

## **DELTA XI AKA ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

Interviewer: Briana M. Davis  
Interviewee: Barbara Dugas-Patterson  
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### **TRANSCRIPT BEGIN**

**Briana M. Davis:** So we're going to start with Section 1. This is 1A. Please, tell us your name and your role in the Delta Xi chapter.

**Barbara Dugas-Patterson:** Well, I'm Barbara Dugas-Patterson. I was initiated in Delta Xi as an AKA in fall of 1980. I was a member and I also served as president of the chapter at one point while I was there.

**Davis:** Thank you so much. What high school did you attend and how did you come to be an AKA?

**Dugas-Patterson:** I went to Monsignor Kelly High School in Beaumont, Texas. I grew up in Beaumont and my older sister, Theresa, was an AKA. I had never heard of sororities or fraternities till Theresa went off to college, who's six years older than me, went to Lamar University, and one day came home and told us that she was going on line to be an AKA. I remember just observing. I was probably maybe a freshman in high school, and seeing her and her line sisters and the things that they went through and then go into a probate show and seeing her perform, it was such a cool thing for me to see as her little sister, and that's when I decided I wanted to be an AKA.

**Davis:** I too have an older sister who is an AKA.

**Dugas-Patterson:** You do?

**Davis:** Yeah, she was a part of the Theta Sigma chapter at The University of Alabama. I didn't know much about it either. Until I started this project, I still wasn't very familiar with it, but the probates are really cool.

**Dugas-Patterson:** They've changed over the years. Ours was almost like a variety show. There were maybe seven or eight songs we had to sing and dance. It wasn't like a step show like a lot of the probate shows do today. We prepared for weeks and put on our little 45-minute variety shows, singing and dancing. We made our outfits, we were all dressed alike. I think we had a change in costume during the time and it was really your chance to come out. Plus, it was also in the week leading up to becoming an AKA. The last week we called hell week. That last week you had your probate show. Whereas now, those shows that they do are generally after they come into the sorority, so there were some changes.

**Davis:** Very interesting. I would be interested in doing side-by-side videos of each and seeing the differences.

**Dugas-Patterson:** We still have some pictures from our show. They aren't the greatest. They're pretty grainy given that they are—well, we just hit our 40th anniversary in December, so they're 40 years ago. But us in our little pink and green jump suits and dresses. It was great fun and it was a way that when you had your show, you knew you were close and everybody at the campus, the Black population came

out to support you. Certainly people that were in other Greek organizations, the Divine—we had eight, not nine. But everybody came out to support you and make you feel great. It was great community.

**Davis:** How super cool, super-duper cool. So that will conclude Section 1. We're going to go ahead and move on to Section 2. This will be our longest section. Just feel free to bunny trail. I really just want to get the full picture of your experience. Like what what were some smells, some memories? Yeah. So let's get into it.

**Dugas-Patterson:** Of college or just AKA?

**Davis:** Yes, anything that you would like to share. This isn't exclusive to AKA experiences. We do want to put the fact that you are a Black woman in higher education at the forefront. I do want to focus just on what it's like to be a woman of color in these spaces.

**Dugas-Patterson:** That makes me really sad that we're sitting in 2021 and it sounds like in many ways your experiences is what I had in 1980, we never made a lot of progress, have we? We were two percent Black when I was at the university, so about 1,000 Black students, today what do you guys have, do you know?

**Davis:** I know that there's four percent Black population, and there's 50,000.

**Dugas-Patterson:** Okay, 50,000 is pretty much the number, so that means for you you've doubled, but in 40 years, that's pretty sad given how many Black people and outstanding Black people are in the University of Texas. I hope that it's not because of the reputation of the university honestly, that it can be a difficult place. I will tell you, I loved my time at UT, it wasn't perfect, but it was wonderful. I had gone to schools that were predominantly white or always integrated, even in high school. I didn't look at it as 49,000 white people, I looked at it as 1,000 Black people. I thought, wow, I'm going from 20 - 1,000. I'm going to have 1,000 friends that are Black. I would say my experience was that we were close knit community and looked out for each other. I have a lot of friends that were athletes, but they intermix, some of them became joined Greek led organizations. I just think we were close. Maybe I was really idealistic and naive, but I knew that racism existed, but I was excited to be at The University of Texas, it's where I always want to go to school.

I was telling somebody I had no idea the value of an Ivy League education, so all the Ivy's came after me and all I wanted to do was go to The University of Texas. I had fallen in love with it when we went to Austin when I was a little kid. I was a national achievement scholar my junior year, and so all the Ivy's were reaching out amongst others, some HBCUs, but all I cared about was The University of Texas. I only applied to The University of Texas, I finished number one in my class, so I knew I'd get in, and that's it, and I turned everybody down. I think my mom still has letters from Harvard, and Yale, and Princeton and I thought I'm not going there, it's too cold, I had no idea. Now I look back and go—but you know what? I met my husband in Austin, I look at my three beautiful children and I have no regrets, I know that that's where I was and I met some dear friends that would be sisters to me for the rest of my life, so I was right where I was supposed to be, and it was great.

