my first time away from my family. My one sister who, her and I are very close, she stopped speaking to me for a year because I left. Where I, you know, we did a lot of family things together and I left.
- Cynthia Tucker: 03:25 So she stopped speaking to me for a year. Finally, she come around and we always been close anyway, and we rekindle that relationship. So, we left Fort Campbell and we went to Fort Raleigh, Kansas. Fort Raleigh, Kansas is where they send everybody that the Army don't like. <laugh>. So they send you there and they have 'em all living on one military base. So they know where they're at. <laugh> You know, but every morning I woke up, I looked at the ceiling, I said, God, I'm still here. You, why are you punishing me? What are you doing? You know, it was, it was a horrible place. It was extremely hot in the summer, extremely cold. In the winter, we would have tornadoes. My first tornado, I heard this train coming and I'm like, what? We don't have no trains up here.
- Cynthia Tucker: 04:31 And my husband's like, it's a tornado. So I got to experience the tornado. Lucky for us, we were there 18 months. We were at Fort Campbell four years. So they took us from Fort Raleigh, Kansas and sent us to Baumholder, Germany. We stayed there four and a half years. Now, I must say, for all my travels everywhere that I have been, I was always a Black woman. That part did not change in my life or in my family. And I always maintain my culture, my identity. Uh, moving to a foreign country is very rewarding in so many ways. If you ever wanna have the best Christmas of your life, go to Germany, <laugh>, because they celebrate from December 1st to the 31st every single day. And so you, by being around military personnel, you do the things based on where you're at. And so the culture changes, activities change, the environment where your kids go to school, everything changes.
- Cynthia Tucker: 05:55 So if you want to be happy, not stress, you jump in and blend with it. I became a distaff, they call it a distaff worker, which we had four buildings, high rise buildings, where actually in Germany, they were like apartments. And we had maybe 16 apartments in each building. And so I was responsible for four of

those buildings to hold a meeting, once every three or four months. And the reason I will hold a meeting is if something would happen. They always told us, if the balloon goes up, gather your people up because the dependents gotta get to a certain location to get out of the country. And they had to have somebody in charge of making sure that the family members were taken care of. And so, and that's what I did as, as a distaff worker.

Cynthia Tucker: 07:01 My first involvement being around a lot of people, because actually I was a very shy person. Very, very shy. But life taught me to open up. But I was afraid of people when I first left home and got out in the world, I was, if somebody said boo to me, I would cry. I was very, very afraid, of people. One of my omens is I had extra fingers. So on each, each little finger, you can see a scar there. I had baby fingers and they stood out about that much. And they were real narrow. They looked like a long wart. One had a blood vessel and the other one had a nerve and a nail. So when I was working at Pepperidge Farm, I got one caught in the machine cause I was the machine operator. So, I went to the doctors and he said, well, we might as well take these off.

Cynthia Tucker: 08:03 And I was about 21. And, and I said, okay, we'll go ahead and do that. But they still, none of my kids, it's a gene and hereditary. I had five kids and none of them had it. None of my grandchildren had 'em. So maybe I was the last one to have it. But, um, that was my good luck, that good things were going to happen to me in life. That's how I looked at it. You know because I was special. I was special because nobody else had those fingers. Nobody in my family, I was the only one. So my aunties, all of them were, my mother came from a big family was 13 of them. My dad, same thing. 13 when back there in the day. That's, that's the way it was. So, my aunties all took me under their wings.

Cynthia Tucker: 09:01 And so because of those extra fingers, they taught me a lot. They taught me a lot about life. Some of the things they taught me, I still do today. For example, one of my aunts took me shopping into Philadelphia. And we would take the L on the subway. And this is in the sixties, so it, she was used to doing it. She would go, she would go there once a month, but she would take me usually in about November right before the holidays. And me and her would just have a blast. She taught me a lot. But one of the things she taught me that I still do today is never carry a purse. Put your money in your bra. And so my friends today tell me when I died, they're gonna pat me down <laugh> because say, know, that's what I do.

