

Community Archive Center Oral History Project Transcript
Freddie Mae Barnett, Interview date: 1/28/2023

- dindria barrow : 00:01 Hello, this is dindria barrow of the Community Archive Center of Tacoma Public Library, and I am at the Brookdale Allenmore guest room. And I am meeting with Mrs. Freddie Mae Barnett. Today is January [not November] 28, 2023. And I first wanted to start with, thank you so much for allowing me to record your oral history, Mrs. Barnett.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 00:30 You are more than welcome.
- dindria barrow : 00:32 All right. The first question is, name some of the places, people, and things you call home.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 00:44 Well, I was born and raised in Athens, Georgia, 72 miles out of Atlanta, east of Atlanta. And at 19, I married one of my church sweetheart. We didn't go to school together, but we went to church together, and he was in the United States Army. So traveling around, my home right now is Tacoma, Washington. That is what I call home. I call Tacoma, Washington home because I came here and I grew up. I more like, grew up here because I had never ever left my mom and dad home after my grandma died, until I married. My mom didn't believe in us spending the night. So I only spent the night with my grandma. After she died, I never spent the night away from home until I was married.
- dindria barrow : 02:05 Right on. How does Athens, Georgia compare to Tacoma, Washington?
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 02:13 Now, Tacoma, Washington, and Athens, Georgia in the fifties was a total different place. I came here in May of '59 and it was still some prejudice here because it was prejudice. We didn't live on base, we lived in the community. And it was hard finding a place to live. When the, where do all the black peoples live, what do all the black peoples do? Because here I came from a real heavy segregated place. Black and white, either colored and white. Okay. Everything we had was divided. Our schools was black school, that schools was white. Our, our dentist was black, our funeral home was black. Everything. So this was total different when I came here.
- dindria barrow : 03:33 Yes.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 03:35 So it just made life easier, much easier. You didn't have to worry where you could go or where you would be served or anything because it didn't make any different.
- dindria barrow : 03:52 That is really interesting. That helps me understand Tacoma's history a little more. Sometimes I think that I know what the

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north is about versus the south, but I don't know. I only know my experience. Right?

Freddie Mae Barnett : 04:09

Right. Yes. Our experience.

dindria barrow : 04:11

All right. I know a little bit more about where you lived with your husband and, I remember that you lived in Germany.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 04:23

Oh, yes.

dindria barrow : 04:24

How did living in Germany as a military wife affect your life?

Freddie Mae Barnett : 04:30

I enjoyed living in Germany. Germany was totally different from any place I had lived in the United States of America. Okay. At the time when we was there in Germany, the Germans welcomed the American peoples. My first trip that we was there from 1956 to 1959. Okay. We stayed in Bremen Harbor, Germany. That's the port of embarkation where all the ships come in, and those who are coming back to the United States leave from. They come in and if they're traveling back ship in the Bremen Harbor, Germany, and they leave out of Bremen, the port of embarkation. But, we live on the economy with the German and my landlady. She just loved me. She was very, very good. And there in Germany, you didn't feel any prejudice at all. Okay. You didn't feel you could go wherever you want. And they are just right there willing to serve you. We had no prejudice in Germany.

dindria barrow : 06:05

Thank you. That is a, a very interesting fact as well, because I have preconceived notions about what Germany was like in the fifties right after World War II, but that means that my ideas need to shift because of the stories that you're telling me.

dindria barrow : 06:25

And did Germany feel a lot, like, I know that it was different than the United States, but because of the, the non-segregation, was it a lot more like Tacoma?

Freddie Mae Barnett : 06:39

Oh, yes. It was a lot more. Like only in Germany. Now, I will say, Tacoma had some prejudice when we came here in '59. Okay. See, there was a prejudice. We had a hard time finding an apartment, and we would look in the paper. Cause we came, we was living in the guest house on base. And then looking for an apartment, and you'll go to places, and then if they see you are Black, they peep out. They didn't open the door. Then if they did, they'll say, well, I never rent to Black peoples. Oh. So I got to the point when I would call somebody, I says, now I'm Black. Do you rent to Black peoples or not? <laugh>? Oh, yeah.