We were just close, we were close-knit community. We had Mama Duren there looking out for us. If anybody had issue, she had an apartment right there on campus and we could just go freely and we just took care of each other. I don't think of it as a negative experience. Thankfully, my freshman year, I had a Jewish roommate and we got along fine and I didn't have any experiences that were bad. She took me

home to her family and I took her home to mine, so I didn't have that. I didn't find out probably til much later, even recently when we all went back to celebrate the first Black students, and we were all at the reunion. They started telling stories and some of my line sisters said they had experiences that I didn't experience where there were two Black girls in a suite but in different rooms and two white girls, and one day they came home and the white girls had moved themselves all together and put the Black girls together and said, "We just thought that you would want that." And didn't I ask them. I had no idea that—I had my own close girlfriends. Then I had my sorority sisters, my sorrows, and plenty of guys were my friends. I just, I think, focused on the upside and didn't, not that I didn't see racism, I had examples of it that I remember. I remember being on an elevator with two of my friends, so three young Black girls just smiling and three big tall cowboy white looking guys, once the door closed, intimidating us, and calling us niggers, and just thinking, "Wow, we're just on an elevator. What is the deal?" But those were few and far between and mostly I had great experiences with other Black people because we just stuck together like a family.

**Davis:** Well, first of all, very sorry that that even happened to you or that anybody thought that that was okay to say that and trap you and intimidate you in an elevator.

**Dugas-Patterson:** You know cowards, right what cowards do.

**Davis:** They just feel bad about themselves, so they project and they want to lash out. But it's encouraging that those instances were few and far in between. What can you tell us about the activities and service projects you participated in and how did they impact you?

**Dugas-Patterson:** I will. I just want to say though, perhaps my experience was different than some because of how I look. A lot of people didn't automatically see a Black person when they saw me. It could be that that had a lot to do with my experience and that my friends had very different experiences. But we all know as Black people when we have them, we just a lot of times internalize them. Those experiences are already hurtful, so we don't want to talk about them or share. We don't want to relive them by talking about them, so we just internalize them and keep going. That could have had a lot to do with it. I was very active on campus. In addition to the sorority, I was in university council, so I was a representative in student government as a University of Texas sweetheart. That year, I recruited for the university, I flew on the University jet with the Vice President of Public Affairs. I wanted to make a difference, so we were having diversity receptions all around the state and I volunteered to go and represent the university. I did a lot of traveling with the university recruiting team and admissions team as a result and spoke. I was, of course, in the Black Student Organization. I don't know if we called it the BSG, like Black Student Government, I don't remember. I think it was BSA, Black Student Association, and I was definitely a member there. Sorority kept us very busy once I got into the sorority. We did service projects. Our dedication is lifelong service to all mankind. We did a lot of service projects in the community, whether it was raising money for different things, helping kids. We did things like tutoring students after school, all kinds of things.

Some of my most memorable. Talk about smells, yuckiness, we'd raise money by going and cleaning the Frank Erwin Center in the middle of the night after an event and that way we'd raise money for the sorority. One time we cleaned it after the rodeo, don't ever clean it after the rodeo. There was snuff and it was awful. I think that was the last time. We were like, "Okay, we're done," because we'd cleaned it after concerts and you'd have beer and stuff in the middle of the night. But for us you can raise a couple of \$100 for the sorority in one fell swoop and that was great for our programs for community service. We threw a lot of parties to raise money too, which was a lot of fun. That was our weekend stuff which

sorority or fraternity was throwing their party because that's the way we raised money. I would say at least three out of four weekends a month, if not every weekend, somebody was throwing a party to raise money, so that was the fun side of raising money. We had a great time, and again, that's how we supported each other. We joked with each other, like we have our cute rivalries between us and the other sororities or the fraternities, but it was always a fellowship. We all related to each other. In fact, sometimes I look my daughters in college and I go, oh, that seems when they go at each other, it seems a little too real. Whereas we'd kid with each other. Are you a Delta? I'm an AKA. But we loved each other. We were about the same things. We were about excellence and education and making the community stronger and better. We recognized that we may have gone into different organizations, but we were all about moving the needle forward for our community. As a result of that, we supported each other, we'd go to each other's parties, we'd go to each other's events. If we had AKA week, we'd support each other, or a Kappa week, we were just there for each other. That felt good, I liked it a lot.

**Davis:** Well, that is super cool. I think you have a very positive outlook. I was surprised to hear that there's a lot of opinions surrounding each Greek organization, like there's stereotypes for each which I had never considered given that I don't have a lot of knowledge about being Greek, but maybe that's changed over the years. I think at first, it might have been more about Black unity just across the board. Now, from what I've seen at UT, the Deltas don't really hang out with the AKAs, and I would just observe.