Cynthia Tucker: 10:01 You know? So, all these little things who have made me who I am today, um, I've passed that onto my daughters. They don't do

that. <laugh>, they're not, you know, they, they don't see a need for... Mom that is what they got purses for. I mean earrings, coins, you know, at night, all kinds of things are falling, hitting the ground because forget where I put what, you know, but it was during that era, that's what women had to do. And so that's what my aunt told me. She taught me. She was so sweet. She passed away at, she was 99 years old, and she passed away two summers ago. She outlived; she had 13 kids too. And she outlived all but three. She was a dynamic woman.

Cynthia Tucker: 10:58 And she loved doing word puzzles, you know. So, I got the chance when I went back home to visit, I got the chance to see her. And my cousin called me, and she said, Hey, you're in town. Why don't you come see mom? She's in assistant living place. Why don't you come see her? She says, because she's 99 and I don't know, she's gonna make it to a hundred. And so, I did. I went to see her, and I was so glad she remembered me. She knew who I was. She, her brain, she was very smart, very, very smart. You know.

dindria barrow: So, did she have you do a word puzzle?

Cynthia Tucker: No, she didn't. She didn't <laugh>. But, but we, we talked about our hidden secret of where we stashed things. We talked about that. Right. And, and you know, and we just laughed about it. But she told me, just keep on doing it. which she had to tell me I already do it. <laugh>

dindria barrow: 11:52 That's fabulous. Yeah. So, there's a lot of places that you call home. How did you get to Tacoma?

Cynthia Tucker: 11:59 Okay. When we Baumholder, Germany, we had my hus... Well, right before we left, my husband came to me and he says, it's time to reenlist. And there's a whole list of places we can go. I want you to choose the place we can go. Well, each time we kept saying California. California. We never got there. I told my husband, why am I choosing? Because we never get to go where we want to go. Right. I says, but okay, why don't we go to Fort Lewis, Washington? And he put it in and he got it. And we were shocked. So, we flew into New York. My son was five years old and his brother, my two youngest one, his brother was three. And so, we got to New York and my son was standing there getting a, a, I think a soda. And he looked up to the lady and he told her, I'm going to the United States of America, to see my grandmother.

Cynthia Tucker: 13:00 And the lady looked at me and said, where you guys been? <laugh>? Where have you had this kid? I said, we're military. And you say military, everybody understands you know, but it

was just so cute. So I told my mom and she was just so thrilled that, you know, he said that. Um, so we came here to Fort Lewis, Washington. And we were here probably about three years, two years. It was two years. And then my husband got orders to go to Saudi Arabia. And it, when you are in the military and you get orders for anywhere less than a year, less than 13 months, your family can't go. And so I, he was in the Sinai and so I didn't get a chance to go.

Cynthia Tucker: 14:01 And so when he came back, he was so excited, cause we are coming up on retirement on 20 years. And he said, okay, I got a place I know where we can go to retire. I said, so where's that? He said, we can go retiring at Sinai. I said, let me tell you a couple things. <laugh>, they shoot me in the airport. <laugh> said they would shoot me in the airport because one, I'm not walking behind you. Two, I'm not wearing all those clothes. <laugh>. I said, three, I got too much mouth. I said, so they just shoot me in the airport, and we're done with it. <laugh>. So, I told 'em, no, we're not going to retire in the Sinai <laugh>. So, he accepted that <laugh>. Oh, right. So after that, then he came back home. It was only a six-month duty.

Cynthia Tucker: 15:04 He came back home. He was home for about six months. And the military usually allow you to be home a couple years before they send you somewhere else. So, they sent him to Korea and he had been to Korea before. And so, they told him he got, had orders to go to Korea. He's like, okay, this, it' 12 months I can do it. So, he goes to Korea. I went over to visit him and to shop. I told him I was only going to shop <laugh>, you know. So he came back home from Korea. After he got back home, he was home maybe about two months. And they told him, Mr. Tucker, we have orders for you to go to Fort Ord, California now finally. Here comes California after all those years. So, you know, he was standing on our back porch, and he just looked just so low.