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- dindria barrow : 07:38 I'm gonna pause real quick because there is some [noise]. Hello. We are on question number two. Who are you and where do you come from?
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 07:53 Wow. That's a loaded question. Plus a good question. <laugh>, who am I? Freddie Mae Barnett. Okay. Why don't I say I'm a daughter, sister.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 08:10 I'm a aunt. A grandmother, a mother, and a lover of peoples. Okay. I am a lover of peoples. As some people say, I'm a people person. I don't know so much about that <laugh>, but I am the type of person I think God have given me the heart of love, that I love everyone. I might not like the way they behave. I might not like what they're doing, but them as a human being I truly love them, and I do have a respect for human being, but I'm gonna demand you give it back. Okay. I'm definitely going to demand that you give it back. That's one thing about me. I, um, raised just one daughter because I couldn't have any more children because of a tubal pregnancy. Okay. And my reproduction organ got all messed up. And she went to school here in Tacoma, Washington, and she married and had two children. And the guy she married, Jonathan L. Johnson, uh, a retired major in the United States Army. Now, they divorced when her children was quite young after, her dad passed in, her dad passed in '86.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 10:23 And so she moved back home before her dad passed with me. We had a large enough home that it was enough room to accommodate her and her children. Stayed with us until she remarried again. But, my grandson, a granddaughter went with her mom and a new husband. And my boy Christopher, he stayed with Grandma. Grandma, I'm gonna stay with you <laugh>. Okay. I never went to work until after my daughter was 13 years old. And then I went to work out at McChord Air Force Base in the troops dining hall. I worked there for 30 odd years. First cook. I enjoyed working at McChord. Plus, I gathered a lot of children. I was mom <laugh>, to a lot of children. And some of them today is, I'm still their godmother. And I still hear from them.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 11:43 Working at McChord just taught me an awful, awful lot with, I mean, I think more with our young mens that comes into service at 18. They leave mom and they just figured, oh, well, Ms. Barnett can be a good substitute mom for me. Any little problem they had, they will come to me. And I always had time for them. And when it wasn't my day to work, if it was a holiday, I would have them over at my house, for dinner. My husband was an automobile mechanic and at the hobby shop, he, wasn't for me working, but he got used to it, and I had him, he was retired to go out to the hobby shop and work with the guys on their cars. So

they all knew Mr. Barnett, and they loved him too. Any car problem they had, they would be right there to help.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 13:06

So the McChord 62nd Service Squadron was just like my second family. Oh, yes. I joined the City Association, Tacoma City Association of Colored Women's Club, which is a part of the National Association of Colored Women's Club. At that time, I was still in my twenties. We had went to an old soldier picnic out on McChord. We was invited by a friend of ours, Gisla Williams, and her husband and I met Birdie Edward there, and she was recruiting peoples for the Tacoma City Association. And she told me all about the Tacoma City Association. Now, at that time, I'd like for you to know I was not working. I was in my twenties. I didn't start working until I was about 33. I worked with the, I joined the Asberry Culture Club whose named after Dr. Nettie Craig Asberry. Nettie J. Craig Asberry.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 14:59

Okay. Now, the Asberry Culture Club was organized before I came here. Okay. In 1954. See, I didn't come here in '59. So she was still a new club growing. And I organized a lot of different, no, recruited a lot of different military womens in there because the older ones was retired. Okay. And then I ventured out and we did a lot of things for the Washington State Home Society. Okay. I learned about the Washington State Children Home Society from Ella [Erma] Betts who worked for the News Tribune. She did all of the news of the Tacoma City Association and the different clubs she told me about. So I did. I went there and met with the staff and find out what it was we could do. And she said, make baby layettes. And that's what we would do. Okay.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 16:21

Asberry made baby layettes for the mothers who lived in the home and went there and didn't have a layette for their babies when they was born. And, we would have sewing classes at my house, and that's what we did for years. And also, they asked that my husband and I put up a Christmas tree. So we would go out and they would go out and get a great big tree and my husband and I would go there and decorate it. We did that for a number of years, and that was fun. Going there, decorating that tree for the Washington State Children Home Society.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 17:28

