

## Marilyn Luper

Daughter of Clara Luper, an icon of the civil rights era who led sit-ins at OKC lunch counters in 1958.

### Chapter 01 - 1:09

#### Introduction

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**Announcer:** In 1958, Clara Luper and her students from the Oklahoma City NAACP Council traveled to New York City to perform her play *Brother President* about Martin Luther King Jr.

It was that trip that became the catalyst for the beginning of the sit-in movement in Oklahoma City and the country.

One of Clara's students was her daughter Marilyn Luper Hildreth. It was seven-year-old Marilyn who in a meeting suggested the group go down to the Katz Drug store to order a coke and some burgers. The date was August 19, 1958 and it became the nation's first nonviolent lunch counter sit-in. On the third day, Katz staff served the group burgers and cokes. The Katz chain soon ended its segregation policy in all 38 of its stores in four states.

Adults were not used for the sit-in for fear of violence. But it was the 13 children of the youth council ranging in age from 7 to 15 who endured insults, threats and even spit from angry white customers.

Clara Luper was 88 when she died in 2011. Her daughter Marilyn is our story teller who says the legacy of her mother inspires her every day and you can listen to her now on the oral history website [VoicesofOklahoma.com](http://VoicesofOklahoma.com).

### Chapter 02 - 5:47

#### Early School Prejudice

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**John Erling:** My name is John Erling, and today's date is April 7, 2016.

Marilyn, would you state your full name, please?

**Marilyn Luper:** Marilyn Ann Luper Hildreth.

**JE:** Your date of birth?

**ML:** September 17, 1947.

**JE:** And your present age?

**ML:** I can't tell you all that. [both laughing].

**JE:** We have ways to find out. You're the second lady who's done that to me.

**ML:** Really?

**JE:** Yeah. One—

**ML:** Sixty-eight.

**JE:** ... one was in her upper eighties and she wouldn't tell me.

**ML:** No, no, you don't ask a lady their age. It's un-American.

**JE:** [still laughing] I thought in the action of preserving history we could do that.

**ML:** Oh, yes sir.

**JE:** We're here in the Oklahoma History Center and tell us where we're actually sitting in the History Center.

**ML:** We're sitting in the Clara Luper Exhibit, showing what happened here in Oklahoma City that changed the course of American history.

**JE:** And this setting here, with some memorabilia from your mother's house?

**ML:** Yes.

**JE:** I don't know if that couch actually came from the house or not?

**ML:** No.

**JE:** But there is memorabilia here.

**ML:** Very—very similar to the couch she had, however.

**JE:** Very similar?

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And so there, of course, is your mother's picture right across the way. So we thought it would be nice to sit here in this setting to tell the story. Where were you born?

**ML:** Oklahoma City.

**JE:** Do you have brothers or sisters?

**ML:** Yes, I have a brother named Calvin Brady Luper and Shelly Marie Luper Wilson.

**JE:** Your last name is now Hildreth, that came by marriage?

**ML:** Yes.

**JE:** And you married?

**ML:** Ellis Hildreth. He's deceased.

**JE:** Your father's name and where he grew up?

**ML:** Burt Brady Luper, grew up in Denizen, Texas.

**JE:** What was his personality like?

**ML:** He was a lot of fun, he was very special. He loved to work and he was an electrician by trade.

**JE:** So his personality was probably very outgoing?

**ML:** Yes, yes, very outgoing.

**JE:** You pick up some of that from him, maybe?

**ML:** From both of them.

**JE:** Yeah? And then your mother's name?

**ML:** Clara May Shepard Luper.

**JE:** Where was she born?

**ML:** In Okfuskee County. Her parents were Ezell Shepard and Isabel Shepard.

**JE:** We'll talk, of course, about her more in just a moment. Let's talk about you and your education and the first school you went to. Where was that?

**ML:** Dunjee, D-u-n-j-e-and-e, Dunjee Elementary School. That was the school that my mother taught at in Spencer, Oklahoma.

**JE:** You went to elementary there. And then did you stay with Dunjee throughout your education?

**ML:** No. I went to Truman Elementary School. We lived at 1819 Northeast Park in Oklahoma City. That was right around the corner from a school by the name of Truman Elementary School, and that's where I continued in the third grade through the sixth. Then we went to Webster, which is about a mile and a half from my house.

**JE:** Then on to which high school?

**ML:** Douglas.

**JE:** Douglas High School.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative). That was the predominantly black high school at that time.

