

DELTA XI AKA ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Interviewer: Briana M. Davis
Interviewee: Linda Todd
Location: Austin, TX/Dallas, TX
Interview Date: 2021 August 03
Duration: 0:36.33

TRANSCRIPT BEGIN

Briana M. Davis: Hello. This is section 1 question 1A. Please tell us your name and your role in the Delta Xi chapter.

Linda Todd: My name is Linda Denise MacIntosh-Todd. I'm a member of the Delta Xi chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, and I was past a president of the chapter.

Davis: Amazing. What high school did you attend, and how did you come to be an AKA?

Todd: I attended Carter High School in Dallas, Texas, and graduated, May of 1975. I decided to go, to attend UT and amazingly, it was the only college campus that I visited. When I went to UT, I just fell in love with the campus and that's the only place I applied and so fortunately, I was accepted and started going to school there and just loved it. That's the only place I wanted to go. I would have been in trouble if I had not gotten accepted.

Davis: I too only applied UT and had my fingers crossed. Question 2A, section 2. What can you tell us about the activities and service projects you participated in, and how did they impact you?

Todd: The activities of the sorority—I can tell you that I know that the organization—we're all about sisterhood and service in the community. It really impacted my life such that, that is my focus now, what, 42 years later. I continue to be focused on servicing others in the community, especially, focused on women and girls and helping them succeed and be successful in life. I think that pretty much every organization I'm involved in has an impact in the communities, especially in the African American community. I would say that it had an enormous impact on me in terms of the direction of this is the focus in my life. While I can't remember the specific activities because it's been so long ago, a lot of times is not what you remember, but how it affects you. I can say when I look at my life now that it had an impact on how I live my life, so that says a lot.

Davis: Well, thank you to your service to our community. There's a lot of people that are very self minded, and they would never dedicate their entire life to serving others, so thank you for that. Question 2B. Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority is the first Black organization at UT that was established by and for women. What are some first you've experienced or contributed to this organization? Some examples of this are initiatives founded by this chapter—social experiences, etc.

Todd: Oh, gosh, some of the firsts that I've experienced—I would say that they are contributed to the organization. I'm not sure if I can really articulate a lot of firsts. I think maybe I'm a legacy. My mother was a life member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority. In fact I probably have her life membership close by. She probably pledged and was around when the founders of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority were all alive. I am a legacy. I was the first from her to pledge Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Delta Xi. I do have a sister who was 13 years younger than I am that also pledged Delta Xi, and is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha

Sorority at UT. I was maybe the first to be the president of AKA, even though my mother was very active.

But I've mentioned before how Delta Xi impacted my skill set. Just to put service first, family service, sisterhood, all of that is really impacted me. At UT, it really was a close-knit Black community because freshmen class, for example, freshman English, you'd have 500 students in a big auditorium, and it might be one or two Blacks, and you probably didn't know each other, and you're sitting there so really that sisterhood, that bonding to make you feel part of a community because you really didn't necessarily feel it from UT because you're just a number. But you really felt other people cared about you, who cared about your well-being, cared about your success. That education was important achievement. All of that, those are many life lessons, caring about others and education, so that was stressed. I'm not sure if that answered your question, but I didn't really have a lot of first except that, the first one to go to UT in my family, not the first one to pledge AKA or to graduate from college because my mom did graduate from college, and she also had a master's degree.

Davis: Oh, mama.

Todd: Yeah. Probably, if you want me to go back and look at her, I think she has a certificate from Alpha Kappa Alpha that shows her life membership. If you want to put the interview on hold, or I can get that for you at the end of the interview.

Davis: Yes. I would love to see it. Any materials that you may have that you would like us to feature on our blog posts, send them my way, just send scans. I'm sure people would love to really get their hands on that, and a life membership, gosh, a life is so long.

Todd: Yeah. I know.