**Dugas-Patterson:** That's too bad. I've been in graduate chapters with AKAs and we will partner with the Deltas to do community service projects. If we are coming together and we're putting on a conference, for instance, for kids, one or the other organization where you're going to expect hundreds of kids, then we'll invite other organizations to come and be a part of that. That's where we all come together and make things better. We have enough people trying to tear us down, we do not need to tear each other down. It's unacceptable to me. It never felt that way for me. I know it wasn't because even now when we go back to the Black reunions at UT, at least the older groups, we're all hugging each other and we're indifferent, the Deltas are hugging the AKAs, we're taken pictures together. I remember a few years ago we went to one. They said, well, everybody who's Greek, go over to this side of the room to take a picture. Three quarters of the ballroom got up and went. Those organizations have kept us together, kept us in touch. Like I said, it's a different feeling and if those rivalries are real now, I'm saddened because, again, we need to be unified. There's a scripture that says that if man can ever be unified, there's nothing that he cannot do. I think of it, as a believer, as an attack of the enemy to try to divide and use whatever he can, politics, color, race, organization, church. It's all an attack of unity, which if we can unify there is nothing we can't do. It saddens me that as Black people, we think that we can afford to come against each other, that's utterly ridiculous to me. I even see it on color. Of course, I grew up in the era where if you had a drop of Black, you were Black. Now I see people who are Black calling out people who are light-skinned and Black and saying, well, you're not Black, you're not really Black, it's like, really! What is that about? I am saddened by the divisiveness, it doesn't get us anywhere.

**Davis:** I just posted about this on Facebook. Colorism is a real thing in our community. I learned recently that colorism was actually a ploy by white oppressors to divide the Black race in terms of color. They intentionally would put lighter-skinned individuals in the house. Some of them learned to read, some of them got special privileges that darker skin people were not afforded and that plan was actually devised to divide us for hundreds of years. Not for a short amount of time, it was actually intended to divide us for at least 300 years, I think.

**Dugas-Patterson:** As long as we've been here and the thing is, yes, it's been in every generation, it's ridiculous. I know when people use to try to get me to play into that, I'm like, "Are you kidding me?" We're all Black, were all talented, we're all beautiful, our hair is all gorgeous, it's all created by God, so go away. If I ever sense that a particular group of people wanted to affiliate because I was lighter skin or a guy wanted to date me because I was lighter skin, they were out of there. I had no interest because I just think it's ridiculous. But you're right, it's sad and especially when you understand where colorism originated here in this country with bringing the lighter skin Black people who had been raped by their masters and produce the women and produce those lighter skin children. That's where those lighter skin children came from. I mean even those lighter skin children came out of horrific events. The master separated the group but we should have seen beyond that and we should see beyond that.

**Davis:** If we can unify, we can organize, right?

**Dugas-Patterson:** Absolutely.

**Davis:** This is very fitting right now. I've been really thinking about colorism. But moving on to the next question here, this is going to be 2B, Section 2. Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority is the first Black organization at UT that was established by and for women. What are some firsts you've experienced or contributed to the organization? I know we already covered some of them, but feel free to reiterate if you'd like.

**Dugas-Patterson:** I don't remember us as an organization saying, "This is something that we're starting." When I was a Delta Xi. Delta Xi had a wonderful legacy by the time I got there. Ours was to keep it up, to keep serving the community well. I'm sure there was probably some sort or something that we started because we're creative group of girls, but we had such pride in the women that had come before us as the first Greek organization at UT. We had such pride in what they had accomplished and we still have that pride in our chapter Delta Xi that we wanted to continue and carry on the work that had been done before us, whether it was in the community, or on-campus or with our grades, keeping our GPAs high, or within the sorority in general.

I don't remember as a group things, but I know that as individuals, we had many first and as I shared with you, I had one of those as the first Black UT Sweetheart in 1981 and that I owe to the sorority because the way you became Sweetheart—Sweetheart was Homecoming Queen. They announced us at Homecoming as the queen of the university and then it was the queen that represented the university in the Cotton Bowl and if your team went to the Cotton Bowl then you were out of the Southwest Conference became the queen of the Cotton Bowl. I was also the first queen of the Cotton Bowl because UT beat Alabama that year in the Cotton Bowl. But I owe it to the sorority. We'd have sorority meetings at Sorors apartments and we always had food because they could last a long time. College girls are hungry. We took turns and it's funny the things you remember, but I still remember being in the kitchen with the meeting going on at the table right next to us. People would send opportunities for the sorority and how they said, "Hey, anybody, we've gotten this invitation to send a representative to interview for UT Sweetheart." We were all like, What is that? I thought it's the home coming queen. They said "Barbara, you want to do that? You like this stuff. You like going and interviewing and doing stuff like that." I said, Sure, it'll be great interview experience. Nobody ever thought that I would wind up, anybody Black, would wind up as the UT Sweetheart.

The way it went was, I went through interviews with probably 30-35 girls from college organizations on campus. It was interview panel. You go into a room and you might have 10 interviews in there, just throwing questions at you. I made it to the five finalists. It's funny, I position myself in the middle. I knew

that trick. I position myself in the middle and there was a picture that went into the newspaper and then there was a campus vote. It was funny because there had been word that another soror had made it to the finals few years before me. There had been word that she'd probably won, but that the judges changed the votes. That was even more reason why I thought that I would never win. I thought even if you win, you never going to win. But I knew a lot of people on campus, had always been friendly. The sorority got out and asked people to vote. These were not big elections, 40-50,000 students and I think less than 2,000 votes cast. In fact, I think Nancy Reagan came in second to me as a write-in. But I do remember that the editor of the Daily Texan was a young Black man. He took it upon himself to say, we want representation in that room. I mean, it was just God moving because he just took it upon himself and said we want representation in that room and then the Daily Texan staff decided I was their candidate of choice and they started telling people to vote for me. They would have voting booths at different places on campus and there were organizations like the white fraternities and the cowboys and things like that, that mend those booths and I heard that they were telling people, "Don't vote for her, she's Black" because you couldn't really tell, you wouldn't know.