Cynthia Tucker: 16:05 I said, how long we gonna be there? He said, A year. I said, you heard me said we, I said, it's because I'm going with you. You just got back from Korea, and you were going a whole year, you had previous, you was over to Sinai, six months. I said, we got a couple boys who need their dad, so we're going with you and we're taking the dogs. We had two little dogs. And so, we took the dogs. So, we did, we went down there for the one year and then we came back up here. And the reason we had to go to Fort Ord was, because Fort Ord was closing its base. And they were all moving to Fort Lewis. So, they had to send a team down there to get everybody closed out and move 'em up.

Cynthia Tucker: 16:57 And so they put us in new quarters. So, I told my sons were, by this time, my sons are 10 and 12. They were not happy. They

did, you know, now they got friends. They're in the schools. And so I told my sons, okay, I want you to know we are on a vacation for one year. Okay. And so, we're gonna do fun things and we'll get through this. And so that's how I handled it. So once a month I would take 'em, both of my sons were artist. They loved to draw. So once a month we would go to the art galleries. And I don't know if you know about Carmel. It's right, right next to Monterey. Okay. And it has rows and streets of art galleries. Oh wow. Wow. So, I exposed my sons to the art because I seen an interest in them that they were headed toward drawings.

- Cynthia Tucker: 17:59 And my one son collected comic books and he loved the cartoon characters. And my son John, he just drew stuff and gave it a name. <laugh>, you know. But, um, both of them, the, what I did with them, I would buy 'em a drawing pad. And the drawing pad, they could not tear any pages out. So, if you drew on that page and you didn't like what you drew, you go to the next page. And I made 'em keep 'em until after they graduated and left home. I said, it's because you can see your growth. You know. So, Terrence, my baby son works for Microsoft. All right. Okay. That's where his, he went to Seattle Art Institute. Graduated. And my other son does photography. So yeah. And so, all because of their art skills that I seen when they were younger. And I tell all young parents say hone into their skills, what they like to do. Not something, you know, all kids don't wanna play basketball. Maybe you're trying to push 'em that way. All of them don't wanna go into IT. Okay. But pay attention to them and you'll notice what their skills are and what they like to do. And then you enhance on that to make them a happy kid and a happy young adult.
- dindria barrow: 19:24 Right on. Those are good words of advice. Yeah. Right on. So you sound like a teacher. So I used to be a teacher for about 20 years. Okay. And I was a military brat so everything you're saying sounds very familiar. <laugh>
- Cynthia Tucker: 19:38 Yes, ma'am.
- dindria barrow: 19:40 Right on. Let's move on to the, the second question really kind of folds back into the first question. So, we can skip it, but it's, who are you and where do you come from? And it can be more philosophical, or it can be literal, whatever you wanna take it as. And then the third question is, what is your past and what are your dreams?
- Cynthia Tucker: 20:04 My past, because I was so timid and so afraid of the world, if I would've had that book and read that book, "Dear Success Seeker". I really would have grown so much. I wouldn't have been afraid of people. And I would've been much farther in life.

And not so much as financially or none of that. It's all gotta be internally, is how you feel about yourself. And so, through the years, I gave women the confidence in their self being a good friend by, teaching my kids the value of seeking yourself first. It's very important to seek yourself first. And then you, there's nothing in this world you can't do. There's no blocks. There's no limits. You seek yourself first and do things that you like to do. Don't just go out here and get a job because your buddy is going to get that job.

Cynthia Tucker: 21:17 Do something that you feel good about doing every day you wake up to, to doing that. So, I enjoy, after all these years, I, I tell young wives, young mothers, right now my son, his girlfriend, they have a new baby. He's two months old and she was, he wasn't sleeping that much. So, I told her, you know, when he sleeps, you sleep cause you need, this is her first child. I said, you need to get as much sleep as you can cause he's nursing, he's always in need of you. I said, so you have to do this. So, he still wasn't sleeping that much. So, I went over and I told her little advice, I said, uh, give your baby a teaspoon a rice cereal, baby rice cereal. At night when he goes to bed, I says, now teaspoon isn't much.