Davis: Well, congratulations to the both of you. That does answer my question, you are the first to be a president in your family of AKAs, which is a big feat there. Question 2c, please speak to the legacy of the chapter and its members. What would you like the community at large to know about the Deltas Xi chapter and its members?

Todd: Just that Deltas Xi really exhibited what the founders had in terms of the vision for the sorority. Sisterhood, service to others, education because you cannot pledge Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority unless you have gone through college. I think that that says a lot. A lot of organizations out there that you can join. But because this one stresses the fact that education—you have to have a certain grade point average. You have to keep that up when you're pledging and a lot of people will look at, especially AKAs, to lead an organization. It is so much deeper than that. It really does impact the lives of Black women. It elevates, it encourages, it bonds us together. It provides a sense of belonging and not entitlement but belonging and where we have been excluded from so many things. Many activities in college life, outside of college life a lot of barriers to overcome, so it's safe place to be. I think that's what I would like the community to understand because we are here to help others and it's uplifting for when you help one group, you really helping the larger humanity groups, so that's what I would like them to know. Can you pause it for a minute?

Davis: Yes.

Todd: Let's take a quick break.

Davis: We took a little bit of a break. We're going to jump right back into Section 2.

Todd: Okay.

Davis: Yes. Please speak to your experiences courting, living, and socializing on or around campus.

Todd: When I moved to UT, of course, I was 18 years old and moved to the Jester dormitory, which is a co-ed dorm. I had a roommate for a short time. We didn't really get along, so she ended up moving out. The first year, freshman year, I ended up having a room to myself because she moved out. I think we just had different eating habits. I'm a real neat person and I don't think she was that neat and I'm more of a healthy eater and she was snacking all the time. I mean, it was just very different. So I lived in Jester and what was fun about the dorm is that when you went through—I guess the foyer—sometimes there would be the guys down there playing dominoes or sitting around and they would always tease the girls that walked through—“Hey!” my nickname was Tosh, short for Macintosh— “Hey Tosh!” That was my nickname during my college years or they would say something funny and I hate to call it heckling because heckling has a negative connotation to it. It was really more and fun.

As I mentioned earlier, we're small Black community and we all knew each other. That's a happy memory. Another one is there would be soul night on Friday nights. I think it was in the student center. I can't remember exactly where it was held, but we would have soul night and that was just where we play the music that we loved to hear. We would all come and gather and dance and just have a party. I cannot remember the frequency of soul nights, but I do remember that being a lot of fun. Let's see what else do I remember, I remember volunteering for Project Info. I would be a person that would give tours around campus for those students that we're considering coming to UT and they were visiting the campus. I was part of Project Info. I think that's what it was called. Volunteered for that. That was a great memory. Another great memory was being part of Innervations of Blackness, which was a choir, and we sang Black spirituals. That's where I learned all of the words, all of the verses of Lift Every Voice. Well, okay, pause it here because here I am talking.

Davis: Are there memories courting, living, and socializing on around campus that you'd like to share?

Todd: Let's see, courting. Oh my goodness, I have so many memories. I started off as an Omega Pearl because an Omega Pearl is really just an interest group for a fraternity. It was interesting is because I ended up in AKA, but I really hung out with the Omega Psi Phi guys. Became friends with a lot of those guys, so I was an Omega Pearl, and friends with a lot of Deltas. I think that just because you pledged AKA didn't mean that you weren't friends with a lot of the women in other sororities. I had a lot of friends in Delta, Omega. But because of the legacy of Alpha Kappa Alpha is ingrained in me to be an AKA, and that's when I decided to pledge. I pledged—there were I think 10 that were on our line. We started off with—and I can't remember all 10, but only six ended up. We call it going over or being initiated. And the name of our line—we were called the Special Occasions. I cannot remember what my line name was. It had something to do with the months that we were born. Maybe I think I was Grateful Thanksgiving. I cannot remember. I'll have to go back and look what the line names were.