And then after that, I, start going on day trips. We would rent a bus and take about 45 peoples, which would be enough to pay for the bus. And still give us money in our treasury to pay for things that we wanted to do for the community. We would go like, here to Canada, down to Portland, over to Nisqually Falls for the breakfast. Down we went to Port Angeles and get the ferry over to Victoria. Spend the day there. Either we would go

up to Vancouver, you just go across the border there. And sometime we would go up to Anacortes and get the boat over to Victoria. Okay. Everybody always enjoyed our trips. We would go down the Lloyd Center in Portland on a shopping trip. So we just had a real good time. We also would give live theaters. Now, the Canadas was an old family here in Tacoma, and one of her sons, Charles Canada, would always produce plays. And we would rent different places because the clubhouse wasn't big enough for us to hold dinner theaters. And we had more fun. And the community enjoyed our dinner theaters. That was really fun.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 19:52

Then we also had a Christmas party for the community and gave our, Christmas toys and prize out to the different families who my daughter was working, family therapist, a child and family therapist. And she would give us names of peoples who needed help. And, the children would have wish lists. And so it was always Mrs. Tucker, Helen Tucker, Theta Mars, and I, that would go out and buy toys and take them to the family. That was really great. Another fundraiser was rummage sales. We used to have rummage sales, I think about twice a year down at 15th and Commerce, which is a great place downtown that we would, and the missionary was very, was next door. And when we had our rummage sale Friday and Saturday, the chaplain would always invite us to have dinner. So, and after Saturday closing, before we take all of the, have the Salvation Army to come in and pick up the leftover, we would have the chaplain to come over and see what he could use.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 21:43

In his closet. I tell you. That was so wonderful. We enjoyed that. Then after Dr. Asberry, she went into, the Allenmore Nursing Home up on Sixth and Pearl. We would go there and have sing alongs with the patient, with patients who was able enough, and we would serve them refreshment. And we did that. Oh. Way after Ms. Asberry passed, we would do that in the remembrance of Dr. Asberry. We always had a tea at the clubhouse in her honor, but we was never able to bring her out. Now we had one once, Mother McCabe and I, when she was in Lincoln Park Nursing Home, and Erna [Ella] Betts was our reporter that time. It's an article in the News Tribune I think it's an article in the Asberry Culture Club scrapbook. That will show Mother McCabe, I think it was her hundredth birthday.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 23:17

And we was at Lincoln Park Nursing Home to celebrate her hundredth birthday. I never did, I don't remember Ms. Asberry talking. I used to visit her every Wednesday when, she was at Sixth and Pearl until she passed. But she never did talk. She was never able to tell me anything. Everything that I know about her is what, Miss McCabe know and, stuff that I read about her. She was really a force in Tacoma. And not only, uh, that she was a

pioneer. She organized the NAACP and also the Washington State Association of Colored Women's Club. At that time, she was a member of Allen AME Church. And she is one that also worked with the American Red Cross. Those are some pictures we have that, I'm looking forward to, our treasury getting blown up and used in the historic music room building of Dr. Nettie J Asberry home.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 24:56

The Red Cross one is a great picture of her. And the, what was that she made for the fair? They had in Seattle? She won first place.

Cynthia Tucker: 25:12

She...it was a coat.

Freddie Mae Barnett: 25:15

A coat, yeah, and that coat is now in the Washington State Museum.

Cynthia Tucker: 25:21

It was a knitted coat.