Cynthia Tucker: 22:25 Add a little water to it. I says, and get that to him. I said, I guarantee you he's gonna sleep four hours or more. And so, I don't think she did it. Cuz every time I asked her, I'll check with her. I say, have you gave him that? Right. She and she's a nurse. <laugh>, so there you go. She's probably not going to do it cause she's a nurse. <laugh>, you know, which it is funny cause I tell her, okay, you know, I don't push her any further. I said, when you get tired of missing that sleep a teaspoon. I even went and bought her some rice cereal. I said, this is what, it's Gerber. You know, Gerber's been around 150 years. I says, it makes a big difference. And you can get some sleep. I say it's important that you get some sleep. It is very important. And young mothers sometimes, especially their first baby, by the time you get your second and third, you're like, <laugh>, Because it fills up their stomach, then they sleep a little longer. Yeah. And with them sleeping a little longer, you get to sleep a little longer. You know.

dindria barrow: 23:47 She never did it. Yeah.

Cynthia Tucker: 23:48 She didn't do it. She's still getting up every hour. She says sometimes two hours, she might get two hours in there. I said, well you, when you get tired, I gave you the rice cereal. Try it <laugh>. Okay.

Dindria barrow: 24:00 She might get there. Yeah.

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- Cynthia Tucker: 24:02 Yeah. Just need you just need a My grandmother told me, my mother told me to do that. And my aunties, I had five kids and so I learned on the first one cause I wasn't hardheaded <laugh>. So I learned on the first one.
- dindria barrow: 24:19 We all got our different kind of minds. Right.
- Cynthia Tucker: 24:21 Yeah. Yes. Yes. I needed some sleep.
- dindria barrow: 24:24 That's the truth. Um, I wanted to get into how did you grow up? What are the highlights of your adult life? And you can speak to the Colored Women's Club or the Nettie Asberry Cultural Club. But I don't know how far you wanna go into, you know, these beautiful pictures and talking about the family, but, um, bringing the past to coming up to your dreams.
- Cynthia Tucker: 24:54 Yeah. Well, I've always had strong women in my life from my grandmother. My mother was strong. Um, when I got to Washington State, my mother right there, she, I called her up one day and I said, hey mom, I'm thinking about going to school. I says, going to college. I says, my kids are getting ready to graduate high school. I'm done raising kids. I think it's time for me. And she says, so why are you just thinking about it? I says, because mom, I will be 50 when I graduate. She says, Hmm. How old will you be if you don't go
- dindria barrow: 25:37 <laugh>
- Cynthia Tucker: 25:39 I said, Hmm. She's right. So, I'm still gonna be 50. Doesn't matter. So go get your education. That's now, I think that's one of the sweetest things my mother said to me. Cause I did exactly what she said. And I was very proud of myself when I went and got my degree. And then I told all my kids, if I can do it, you can do it. You're going to college.
- dindria barrow: 26:05 You were a role model at that point
- Cynthia Tucker: 26:06 That's right. <laugh>. So I was on my last two kids. My previous, my son went in the military. My daughter went in the military. And then my other daughter married a soldier, but she went on and got her master's degree. So they all did something in the educational field. And so I just had the last two graduating high school. I'm like, no, here's, you have to follow your dreams and you have to go to college. It's not maybe, and my baby, he graduated high school, and he told me, mom, I think I'm gonna take a year off. And, cause I told him, okay, so either you go to college or you go to work, what do you wanna do? And he says, well, I'm going to go to work. Okay. So he had no education, but

a high school. He had his high school education. So he went to work in a nursing home. He got his CNA license, worked in a nursing home. That lasted maybe about through the summer with three, four months <laugh>. By September, he's like, I'm going back to school.