They were like, vote for any of these other girls, but don't vote for her. But I guess the Daily Texan got the liberals out, the rebels out, and then the Black student population came out and voted for me. I have a friend whose Latina and she said the Hispanics thought I was Hispanic. They came and voted for me and so turns out I won—but the funniest story about that is that they would announce the queen every year at what was called Roundup. I don't know if UT still has Roundup. But it was an event that was pretty much the fraternity and sororities. It was like a carnival that they held every year to raise money and yes, you had to give some of your proceeds to whatever the cause was, but then you got to keep some of your money. Well, the AKAs were the only Black Greek group at ever participated with all the Black people out there every year. It's funny, we ran a jail, so people would pay us a dollar to put people in jail and then you had to pay \$2 to get out. That was your bail. All day long we're in our little pink button downs with AKA and were arresting people, but that's where they announced it. I had been around the girls, and met them. We had taken pictures together. We're standing on the stage and they said, "And the winner is—" and they said my name. But I thought to myself, None of those girl's name sounds like that. I had no concept that I could possibly win. I was like, "What are they talking about? None of those girls sound like that." Then I saw a bunch of Black young women jumping up and down in their pink and green, pink shirts with AKA. I said, "I won?" I was like, "Are you kidding me? I won?" I'll never forget the looks of those girls' faces. They looked at me like, She won? They were as shocked. I was shocked, they were shocked. The soros were just jumping up and down. I have that first because of the sorority. Just, again, another example of the sorority getting an opportunity and saying, "Hey, somebody needs to do this. Somebody needs to go represent." I did, and God, He has quite a sense of humor, and He saw fit to make it happen.

**Davis:** I felt like I could picture it in my head. It's a whole movie.

**Dugas-Patterson:** I can still see it. There's one other funny part about this, Bri. That's why I say God has a sense of humor. My whole life, I'm a little girl from Beaumont, Texas. Every New Year's morning, we'd get up and our routine was, in my family, my sister and I, my mom and dad, we'd watch the parades, we'd watch the Rose Bowl parade, we'd watch the Cotton Bowl parade. Here, I was home at Christmas time the year before. Of course, I'm college student, so I'm sleeping in, I have no interest in getting up with the family to watch the parades. My dad said, "Barbara, Barbara, come here. They say that Miss UT is coming up after the commercial," and I go, "Dad, there is no Miss UT. I've been there two years, it doesn't exist." He goes, "Yeah. Come on, come here. Let me show you." He gets me out. I still remember me being in my robe with my hair on top of my head. I look at it and sure enough, there's all the queens

at the Cotton Bowl, the different school queens waving on the float. I said, "Never heard of that." I joked with my dad. I said, "Dad, next year, that's me." Then next year, it was me. Bizarre. But I think your words have power. After I got Sweetheart, I was like, "I'm going to be the Cotton Bowl queen. I'm going to be the Cotton Bowl queen," and I was.

**Davis:** Yes. Definitely. Your words definitely have power like when you say it out loud, you can't take it back, it's just out there floating in the universe.

**Dugas-Patterson:** We speak life or death. We speak them both. I tell you, that was just a funny thing that God used in my life later because also that summer, while I was the Sweetheart, I was at a party in Houston with a bunch of other college students. I don't know if you've ever heard of Eric Dickerson, but he was a pretty very great player at the time. We met up at a party and he came up to me and he said, "People told me you're the UT Sweetheart and that you say you're going to be the Cotton Bowl queen," and I said, "I am. Yes, I am". He goes, "Well, that you can't be because we're going to win the conference." I go, "I'm going to be the Cotton Bowl queen," he goes, "We're going to win the conference." I said, "I don't care if you win the conference. I'm going to be the Cotton Bowl queen." He goes, "That's impossible. Whoever wins the conference goes to the bowl game." I said, "I'm going to be the Cotton Bowl queen." That year, SMU won the conference, they got disqualified because of something they did. We went to the Cotton Bowl, and I was the Cotton Bowl queen. Many years later, I ran into Eric and I said, "Eric, I don't know if you remember me." He goes, "I will never forget you." He said, "When you said, 'I don't care, you can win the conference but I'm going to be the Cotton Bowl queen,' and that actually happened," he said, "I thought, oh my gosh, how could that be?" I just think it's God teaching me the power of my words. Very surreal. Standing on a float, freezing, by the way, on New Year's Day in Downtown Dallas with hundreds of thousands of people lined up, taking your picture and waving at you. It was another thing that where I said, "Lord, you really have a sense of humor. People are taking my picture and waving, and I'm just me." But it was a very, very cool experience. One I'll never forget.

**Davis:** That is super cool.

**Dugas-Patterson:** All because of AKA. No, it's a sisterhood, it is. It matters to us, and it's global. I know people move out of the country and they're small chapters in Dubai or other countries, it gives people that connectivity and that support they need to get through those times in life and really, again, continue to propel each other forward, and excel, and shine, make a difference.

**Davis:** Cool. I can't believe I'm talking to the Cotton Bowl queen. This goes into the legacy of the chapter and its members. If you could speak about the legacy of Delta Xi and what you would like the community at large to know about the organization?