**JE:** But as you were in school and people knew who you were because of the sit-in, did that have positives or negatives for you?

**ML:** It had both.

**JE:** You were about eight years old when this all started. Are you saying that as you got into junior high and high school they knew who you were?

**ML:** Oh, yes, oh, yes.

**JE:** Right. And so that was a positive and a negative.

**ML:** Yes. I can remember going in the classroom and the teacher would say, "Here comes sit-in, squat-in, lay-in Luper," and it was a big laugh. And I didn't understand what was so funny about it.

But you had to understand the time. During that time, you did not have a lot of professionals speaking out against injustice. Especially educators or those with a solid job. My mother was one of the few people, at that time, that decided to stand up. And a lot of people either loved her dearly, they didn't hate her but they didn't understand her, they didn't understand what she was doing.

We received a lot of bomb threats, even to the high school that I attended, to the point that the FBI came and got me out of school. And I said, "Oh, my goodness." They kept me out of school and they would take me out to Dunjee.

**JE:** What was Dunjee, "take you to Dunjee"?

**ML:** Where my mother was working.

**JE:** Okay.

**ML:** On the way out to Dunjee, going down 36 where that four-way stop is, I don't know what happened but we almost had a very serious accident. I'll never forget it as long as I live. And I said, "Now you came to get me out of high school [laughing] to kill me." I told them, "Take me back and let this bomb go off."

The reactions were different throughout the community. I better understand it now because then we had a job to do and we were committed to doing that job.

**JE:** I would imagine your own children had the benefit of hearing you tell the story so that they knew from a very age what you had done and their grandmother had done.

**ML:** We always tell our story. My mom would tell us all the time, "If you don't tell your story, who will?"

And I think that is why throughout the years and the people you interviewed doing the sit-ins will continue to tell their story, no matter who they are and what experience they had. She would always teach us, "One day somebody's going to write about me. One day somebody's going to talk about me. I guess it's going to be me, myself."

**JE:** [laughing]

**ML:** She was a very, very special person.

**JE:** Yeah. By the way, I just noticed when I drove in from Tulsa, I got on the Clara Luper Corridor.

**ML:** Right.

**JE:** And I'm sure there have been other streets that have been named after her, but that was pretty special for me to see that.

**ML:** Right, from 23rd and Broadway—

**JE:** Up here.

**ML:** ... all the way down here, past the capitol, all the way down to 35.

**JE:** Yes.

**Chapter 03 - 5:50****Trip to New York City**

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**John Erling:** Okay, the lunch counter sit-in story, how old were you when that actually started? Then I'd like to know the background of what was going on in the community as this was about to begin.

**Marilyn Luper:** As I told you, my mother was a teacher at Dunjee High School. Spencer was a poor area here in Oklahoma; it was considered the country. But what they had was a lot of pride and a lot of determination and a lot of guts. She taught out there for years.

She had written a play—Mom was always writing plays and books and stories, having her kids memorize—and the play was called *Brother President*, the story of Martin Luther King Jr. But along with being an educator she was determined that nothing could hold her diamonds back, referring to her students. She was determined to make them learn.

They put on this play, and when they put on the play, Herb Wright, from the National NACP, who was the youth director at that time, saw the play, and invited the young people to go to New York City to present the play *Brother President* in front of the NACP National Convention. However, he only wanted to take one student.

But if you knew my mom, you would know that she wouldn't take one without taking the rest of them. Mostly students never have had an opportunity to go across the state line. As a matter of fact, some of the students that I knew out there during that time had cardboard in the bottom of their shoes.

**JE:** Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

**ML:** And would walk up to Mom's house to see her for her to help them. They started fundraising campaigns selling pools and popcorn and everything else so that the young people could go to New York City to the NACP National Convention.

**JE:** And I understood it took \$1,895 for the trip.

**ML:** Oh, yeah, the exact—I'd forgotten how much it was, but that sounds about right.

**JE:** Right.

**ML:** What was amazing about it and for years and years I tried to understand her rhyme to reasoning on this. Her and the other advisors sat down and mapped out a plan. And this plan was that we would go the northern route and return the southern route.

Now, how interesting is that? Because we thought the segregation was that way all over the United States during that time in Oklahoma. And you know Oklahoma, we had some of the more segregated laws than any other state in the union.