- Cynthia Tucker: 27:14 Yeah. Because I told him, you have a car, you need gas, so I'll support you while you're in college, but I'm not gonna do that if you don't go to college. Right. So he's the one that works at Microsoft <laugh>.
- dindria barrow: 27:27 All right. But he had to, he had to take his own route to getting to that point, huh?
- Cynthia Tucker: 27:31 Yeah. He had to be a little hardhead and stubborn, but it, it only took about three months and for him to see the real world. Because being, he's the baby, he is protected. Okay. And he seeing his sisters and his brother and all, you know, they become successful and he's thinking, oh, it's a piece of cake. You know? And he found out when he got out in the real world. No, it wasn't. So, I said, you wanna be a CNA or do you wanna go to college? So, he went to college and um, he went to Pierce College. He got his degree. And after that he said, mom, you know, I really wanted to go to the Seattle Art Institute. Yeah. I said, okay, but it's your dime
- Cynthia Tucker: 28:17 So he went and he graduated at the top of his class. So, we were really, we were very, satisfied and happy with him. And he's been a go-getter ever since <laugh>, you know.
- dindria barrow: 28:29 That's beautiful. <laugh>. Um, so what are the highlights of, I mean, it sounds like you've lived so many places, so many places you call home. What are the highlights of living in Tacoma?
- Cynthia Tucker: 28:45 Well, you know, after, well, I was in Evergreen. I met Mrs. Freddy Barnett. In fact, she looked me up and she asked me if I would represent Dr. Nettie Asberry but in a skit. And it was going to be downtown at the marina. And I said, mm, I don't know this lady, but still, then my shyness comes up. And I said, oh, I don't know. And I said, okay. But I'm also a very creative person. I used to sew; I did artwork. This is where my kids got all that from. So, I said, okay, I'll do it. So, she says, I want you to dress up in a 1940s, thirties outfit. She says, and the club will pay for it. So, she took me up to the costume place, got me fitted for a costume. And so, then she gave me a whole stack of information that she wanted me to read and say, I'm like, I cannot memorize this in a short period of time.

- Cynthia Tucker: 29:51 So I have a book at home that's probably about this and this thick, and it is African-American history Encyclopedia. And so what I did was all the pages that she gave me, I slid 'em in pages in the book. And I was staying up there and talk about Dr. Asbury and turn the pages Little did anybody know? I was reading. What I was going to say to the audience. And it was, it went off very well. And so I learned so much about Nettie Asberry that I joined the club. I've been there 26 years. I joined the club, and I joined the Asbury Culture Club. It was maybe about three years after I joined Mrs. Barnett put me to work <laugh>. And she wanted me to do all of the, the Founder's Day programs, which is Mrs. McCabe, Dr. Asberry, Mrs. Stafford, and a few others
- Cynthia Tucker: 30:58 And so every year I put on that program. So, I became, became a walking encyclopedia from learning about the organization. I went to the conventions and the women at the conventions were very strong, powerful women. I fit right in because I was still with the women in my family who taught me everything that I knew. So, they were also picking up being, I'm out here. You remember when I said earlier, I'm always a Black woman? Doesn't matter where I go in life in the world, I'm still a Black woman. So, when I came to Tacoma and I joined that, the Asberry Culture Club, I joined as a Black woman, a proud Black woman. Cause I'm proud of who I am, where I've been and the experiences, the good, the bad, and the ugly <laugh>.
- dindria barrow: 32:05 Yes. All right., I really enjoyed going to the, um, first presentation of the Nettie Asberry Foundation, I believe it's called now. Yes. Yeah. And, um, and so what is going on with the museum? Can we get a little taste of that? Or is that still under wraps?
- Cynthia Tucker: 32:23 No, it's not. Being, I'm the president, I sign the documents for the property December 30th. And it took six years for us to get there. So that was a very exciting day. We didn't know where the money was coming from. We didn't know how, you know, you just don't give up. Cause God's going to come in the mix and sooner or later things are going to happen. And so, we got involved with Forterra and they helped us along the way, but there are, we presented ourselves to a lot of groups in Tacoma. And they went to the governor and the governor, they, we acquired the property. And we do not have a mortgage. So now what are we going to do with the property? It needs a lot of work. The house is 130 years old, so being is that old, um, there's so much we need to do with it.
- Cynthia Tucker: 33:40 And so we are right now seeking grants so that we can revitalize that home. My passion is to have a children's Black history

library. Because for some reason it is so hard for society to accept Black history and teach you to our children. They need to know, once again, the good, the bad, and the ugly. Now things in our past is why a lot of things are happening today. And so, but we need to expose children to the Black history of our culture. And the History Museum, the Black History Museum is for anybody. We will offer um a person, a volunteer to set in two, three times a month. How many we ever can get to set in and read to the children. And so we are going to encourage that. Um, one of the rooms that we have there is Dr...