On my line was Donna Blackshear, Deborah Willis, Sheila Campbell, Marilyn Reed, and it was Rosemary Calico and me—I think that's six, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. There were six of us that pledged the fall of 1976. Some of the people that we talked about, like DeMetris Sampson, she was a big sister, a lot of the big sisters would come back on campus for the activities when you were pledging. We knew people that had

graduated previously in maybe a year or two before because they would all come back on campus and participate in some of the activities of the pledgees, if you will. We weren't just a close-knit with people that were in school at that time, but previously pledged. I mean, it was to me a memorable experience because we all became close and you learn the history of the chapter you're involved in, activities to service in the community and then when you pledge a line, you become close to that line because they get to know you.

I had a little sister who—Lareatha Clay. I was Lareatha Clay's pledge. I was her special, which meant that I gave special time and attention to her as a big sister. All of those are just very pleasant experiences. Then for me in terms of—after living on campus the first year I actually moved off campus to an apartment on Riverside Drive. That was a big step because I ended up moving with a girl that—I knew her because she lived in the dorm but I don't know how we ended up moving together. But that was a terrible experience because she again, was extremely messy and she ended up not taking courses after the first semester we lived together and not being able to pay her bills. So we didn't get along very well. That was a terrible, terrible experience. But I remember my mom hearing it in my voice because I didn't want her to know that I'd taken this big step but it wasn't successful, but she could hear it in my voice. She came down and one day and surprised me and saw how terrible the situation was, how unhappy I was, and moved me out to my own apartment.

Then from there, I ended up, I think my last two years, staying in an apartment where there were four of us that lived in the apartment. I think it was still off of Riverside. And just had a great experience. So I know Deborah Smith, we called her Mickey, but she wasn't AKA, she was my roommate. Then, the reason we chose that apartment complex—Cynthia Sattler Wilson, who was one of my best friends and she's still one of my best friends, she's my daughter's godmother as matter of fact—she lived in that same apartment complex. She had pledged me in the sorority. A lot of the people that I knew from UT, it's amazing that we are still great friends today. I think that just shows you the connection and the beauty of the sisterhood of AKA and Delta Xi in particular. I can say Jeannetta West—we ended up working at Xerox together. She's a good friend and I pledged her in the sorority. Donna Jack—oh gosh, I have to think of her married name. Childres. She married Leonard Childres. She is a good friend of mine, Janet Jack—her sister was my Dean of Pledging. She's a good friend of mine today. I think I already mentioned DeMetris Sampson, Lorraine Hood, Cynthia Wilson, Lareatha Clay. My travel agent for the last probably 20 years is Janice. She is my travel agent. Yeah. I mean, we're all good friends and we worked together at Xerox. Yeah. I think that we have Pamela—oh gosh, I have to think of Pamela's last name. I mean, she lives in Boston now. She helped my daughter get an internship in DC. I mean, the connections are not just in the Dallas area because a lot of people that I've named live in Houston, Austin, Dallas, Boston. They live all over. I'm sorry, Jana Nickerson. That is my travel agent that I pledged her sorority. Jana Nickerson, her maiden name is Williams. I just wanted to make sure I got her name and Pamela who got Pamela Everhart and that was her maiden name. She's an attorney in Boston. We stay connected.

Davis: Well, how amazing! Your network is vast. It seems like everybody is so helpful. Thank you for sharing. I wrote down some of those names and I will look into those, see what I can find. If we could go over the fall of 1976 line. I have you, Donna Blackshear, Rosemary Calico. Who else was in that—

Todd: Marilyn Reed, Sheila Campbell. I can give you their married names, Deborah Willis. Donna Blackshear—her married name now is Reynolds.

Davis: Okay.

Todd: Donna lives in Houston. Deborah Willis, so Deborah D-E-B-O-R-A-H Willis Davis and she lives in Houston. Then Sheila Campbell—let me give you—Sheila Campbell Savannah is her married name. I've been in contact with all of them. I have not been in contact with Rosemary Calico. I think she lives in the Houston area. Then Marilyn Reed, and I'm not sure what they are—I could probably look them up on Facebook or LinkedIn.