Freddie Mae Barnett: 25:23

Yeah. But, we will get pictures and we wanted to display that in her music room. Stuff that she did. Now she did a real public thing. It was a black man and white woman who was going to be married and here in Tacoma. They was trying to stop him. They would've killed him. But she, let me tell you now, back then, I don't know what year it was, Dr. Asberry got a group of peoples, they marched down to Olympia, and in doing that, nothing happened and those people got married.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 26:04

I can't give you names or nothing. I'm pretty sure somebody know, because nobody gave me the name. A black woman and a white man. But she stopped that link lynching. She did. And got a group of peoples. And, you know, I said, so she really did press and persevere through, through all her hard times. She did it <laugh>. She did it and we know we got strong womens of that type today. We know we have. Cause it's in our DNA. <laugh>. Okay. Back to me. <laugh>.

dindria barrow : 26:54

Right on. I love that you shared about, Dr. Asberry. I can tell that you are one of those strong women that she was a role model for because of the things that you did.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 27:07

Well, thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 27:15

I went to work out at McChord when, in my thirties. My daughter was 13 at the time, because she was old enough then my husband said I could go to work. I didn't have to have a babysitter. <laugh>. So I did. I worked out there 30 odd years, and I enjoyed working at McCord in the troop dining hall. I was

the head cook. I have so many pleasurable moments from working out there. It was a pleasure to be able to cook for our troops. Oh, yes. So, a lot of them became great friends with my family. And my husband was retired, so I had him to come out and work in the, troop hobby shop on that cars, because my husband was a mechanic. Then. He enjoyed me working. Oh, yeah. He enjoyed, he could help me go to work then. Oh, yes. He saw that I was working and that we had two checks. And boy, we can do more stuff now. <laugh>. Yeah. But I'm glad I didn't listen to him, that I did go work when my daughter got old enough to not have a babysitter. And, after my husband passed, I went back to school.

dindria barrow : 29:07

Right.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 29:08

And that's where I met my dear and our president today Cynthia Tucker. And we became great friends. And how I, uh, um, we was honoring down at the Port of Tacoma, we was honoring Dr. Nettie J. Asberry as one of the pioneers. And you know who we had to portray Dr. Asberry? Cynthia. She did a great job. She don't never talk about it. <laugh>. That was her first thing. That I had her to do with...

dindria barrow: 29:52

You put her on stage, huh?

Freddie Mae Barnett : 29:54

Oh, yes, I did. All right. That's what Cynthia right there, that's friend. I was president at the time, and I most certainly did. And she did a wonderful job portraying Dr. Asberry. Plus, she knew nothing about Dr. Asberry, but we had it all written out and everything. And honey, she did a great job. And we have pictures of that somewhere that I'm looking forward to Cynthia putting, out in that music room. Yes, yes, yes, yes. So anyway, I, told you the person, lady, I always out in the community, the voter registration.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 30:56

And in my Democrat party, I'm active in that. So, when Obama ran for president, I was going to make sure that the Tacoma City Association host that group when Senator Kerry came out. Stomping for Obama. He was campaigning for Obama. And we had our clubhouse gave the committee the key, and they dressed it up just like red, white, and blue. Totally like a headwater. Oh, it was beautiful. Beautiful <laugh>. And he came in, and honey, our clubhouse was packed. Peoples was standing. And peoples who didn't know, "well, I didn't know what this building was." <laugh>. But I was not going to have our first Black president, his senator come here campaigning for him, and not be at our Black clubhouse. I wanted that to be, and that I am very proud of. Because we got pictures of that. The News Tribune was there and it made it so wonderful question and answer that some of the

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guys who, from the AmVet, I don't remember their name, but they got up to shake hands and to say how glad they were to meet him because they had voted for him and they had faith in him and so forth. It was a wonderful, wonderful campaign visit.

Cynthia Tucker: 33:14

Right on.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 33:16

So I was very happy that I could get there. Some people said to me, well, you should've let the city do it so he can be at the dome. No, no, no, no. The city can do it. City, take everything. No, no, no, no. <laugh>. They going to be at the Tacoma City Association.

Cynthia Tucker: 33:35

Remember we had the Black Collective involved.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 33:37

Yes, we did.

Cynthia Tucker: 33:38

We had our black groups in the community, also involved. And Kerry. Senator Kerry was so impressed. Obama didn't make it, but he represented him. Very well.

dindria barrow : 33:58

Right on. That's a good representation for Tacoma as opposed to throwing them in the dome. Because that would make it more personal.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 34:01

Yes, it was, you know, he was us. Yes. Now, why can't we have him? Yes. Why do we let him go to somewhere else? Nope. But that was one of the things I was very proud of. And I tell you, I had the total cooperation of the community. We really did.