Cynthia Tucker: 34:50 One of the rooms that we have there is Dr. Asberry's music room because she was a musician and she taught a lot of students in the area to go out and be musicians. So, by doing so, her room is still there. We want to revitalize that room. Um, were you at the event that we just had?

dindria barrow: 35:12 Yes.

Cynthia Tucker: 35:14 Okay. And so, the entertainment that we had, we would love to, on a smaller scale, have that in her music room, may be every 4, 5, 6 months, something of that sort. Yes. We can have an artist singing. One of the other things that she did was in her backyard, she put on. And so, we are trying to revitalize it. And we will, it's not a try, it's going to happen. Just a matter we have. Yes. We have a lot of good people who are involved, who are on our committees, who are part of our teams to make this happen.

Cynthia Tucker: 35:55 And I'm very happy that Tacoma is getting involved in it and pushing for this to happen. And it's going to happen. So, I'm not doubtful at all. We just applied for a grant from the National Parks, which National Parks, that's a federal, and that's, those are big grants. But we need, first of all, we need a lot to revitalize the house. And then we have to establish programs and, and we need professionals on board with us to make all of this happen. Cause I'm just a little person on the sideline who signs my signature and agrees to everything. <laugh>. You want me to do what? Okay. Next. <laugh>. That's what I do.

dindria barrow: 36:48 I think you do much more than that then. But okay.

Cynthia Tucker: 36:50 <laugh>. But we are pulling it all together and it's coming together so nicely. In United States right now, there is a lot of things happening. The world is changing. The United States is changing. So, and it's changing for the better. And so, we also need to be a part of the better. It's so important to, Tacoma, the Hilltop area to emphasize and push the Black community. And so that's, that's important. It's important for the young'uns coming up to see where they come from. It's important that we

pushed them on to become famous people. Just their skills like I did with my kids. Okay. You like to sing. Okay. We had a young man come to us and told us he would like to hold a program at our clubhouse for young kids and teach 'em how to build computers.

- Cynthia Tucker: 37:56 And we're like, okay, come sit and talk with me and we'll set down some dates and we'll make it happen. And, and when once we get the house open, it'll be the same thing. Now we have two homes. We have also acquired the home behind it. Yeah. And so we haven't quite decided, I like to use it as a place for our artifacts because we have artifacts everywhere, every time. Most of our past women have passed away except for one. And that's Mrs. Freddy Barnett. She's the only one left. But every time one of them passed, the family members come to me with a box or a clothes basket of stuff belonging to the club. And I've run out of place to put things. I have them at home under beds, <laugh>, I have them in storage boxes. And so I'm not gonna live forever. I want it all centralized in one place. To share with the community. That's the purpose of saving all this. So the community can come in and see our history, the history of the Colored Women's Club and the people who set it up. And the people who were here in Tacoma are supporting the Black community.
- dindria barrow: 39:19 Right on. Well, that's definitely a dream that I think is going to come to fruition. Yes. I can't wait to see it happen I am going to pause here and if you want to have. I mean, I have a couple more questions, but I think that we can pause here. I think that we have heard a fabulous story today about you. And I really appreciate you sharing that with us. I wanted to ask you if there is a way that I can digitize these pictures.
- Cynthia Tucker: Yes, ma'am.
- dindria barrow: Okay. And then can I get them back to you?
- Cynthia Tucker: 40:00 Yes, ma'am.
- dindria barrow: 40:00 Okay. because I don't know if you need me to do it like right now cause I Can do that too
- Cynthia Tucker: 40:03 No, no, No.
- dindria barrow: 40:04 Okay. Um, so I'm gonna digitize those. I wanted to share this with you because I found this and then you brought me the Ascensions and I'm gonna find out if I can digitize this as well and get it back to you.