**Dugas-Patterson:** Well, the mere fact that it was the first organization of Black women at The University of Texas just tells you that that group of women were trendsetters. I mean, that was not easy. Those times were not easy as we listened to the women that went before us and hear their stories, they felt ostracized by the Black community in some places because people were like, "Why do you want to go to that big white university? Why don't you come in over here, do an HBCU? Why aren't you at Huston-Tillotson or somewhere else?" They had the support of their families but it took a lot of courage to do what they did, and then create organizations to support each other, support women, and give back to the community for life. That's what we're about, for life. This is not just parties and t-shirts in college, that's just the beginning of your experience with AKA, and even then, Delta Xi, it's always important to

keep that legacy going of making an impact in the community of helping children, helping people, helping the less fortunate, helping each other to excel at the university. Just a proud legacy of love and commitment to make a difference for a lifetime. It's very cool because our chapter does have that and we come back together, we come for reunions, we stay in touch with each other through chats and email, text and things that have made it easier. We have group chats and group meets and things like that so that we are shouting each other out even now. A soro from 30 years ago accomplishes something. It's in the group chat. We're all going, "This is great. We're so proud of you." Somebody has a job, they throw it out there. Do you know anybody that can fill this role? We are always wanting to stay connected and help each other. Our chapter is just a small example of that. This is a global legacy that we have beginning in 1908 from Howard University. We're a small but mighty part of that overall history and legacy of love and lot of laughter and support and excellence.

**Davis:** Super-duper cool. It's just very inspiring, I think, that even though you might not know each other, you can still have that thing in common and that mutual goal of support just across the board in the grad chapter and in the undergraduate chapter, which I do believe they're separate.

**Dugas-Patterson:** Well, undergrad means, you're still in college, and then once you graduate, you are member of the graduate chapter. That's where you're active and you do all your community service and activities through the grad chapter. If you're an undergrad, still in college, that's the undergrad chapter. But you still do things together. We partner together on events and come together to support each other and things like that. It's just you're in different chapters. Really because undergrads have their own agenda and they are dealing with different things than once you graduate college. But one of the amazing things about when you're in a graduate chapter is it can have somebody in it who's just graduated college all the way up to what we call our golden stars or diamond stars, 75 years. We see it's inspiring. I was in a grad chapter in California and I loved it. We have people in their 20s and people in their 90s. I mean, these ladies in their 90s came in those meetings, still participating, dressed sharp. You're just like, "Oh, I want to be like that." No matter where you are, maybe somebody that comes right out of college is looking at my age group and saying, I want to be like that, but I'm looking at somebody in her 80s and 90s and saying, I want to be like that, look at them, still going, still committed to the community, still coming to meetings, still dressing like they just left Neiman Marcus and still doing great things and fostering an environment of sisterhood. How awesome is that? I love it. Then doing things in junior high with kids or high school with kids and influencing them so that they will want to give scholarships. AKA gives a lot of money away for scholarships to help young men and women go to college. Then a lot of the women that get the AKA scholarships clearly have an interest in AKA because the organization helped them get through college. Just continuing that legacy, it's exciting.

**Davis:** Actually, it has an impact on why I'm so interested in the organization. Given that it gave me a humble Brown student a chance to do some archival research. For the first time, research specifically about Black women on campus.

**Dugas-Patterson:** It's through Black Studies?

**Davis:** Yes.

**Barbara Dugas-Patterson:** I'm a giver to that scholarship pretty much every year. I think I supported it. I just did it on the 40 during 40.

**Davis:** Well, I personally thank you. I thought I was going to focus more on Black sports and what it's like having the sports experience. But learning about Black women is so much more up my alley.

**Dugas-Patterson:** We're quiet and mighty. A lot of times we hold up the world on our shoulders. In so many ways. I was, like I said, very fortunate. I met a group of Black women at orientation and said, "Hey, I'm here by myself. Can I come and hang out with you guys?" We all came back and there were about eight or 10 of us, sorry, eight or 10 of us that hung out together. None of them pledged any sorority while they were there. I was the only one that eventually pledged, AKA Fall of my sophomore year. I had that friend group and now sorority sisters. It was great to have that support. Probably why I had such a great experience between all those sisters, either through the sorority or just really close friends, some of whom are still very close to today.

**Davis:** This is a fun question. Please speak to your experiences courting, living, and socializing around campus. Feel free to share what you're comfortable with there.