Cynthia Tucker: 34:23

We were standing room only people were standing. Standing in the parking lot to be here. They, as the, the Colored Woman's Club became an icon at that time. A lot of people even up on the Hilltop, now they say they never heard of us. Right. So, events like that bring us to the forefront. And the TNT covered it.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 34:50

Yeah. Front page <laugh>. Oh, yes. Front page. Oh, it, it's in the archives. Okay. And one thing I skipped, in telling you, cause when you put this together, you'll put it all back in text with it is the Asberry Culture Club did a Black history contest every year. Yes. With the middle school student. Every year we did, uh, we gave them the subject to write on. Okay. And, we, uh, got black and white children. And somebody say, well, supposed to white child. Well, if a white child out writes a black person, he will win or she will win. And they did. Yes. Cause we do things fair. Yes. The others might not. We can do it fair. And we had a good turnout on our Black history essay contest. The prizes was a war bonds. That's what we gave, uh,

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- dindria barrow : 36:05 That was the prizes?
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 36:05 Uhhuh. What did we give? Yeah. We gave a first prize was a \$500. Second was \$250, and third was a \$100, I believe. And then a gifts from certificates. You know, certificate for participation. Yes, yes. We really did that. And that was very, very good. We would have a plaque and Ms. Road, Reverend Road's son, one, when she was teaching at Jason Lee, and the school got to keep that plaque. Okay. Until the next year. But Ms. Roads took it home. Cause the son name was on it. Now we had to buy another plaque, <laugh>. So, we are missing our first years. We got the second years on the board at the clubhouse. Yes. But she took that, Yeah. Mrs. Road took it. He said if it just for the school to, to put on display, because, you know, one of their student won it, but oh, no, she took it. So we missed that plan. Well, but we had fun doing it, though. Yes.
- dindria barrow : 37:44 <laugh>. That's how it was. That's how important it was to her too. That's what it really means. Right?
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 37:49 And I tell you, we, now the committee for our Black history was Freddie Mae and Theda Morris. Okay. We went all over, trying to discover the beginning history of Tacoma. Okay. Because, that time, the Tacoma Public Library had nothing. They didn't have a thing on Blacks and the Northwest Room, the first stuff we had collected was given to the Northwest Room of the Tacoma Public Library. And I'm sure they have it in the archive somewhere. But we was very pleased to do that. And let me tell you one time, we had a, I've forgotten name, it'd been so long ago, but he was a historian, a Black man from Seattle. We had been over to interview him, and then we had him to be the speaker, because see, after the children presented, we would go through them and the ones that we would choose would be invited to present their essays.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 39:29 And we always had a speaking. We had this, man who was a historian from Seattle, who had worked with a lot of Black history. And I tell you, he was so interesting. After the program, my husband had invited him and, let's see, the speaker, the Morris, the Drummers, the Edwards to my house. Yes. And they just had a very good time sitting and talking about the Black history of Seattle and Tacoma.
- dindria barrow : 40:29 Ooh, I wish I could be a fly on the wall of that one <laugh>. Go back in time.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 40:34 Oh, it was wonderful. Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, wonderful. Yes, we did, you know, we learned about this Black man who came to Washington state with some white pioneers.

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Okay. And he, was it his name? Didn't we have one named George Washington? That was him. He was a Black man. Yes. Now, he, it was a time that peoples would have starved if it wasn't for him and his farm and what he gave them to, sustain them. And you have heard that instead of Uh hmm.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 41:32 Something they say they should have named after him, and they didn't. I'm 89 years old now, so I forgot a lot of stuff.

Cynthia Tucker: 41:43 Isn't it the state, I read what you're talking about.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 41:45 But anyway, they say it should have been named after George Washington, that Black man. Right? Yes. The state instead of Washington state being named after George Washington, the president. That it should have been named, after the man who saved all of those peoples that year from starvation, because of his farm, he was able to share.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 42:16 And his wife, I think was the first Black teacher. Oh, you have to look that up.

dindria barrow : 42:23 Okay. In Washington state.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 42:24 In Washington state, okay.