Community Archive Center Oral History Project Transcript
Cynthia Tucker, Interview date: 4/21/2022

- Cynthia Tucker: 40:18 Yes, ma'am.
- dindria barrow: 40:19 Yes. Um, so fabulous you filled me up with good news, with history, and with a better understanding of Tacoma in essence. So, thank you so much.
- Cynthia Tucker: 40:36 Well, you know, the, the Colored Women's Club, they were responsible for a lot of things that occurred in Tacoma, the Hilltop and in Pierce County. Yeah. They were responsible for, and yet they didn't get credit for it because women couldn't stand out front during those times. They had to take the back seat, one of our ladies who was a member of the Northwest Regent, her name was, she was in Longview. Oh, I lost her name. That's okay. Yeah. Anyway, she was in Longview, and she applied for a grant.
- Cynthia Tucker: 41:22 Now she applied for this grant in 1945 and I proudly to say the grant was offered by Sears. And so, it was a cultural grant was by Sears. By Sears of all. And so, her name was Victoria Freeman. Yes. There's a park in Longview, Washington named after her Victoria Freeman. So Mrs. Freeman sold dinners every Saturday night of fried chicken dinners for \$5 I think she was selling them for, and she wanted to get money together to do something for the community. Now, during this time, Black folks lived on the other side of the railroad tracks. And they didn't have electricity. They also didn't have indoor toilets. So she applied for this grant and she won. When she got to grant. it was for \$5,000. Now, today, \$5,000. You can't even buy a car, part of a car, <laugh>. But she was able to take that \$5,000, put it into the community. They got paved roads over on the other side of the railroad tracks, everybody got an indoor toilet. And she had enough money to buy land to build a park. And so, the park, not long ago, I wanna say about five, six years ago, was named after, after Victoria Freeman park in Longview.
- Cynthia Tucker: 43:12 But the money, and she was a member of the, the Northwest Region, organization, association of Colored Women's Clubs. We had the Northwest region, then we had Washington state. And then we all belonged to national organization. So, in the northwest region, we had, Seattle, Longview, Spokane, Yakima,
- Cynthia Tucker: 43:47 There's a couple little small towns over there that we had. We had eight cities in the state of Washington. We're down to two now. And I'm always trying hard to try to get some other states, other cities to join us. Maybe a couple years ago we had Bremerton and Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Greer was in Bremerton. And so, they didn't recruit and because they didn't recruit, we're dealing with a different generation of women. And because they didn't recruit, they, when Mrs. Walker passed, she was the last

one. So that was the end of that organization there. But we're still always trying to recruit our cities because we were in the Green Book directory. And did you know about the Green Book? The story behind it?

- dindria barrow: 44:47 Not the story behind it, but when I saw this and I saw the, your organization's name on it, I just looked through it and I just went, wow. Amazing.
- Cynthia Tucker: 44:55 So I'll tell you a little bit and I'll try to keep it short. Okay.
- dindria barrow: 44:59 <laugh>,
- Cynthia Tucker: 45:00 Because the Green book, that there's a movie about the Green Book, it's nothing to do with the actual Green Book. The Green Book was written by a postman in New York City. And during the time, the thirties when Black people were starting to migrate and move out of the south, you couldn't go anywhere because you had to know to go to the right gas station. What if you had to stop and rest any place you had to go, you had to know where you were going. So, he started writing this book and he updated it every year and it, I think it costs \$5. And he always said, if you are a Black person traveling, you need to carry this book because you need to know how to be safe, where to stop to eat, where to stop to get gas. And the book carried on for many, many years. The book now is in the Ford Museum.
- dindria barrow: 46:05 Wow.
- Cynthia Tucker: 46:06 Here we go. First Sears, now Ford <laugh>.
- dindria barrow: 46:08 Yeah, exactly. Oh, you got it. Okay. Thanks John. Yeah. Sorry. We have our own HVAC system in here.
- Cynthia Tucker: 46:15 Yeah. It's okay. <laugh>
- Cynthia Tucker: 46:18 And, and so it's, Amazon has different, this came out every year, so you can go on Amazon for yourself if you wanted to get one of the green books on 1945, 46, 47. Wow. Pick a year. And it has names in it of people who, if you were going to Spokane, there's a list of names where you can stop contact these people and they will put you up in their homes. Yeah. So that you were safe. Gas stations, barber shops, restaurants. Because we were starting as a people travel out of the south and we just had to be safe. And that was the purpose of the Green Book.
- dindria barrow: 47:08 Thank you for telling that.