**Dugas-Patterson:** Yeah. I lived in Jester. Jester was pretty new. I think it was a couple of years old, not too many years old when we came in and it had its own zip code. Once again, I thought, Oh, this is going to be fun! It's like living in a small city. I lived on, I forgot which wing, but the floor was floor two and it was called a Virgin Vault. There had been an article in Texas Monthly about it. It was an all-girls floor. That's why they called it the Virgin Vault because Jester was cutting edge. I mean, they had guys and girls on the different hallways. They had guys and girls next door to each other. That was cutting edge 40 years ago. Let me tell you. It was really exciting to live in such a big place. It was fun. Again, my eight friends when I was a freshman, we all lived in Jester and we used to do silly things like you smell popcorn pop in and you'd follow the smell to see if it ended at a door where you knew people or you'd make friends with them, so you could eat it. We used to wait for our moms to send our favorite foods. One of my friend's moms made this awesome chicken spaghetti, and that was during the day where you could send it on hot ice and my mom made turnovers and cookies and so you waited. You're like, "My mom's sending a care package," and all your friends would be waiting for your mom's specialty. Yes, that was great. But living in the dorm was crazy. There was just always a party waiting to happen in a big place like Jester. It was just a crazy place. Spent a lot of time in the library, actually studying, taking a nap sometimes in those great rooms in the PCL, those good couches. A lot of times I would study in the library because Jester was like a big animal house. It was just a wild fun place waiting always waiting to happen. Then my sophomore year I moved off-campus. So sophomore, junior, and senior year, I lived in apartments, my sophomore year by myself, which was funny because it allowed for, well, the Fall of my sophomore year, I was pledging so my line sisters were all at my place because I didn't have roommates. So we spent a lot of time there. Then after that, the next semester it was like a turnstile. My mom used to call me and say, "Who's spending the night with you tonight?" Anytime people were getting tired of their roommates, they just come and spend the night with me because I had none. It was a lot of fun having that freedom. Then my junior year I lived with a friend who came up from Beaumont, had one roommate, and then my senior year, I lived with two of my girlfriends. Just variety and just a lot of fun. A lot of laughs, lot of fun, lot of not sleeping. I don't know. I think back at college very fondly. It was an amazing experience for a little girl from Beaumont, Texas.

**Davis:** Wow. I hear Jester is a lot different then than it is now. Going to Jester now I know there's Jester west and Jester East. There's that food court that is right there.

**Dugas-Patterson:** There was only a cafeteria back then, your big cafeteria. They weren't food courts like they are now. But I've seen it.

**Davis:** I see. Well, now there's a J2 on the second level which is like a buffet. They have a lot of food options in Jester alone. There's a Wendy's and Starbucks.

**Dugas-Patterson:** I saw that yeah. Forty years ago, fast food wasn't as in as it is today. My freshman year, I lived on Blue Bell ice cream. They always had Blue Bell, peanut butter and jelly, and the hamburger line. Then I never missed every other Sunday's steak and shrimp, fried shrimp, and steak. But other than that—one of the memories I have is hilarious. You'd get food all week and then on Friday, they'd have something called Jester surprise. It would be the leftovers of everything all thrown into one bowl. I always used to laugh because sure enough, I'd be in there going, "And who would pick that?" And some boy who probably had a voracious appetite, would come in and go, "I'll take the surprise," and I'm like, "Oh my gosh. " You can just tell, it was all the beans, the vegetables, everything thrown into one pot, but it was fine. I mean, we didn't have the variety that you guys had but we always had the hamburger line. If you didn't like what was being cooked, you could always go to the hamburger line.

**Davis:** There's those always those guys and you're like, "Wow, that's your digestive tract. Do you."

**Dugas-Patterson:** I never knew how much boys in college could eat until I went to college. I had friends at high school but at high school, you just get your lunch and you'd eat it. You never saw how much they ate at home. I only had a sister. My dad was a pretty small man about 5'8 so he didn't eat a lot. It just shocked me when I got to college and saw how much food boys ate and then I had friends who were on the basketball team or the football team. You'd go in their rooms and they pull out one of those lower drawers and it'd be all snacks. Everything that you could imagine was there in their snack drawer. That was one of the things I learned going into college, how much boys could eat. Now I'm the mom of two young men and a daughter. I experienced it for myself when they were all going through high school and if they were home for college or their friends, they could wipe out a refrigerator. But I didn't know that till college. The funny memories I just remember is my starched jeans were in back then. There was no such thing as spandex, they did not give. We just have to lay down on the bed and pull those jeans up. They were cardboard, but you had to have that really cardboard crease in them. We just laugh, pulling on our jeans. That was a funny memory from college that I haven't had in a long time.

**Davis:** Everything's so stretchy now.

**Dugas-Patterson:** Yeah. There was no stretch in our clothes.

**Davis:** Very funny. Do you like to move on to the next question or how are you feeling?

**Dugas-Patterson:** There's just one thing I wanted to share when I was UT Sweetheart, overall I got a lot of press. I was interviewed on TV and in Houston by the newspapers. I got the key to the city of Galveston. I did the tour. Being the first Black queen at the university and the Black community in general just applauded it and I was received really well. One of the funniest memories though was the queen—there was a fraternity, a white fraternity, that always invited the queen over for dinner all by herself. I went over to dinner with me and 100 white boys for dinner and I'm just like, "Okay, let's see, how I'm going to feel about this." They were all very nice. But I just remember, I never forgot one of them came up to me and he whispered in my ear, he comes, "I think you're really pretty." He goes, "In fact, I would ask you out but they told me you were Black. But you're really pretty." I just remember thinking, "Okay. What am I supposed to do with that?" I'm like, "Thank you?" I don't know. It just makes you realize that people don't even think about their ignorance. They were nice. I had a nice dinner with

them. I didn't know what to expect, but that's a memory I never forgot that you just never know people. Don't really think about what they say or their ignorance. They just don't recognize it.