Cynthia Tucker: 42:28 They had this article on what is the name of the show that comes on, always tell at the end on channel nine, he tells about the history of Washington State. You know who I'm talking about?

dindria barrow : I don't, I'm sorry.

Cynthia Tucker: Yeah. It's okay. And he talked about this one day, and it really did catch my eye. I looked it up and it was Washington, the Black man. Yes. Who, uh, and it, and it said Washington State, Black History. You go back far enough, you'll see it. And yeah. They should have named the state after him, but it was named after George Washington.

dindria barrow : 43:09 Yeah. I mean, I know that there's, and in my travels through the state. There's a city named George and a city named Martha. And so it sounds like we should have both of those cities named after the other George Washington.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 43:22 Right. That's, that, that's George, over East of the mountain, a little town.

Cynthia Tucker: 43:29 George Washington, the president never came here, never did nothing for this state. So he never built this state up. Okay.

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- dindria barrow : 43:39 Yes. That's really important to know because some people want to erase the idea that there were people of color Here in the pioneer days.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 43:52 Well, I can tell you another thing that, I did that I'm proud of. When my daughter was in Stadium High School, she graduated in '72. So you can do the math. But she graduated in '72, and the first year my daughter went to Stadium. The kids was having race riots outta school every day. So our principal then was Mr. Hayes.
- dindria barrow : 44:20 Okay.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 44:20 And he said to me, Ms. Barnett, would you give some race relation class? And I did. I was very proud of that, you guys. Because I gave those classes and I talked to those kids about, this is not a white school. This is not a Black school. This is a public school. <laugh>, your Black parents, your white parents money pays. So why are you guys fighting? What are you fighting for? Anyway, I talked with them and had them to really look at each other. Look at each other. Got two eyes. <laugh>, you got no, only thing you see different in your face, you are white. And, this one is Black. I said, so you need to learn. So, what's the problem? But anyway, after I got through with that class, I don't remember how many classes I gave. Okay. But I know what, the police didn't have to come there no more. Those Stadium kids got so they didn't fight no more.
- dindria barrow : 45:39 Oh my goodness.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 45:39 And I was very, very happy that Mr. Hayes had me do it. But you know what is so funny? My daughter never was in one of the classes. <laugh>,
- dindria barrow : 45:51 She already knew!
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 45:53 I guess. But teachers set up the class. Yeah. Right, right. But they never did have Costella in one of my classes.
- Cynthia Tucker: 46:03 What was the percentage of Blacks in Stadium High School? Because...
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 46:07 Well see at that time, it was more white kids than Blacks. Because you see why we had, we didn't have Mount Tahoma at that time. We didn't have Wilson at that time. We only had Lincoln High School and Stadium High School. That's all we had at that time. Those other came along, in these later years.

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dindria barrow : 46:36 And that kind of makes sense because at Lincoln there was probably a majority of Black people.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 46:43 Probably the majority was then...

dindria barrow : 46:45 So, if you were white at Lincoln, you had to learn how to get along. Whereas in Stadium, it might have been like, oh, more These new Black people were coming in. Right.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 46:56 Because it was Tacoma kids in Stadium that was in Stadium's district all over had to come from all the North End and everywhere. That's right. Because there was no high school over there. And then from up North Tacoma. Oh, you know, but can. Northeast. Okay. Okay. Those kids was bused down to Stadium, remember? So you had more white kids than you did Black kids. And...

Cynthia Tucker: 47:33 Was his school segregated?

Freddie Mae Barnett : 47:34 No. See, that's one thing about, I said about Tacoma. Tacoma was undercovers. Okay. You had some prejudice undercover. Yes. But you didn't have it out. There was no prejudice in schools or anything. No restaurants or anything. And not only that, you see the peoples who did practice prejudice in these big apartments. The general from the Base said, if you are practicing prejudice, your apartment is off limit to all military.