Davis: Yes. I asked because I went ahead and reached out to one of the AKA members on campus to get your line—

Todd: Corrected—were they able to do that on the site?

Davis: I haven't seen any changes to the site. I just wanted to go ahead and verify now, so I can go ahead and send that back out because it probably was one of those things that slipped their mind. With everything being so busy and uncertain, I totally understand. But I'm going to shoot again and bug somebody.

Todd: Yes, please. Copy me in because it's important that our line is indicated because we're not identified correctly. We were fall in 1976, we were called the Special Occasions.

Davis: When I was on the website, it looks like it was smashed into another.

Todd: Can you just copy me in on the next email?

Davis: Yes, definitely. I will do that. I believe her name is Marissa Elder, so keep an eye out for that. She was one of my sisters in FLI—Fearless Leadership Institute. She's in an administrative role in FLI. She is amazing. Her hair is gorgeous. But yes, I will be sure to copy you in that email. We can move on to the next question whenever you're ready.

Todd: Okay, I'm ready.

Davis: Awesome. How has your experience with Delta Xi Chapter impacted your skillset? I know we talked about this a little bit earlier, but feel free to reiterate. And how has it affected your approach to the community?

Todd: I think I've already answered that.

Davis: Well then we will go ahead and move on to some of the life lessons that you've acquired. Just some life lessons that you really learned from being a Delta Xi.

Todd: I know that I've talked about some of those, but I guess service to all mankind, I think Black pride, sisterhood, educational achievements. Those are some of the life lessons, really just right there.

Davis: Super cool. Now, we're going to switch gears. What was it like being a Black woman in the '70s after the desegregation at The University of Texas.

Todd: There's someone coming into my house, I need to close my door—hold on one second. The question was, what was it like being a Black woman in the '70s during and after desegregation? Gosh. I

would say that—I remember in high school though, probably more than college—of having to bused to my high school. At the time, it was an all white high school and then when we integrated it was probably more half-white, half-Black. I was fortunate that that school tried to make things equal, if you will. For example, I was one of the first Blacks to integrate the drill team. Yeah. Before it was an all white drill team. I was one of the first Black officers, one of the first Black lieutenants in the drill team, one of the first Black homecoming queens. There were a lot of firsts when I was in high school. When I went to college, I really didn't probably step out in the leadership of the college in that way. But I still was a leader within the organization. For example, I was president of the sorority. It was probably less than one percent Blacks on campus. I don't remember any specific incidences that happened that were racist toward me on campus. I really had a great experience at UT, I think partly because of sorority life and the friendships. I really can't recall a lot of negative things. There's so much opportunity at UT and times to take advantage of it. There was a feeling of closeness and bonding. But you know that there was a lot going on where things are working against you in the larger community.

Davis: It was like a bubble being in a sorority. It was like a bubble of support and non-judgment. It kept you out of the racism that may have happened in the larger institution.

Todd: Well, I'm not sure if it kept you out of it. I think that you had more positive experiences because of it. I'll just put it like that. Does that make sense?

Davis: Yes, thank you. This brings us to our very last question. We've been chugging through these. Thank you again for your time. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience in the Delta Xi chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated?

Todd: Just that being a member Delta Xi will be something I will always cherish. My time on campus, campus life. I think—I know I'm a better woman, a better person, mother, friend because of the experience of AKA. I've been enriched by it. I have lifelong friendships because of it. It's just in my heart. I love my experiences in Delta Xi, being an AKA, and I will be forever grateful to have been a part of it.

Davis: Well, thank you so much for your time, Linda. It's been a pleasure getting to know you more and getting to know more about Alpha Kappa Alpha. Thank you.

Linda Todd: Thank you, Briana.

TRANSCRIPT END