**Davis:** For a lot of people, I think racial differences and injustice almost seems comical and not super-duper real to a lot of people. I think you realize you're Black when you have that realization of, "It's because I'm Black." But if you don't ever have that realization, it's really hard to even see racial inequality as a real thing because it's never been a part of your experience. It's been a part of others, but it's hard for you. It's hard to empathize.

**Dugas-Patterson:** With George Floyd's murder and some of the things that have happened in the last year. People who haven't had that experience finally were locked in their house and had to pay attention and they were like, "What?" I mean, it seems crazy to us, because we remember everything and it touched us. But I do really understand that some people just don't get it. Now, they can choose to not continue to not get it if they don't want to. I mean, I think we've hit a place and COVID shut people down where they had to think about it. If they don't want to think about it or don't get it because they choose not to get it at this point.

**Davis:** How has your experience with adults as I chapter impacted your skill set? How has it affected your approach to the community? What I want to know by this is just some skills that you've learned, some life lessons that you've acquired along the way and how you view your role in the community? I know you talked a little bit about that, but feel free to speak on it a little bit more.

**Dugas-Patterson:** The sorority helps you build your skill set tremendously because of the programming that we do beginning in college. You do plan community events, you plan community service, you execute on those events. You plan events on campus education weeks for students. You could have a health care week where you bring in different speakers and you give out different information. I mean, every year we have different programming. But you learn at a very young age how to execute a program, an event. But a lot of people never get that experience. I never really realized it till I joined some other organizations as an adult. Those organizations also had sorors in them, but other people as well. And I'm not just saying as an AKA—probably if you had been in a Greek organization, in general, you have the edge on doing that type of work. Because it was required to do from the beginning. We just see people with no organizational skills and wind up saying, "We know who we want on our committee," and we could execute an event on the phone. You do this, go here, you do that because we had been doing it all of our lives beginning in college. It definitely build your skill set. Academic excellence is important in the sorority. You have to have a certain GPA. You've got to keep that GPA up to be active. It's a priority to have academic excellence which helps you. How to impact the community, to assess what those needs are, and then create programming around it to help. I think that's been good. There was a time when I was inactive in the sorority, when I was deep in work and little kids and things like that. But then I reactivated with the sorority. I just think it's such an amazing place because these are college educated, really sharp women all in one room where I remember thinking, there's a great intersection point here. I can know everything about what's going on in my community because you've got sitting here with a 100 women who were all college educated leader-type people and impacting the community in different ways who then bring it all together and say this is going on or that what should we be focused on? How can we make an impact? It's a lot of grassroots efforts that can make a difference through our intersectionality with the sorority. I love it, it's been great for me personally, and I believe that I know that people at my job and things like that as I've moved up and become an executive, a lot of the hands-on training that I received came out of my activity with the sorority.

**Davis:** Just that chance to really organize, to cooperate, to maybe even do some public speaking since I know—

**Dugas-Patterson:** Oh, yeah. Lots of public speaking. To be a leader, to be a follower because a leader needs to know how to be a follower. You have to know how to support, to actually lead, I believe. To be in all of those roles, have the opportunity to lead a committee or lead an event or participate on a committee to help you identify what your strong suits are, what you enjoy doing, what you don't enjoy doing, which is very important for your success, I think as you go forward. All of those opportunities are afforded to you at a young age when you're part of the sorority.

**Davis:** I believe we already talked about where you lived, and if I'm not mistaken, you stayed in Jester for your freshman and sophomore year.

**Dugas-Patterson:** Freshman year, just freshman.

**Davis:** Then sophomore year, you lived alone, and then junior and senior you stayed with two other roommates.

**Dugas-Patterson:** One roommate in junior year, I added a roommate every year, so zero then one then two.

**Davis:** Okay cool. Was there a specific part of town that you were allowed to stay in or did it really matter at the time, or did you—

**Dugas-Patterson:** There was nothing that prevented us from staying wherever because we're Black or because we were students. But I think it's called Riverside, was a big area where the students all live. The buses went out into that part of town. I hear it's nice and ritzy now, but it was just student town out there because the UT buses went and there was a route. It was full of students, just apartment of complex after apartment complex, full of students, and that's where we lived. Again, it was almost like dorms on steroids, but at least you had your own apartment, you could have more limits than in a dorm, but it was student town out there, it was fun. I loved it.

**Davis:** I love that.

**Barbara Dugas-Patterson:** I loved it. My mom was like, "You're not going away to college if you're majoring in being an actress," so I got my undergrad degree in journalism. I thought, well, that's sort of similar. Then I went on to grad school at UT. But, yeah, if I could do anything I want to do, I'd do theater. Pull off. I mean, I've played lead roles in a musical. I can pull that off, I can get in character and sing. But I'm not an opera singer or have a great voice. I can carry a tune and sing it in a musical.

**Davis:** That is still a skill That really is. I've seen people do very well with it and then I've seen people who just absolutely struggle, they can't do both. But that's why we all have our own different gifts and talents and things God just plops in there near.

**Dugas-Patterson:** Yeah, absolutely.

**Davis:** Sprinkle of this and a sprinkle of that.

**Dugas-Patterson:** Absolutely.

**Davis:** That concludes section 2. We're moving on to section 3. In section 3, we'll be rather long-winded, it might be. But there's only two questions in this particular section. So what was it like being a Black woman—well, because if I'm not mistaken you arrived when it was already desegregated for some time so it's not like it hadn't been that way for a while. What was that like for you?