Cynthia Tucker: 48:15 Yes. Yes. Yes.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 48:18 And when they say off limit to all military you know what them white folks did? They was renting to anybody.

dindria barrow : 48:26 Yeah. They changed their mind.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 48:28 Yes. Yes. But the Base did that. They said, if you are going to be practicing prejudice, your building will be off limit.

dindria barrow : 48:41 So the military was quite an advocate for desegregation.

Freddie Mae Barnett : 48:44 It was quite a force. Yes. Yes. Yes. It was quite a force.

Cynthia Tucker: 48:48 They had a lot of Black soldiers, so they needed housing. And so I remember them implementing that they would boycott certain apartments and housing. If they prevented Blacks, from living there, then they're not, no military. And you know, the soldiers could not rent. Could not rent those places.

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- Freddie Mae Barnett : 49:14 Because the commanders would, would, you know, put 'em off limit.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 49:21 So that did help a lot. Because you see, I remember when I came here in '59, there was no one black woman working downtown in a store called Learners, I believe it was, that was Donnie Adams. On the garbage routes was all white folk. I wonder where the Black folk worked. Right. And, come to find out, a few worked for the city. The others worked for Boeing and worked for the military. And they had to fight to get clerks and things downtown. Our Ministerial Alliance is the one who fought, Reverend Brazill, Reverend Boles, all of them. They is the one who fought, one of my girlfriends, Virginia Drummer, her daughter, peoples store downtown. Her daughter was the first black young girl, hired there. All right. Her name was Sandra Drummer. Sandra was the first black hired there.
- Cynthia Tucker: 50:26 Well, Mrs. Capers worked in Woolworth's... she was the first...
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 50:29 No. She worked for Sears. And Woolworth was, Elsie Dorsey. Okay. Elsie Dorsey worked in Woolworth's. Mrs. Capers was the first Black secretary working for Sears.
- dindria barrow : 50:50 Thank you for speaking all of these people's names.
- Cynthia Tucker: Capers, was a member. She was a member...
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 50:54 I believe in calling names. You know, I like to give people's credit for what was done.
- dindria barrow : 51:09 My head is moving a lot because you're giving me a lot of history to think on and to chew on. And I want to incorporate it into my own life so that I know where Tacoma's coming from, you know? So, I'm just really like, excited about what we are recording. But I have one more question for you.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 51:31 Oh, yes.
- dindria barrow : 51:32 All right. What is your dreams?
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 51:38 You know, my dream have always been, always been to see the Tacoma City Association take its rightful place in the community. We have a long history, as I say, we've had strong women, and I want to take its rightful place and to be the force that our organization stand for.
- dindria barrow : 52:19 All right. I like that dream. It's true that the association is 100 years old.

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- Freddie Mae Barnett : 52:26 Yeah. But we should be about 128.
- dindria barrow : 52:34 128. Let me get the number correct. Do you have any other words of advice to people in Tacoma about our coming days or our future?
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 52:53 Yes. What I would like for our young women, I'm not talking about your old women like me, younger women, to ask yourself, what is it God have for me to do? Because God loves us. He made us, and we all have something to do. So you need to ask yourself, what is it God have planned in my life for me to do for mankind? Because he says, love you one another. And our motto, lifting as we climb. So we can't do it by ourselves. So each one of us, black, white, blue, green, yellow, ask yourself, what can I do or what am I supposed to be doing that God want me to do, to be that help in my community. Because if all working together, we can do anything. Cause God have given us the power. We just need to use it because, and I believe our motto is the greatest in the world. Lifting as we climb.
- dindria barrow : 54:30 Alright. I have shivers because with passion, you end our interview and I'm going to take that question and ask myself in the mirror <laugh> so that I can see my answer. <laugh>. I really appreciate your time, Mrs. Barnett. Thank you for sharing your story and sharing what you know of Tacoma's history. It will help us learn where we're going because we know our past. Thank you.
- Freddie Mae Barnett : 55:03 Thank you, thank you, thank you. I just hope it will somebody, whoever read it, will energize them some way.