**Dugas-Patterson:** I think it just felt normal to me, and like I said, when we went back a few years ago when they celebrated the first Black students, we all walked away going, wow, we didn't really realize we were only 20 years into desegregation. There was still a lot going on if you look at it from a historical perspective. But I think it had gotten to the place where racism was more covert than overt, if I can say it that way. You didn't have things that required you to go here or do this, or you can't do this. It had already become a way where there were racist people always, but they had to do it in their own wink behind the scenes. What we've experienced in the last four years, honestly, because that empowered, all that stuff that would insight people but behind the scenes, and we knew better. You knew you had to protect yourselves, we went places in groups, and things like that. But by then it was more covert than overt. At the university, we went everywhere, we did everything. In fact, one of the first things we did when we came to Austin with my three girlfriends that I met at orientation, and we all decided to come back the week before school started as soon as the dorms open so we could acclimate ourselves and have fun. We went to a country-western bar, and people were fine with us being there. We're out there dancing, and we were, "Let's go, see what that's like." I'm not saying that they didn't exist, but it was not as in your face obviously as 20 years before when you were being threatened to not come into the university. By then, things had calmed down, pretty much settled down, and I didn't feel I had to look over my shoulder on a daily basis or anything.

**Davis:** There is a distinct difference in the experiences of those that came first versus those that came a little bit after.

**Dugas-Patterson:** Those people, they had so much courage. I didn't feel I had to have courage to go to the University of Texas, I was going where I wanted to go. It was that answer to my prayers. I was there to have fun and, did we have some negative experiences? Yes, but they were not daily for me, and most days I was just living a life being a college student. Like I said, most of my friends were Black, and that's what we ran together, and I felt very safe in it. Thankfully, I didn't have a lot of negative experiences, those 20 years made a big difference.

**Davis:** Well, thank you for sharing that. There's just one more question, and then I'll get out of your hair.

**Barbara Dugas-Patterson:** No, thank you.

**Davis:** Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experience in Delta Xi? Any parting memories, anything that you'd like to share about Alpha Kappa Alpha Incorporated, got to add that in there.

**Dugas-Patterson:** One of the things I remember fondly, and I might get trouble for this, but when you have a group of women, you're going to have issues. You're going to have women that disagree when you deal with women. One of the things I loved when I was a Delta Xi is we had a thing, when you started feeling the tension build in the org, it was starting to feel siloed or you knew something

happened, and it started to break off people into pieces. We had something we called the hot seat. I mean, if you had 20 women, you'd sit in a circle, and anybody could call the hot seat. Call it we need one! And everybody had to show up. When everybody had a chance to speak and say what was on their mind, and when that person was speaking, you couldn't speak, but when it was your turn, you could speak. I think it was marvelous because we would not leave that hot seat until everybody had spoken, cried, gotten whatever was on their mind out, and we would not leave there til it was healed, til it was out in the open, and dealt with whatever the issue was, and that we had all made up. I loved that. I thought that was the most amazing concept and it kept that unity there. It allowed us to get off our chest in a respectful way whatever was bothering us, to be honest with each other, and then to forgive each other, and come back together. I loved it. I think every family, every organization should have a hot seat. It was amazing.

Then just from college, I had a lot of friends who were football players. I was in an organization, I forgot this one, called Acres Angels. We were like hostesses to the football recruiting programs. When high school players would come in, we'd give them tours of campus. We throw parties that they could come to to get a feel for the campus, and clearly, if you were the Black girls, that we would show the Black recruits around, the high school recruits. As a result, I had a lot of friends who were athletes at the university, and we had a winning football team, a very good football team while I was at the university. Like I said, we beat Alabama when I was Cotton Bowl Queen. I think we finished number two in the nation. That was a great part of being at UT. We went to all the football games. We had friends who were on the basketball team. I still remember their huge feet. What size foot is that? Twenty-two. How does your mom afford—where do you find those shoes? It was just hilarious, but that was another thing that united us, with having friends who were athletes, friends on the track team. I was a Texas Relays Princess. I had friends from Jamaica who were on the track team and that was amazing for me. A little girl coming from Beaumont, Texas. My biggest school was my high school, which had 400, 500 people in it, and 13 years of Catholic school, kindergarten through 12th grade. To get to go there and meet Black people from Canada, from the Caribbean, from Africa, and make friends and just come together and expand our horizons, that was awesome to just to get to know each other. Like I said, I loved it because I had just been in my one little community all my life, so it was my opportunity to expand my horizons, and learn more, and see more through other's eyes. It was an amazing experience for me that I don't regret at all. I think it was right where God wanted me to be and I maximized it. I will always be thankful for my experience at the University of Texas, and I will always be thankful for Alpha Kappa Alpha affording me the sisterhood that it has given me, not only through college but even to this day.

**Davis:** I think we definitely need to implement the hot seats in our families. I do agree with that. Meeting so many people from different parts of the Black diaspora, it opens your eyes to how diverse it really is.

**Dugas-Patterson:** Yes.

**Davis:** Yes. Thank you so much for meeting with me, for giving me your time.

**Dugas-Patterson:** My pleasure.

**TRANSCRIPT END**