**JE:** Tell us a little about that, how blacks were treated in restaurants and they could not eat. Just lay the background on that.

**ML:** Yeah. In Oklahoma City we could go downtown and shop anywhere. We couldn't try on clothes, hats, personal items. We would go downtown and buy supplies of whatever we needed and couldn't try them on.

**JE:** How would—

**ML:** My grandmother would take a strong, measure our feet before she went to the store to buy the shoe. So that's how you would get your shoes. In most of those places there were no bathrooms for blacks. But those that had them had colored bathrooms and white bathrooms. Colored water fountains and white water fountains. Colored telephone booths and white telephone booths.

When you go downtown we could shop all day, but we had to go around to the back of Green's to order our food, to get a brown paper sack and go wait on the bus so that we could eat. We didn't have any place to go eat in Oklahoma City. But we thought that was the way it was all over.

**JE:** All right. Your mother was going to take you the northern route.

**ML:** No—right. We left Oklahoma, 99.9 percent of us never been across the state line, and on our way to New York, on our way to New York City, for the first time—understand what I'm telling you—for the first time in our lives, for the first time in our young lives had we ever had opportunity to go into a restaurant, sit down, and order a Coke. Nothing was like Oklahoma. The route we went, we were able to go into the restaurant. And you know what? They didn't even have colored bathrooms.

**JE:** Right.

**ML:** They didn't even have colored water fountains. After we got to New York City and saw that city and what they were doing in *that* place, I better understood what Harry Truman said, "A little bit of freedom is a dangerous thing."

**JE:** Right.

**ML:** And we found out then that we didn't like what we were seeing here.

**JE:** Were you eight years old?

**ML:** I was younger than that. See, I started to school early, I started to school early after Dunjee. They didn't have kindergarten during that time.

**JE:** So were you six then?

**ML:** Six.

**JE:** Six years old?

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative), yes.

**JE:** And were you in the play?

**ML:** Uh-huh (affirmative).

**JE:** Okay, you were part of the cast?

**ML:** Yeah, well, you had to do something with me. [laughing] So on the way back, we came back the southern route. Back again, the age of segregation and discrimination. Back to

the colored bathrooms, back to the colored water fountains, back to the back of the bus. When we came back from that NCAP Convention—we would meet in NACP meetings every Monday night, and we started negotiating with the people, the powers to be in Oklahoma City, about allowing us the opportunity to go in and sit down like everybody else and drink a Coke or eat a hamburger.

The response was, nobody wanted to sit next to us. They would lose all their business if they ever catered to us. They could take all our money and send us to the back of the building to eat, like dogs.

## Chapter 04 -5:32

### Marilyn Makes a Motion

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**John Erling:** How long did your mother continue coming before the city manager, city council and all that—

**Marilyn Luper:** Oh, it was a while, months and months and months.

**JE:** Could have been a year or so that—

**ML:** It was over a year.

**JE:** ... was back and forth, back and forth, and they wouldn't relent on that?

**ML:** No, because nobody wanted to be bothered with us.

One Monday night at the meeting, we were going through this, over and over again, "What can we do now? What can we do to get their attention to let them know that we're serious about being treated as people?"

And I made a motion.

**JE:** You did? You were si—

**ML:** At eight years old, I made a motion that when we go downtown and sit down and stay there until we was able to drink a Coke.

**JE:** So out of the mouths of babes, eight years old—

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Many of them were much older than you.

**ML:** Yes.

**JE:** But there were thirteen children—

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** ... wasn't it, that were part of this? Were you the youngest?

**ML:** No, there was a couple of kids younger than I at the meeting.

**JE:** So you just, "Well, let's just go down there"?

**ML:** “Let’s stay.”

**JE:** Right. And of course, if you get older you think about the fears right away and you were too—

**ML:** We didn’t have any fears.

**JE:** ... too young to think about that.

**ML:** We didn’t have any fears, at that time.

**JE:** Okay. So then did everybody say, “Well, Marilyn’s right, let’s do this”?

**ML:** Well, no, because my brother thought I was losing my mind. [laughing]

**JE:** And again his name?

**ML:** Calvin.

**JE:** Calvin.

**ML:** When you read Mom’s book, she’ll tell you, you know, Calvin—I don’t know if Calvin’s another but they voted to go downtown.

**JE:** So there was a vote then of everybody?

**ML:** Yes, everybody called their parents. We had transportation to go down to Katz Drug Store and that’s when it all began.

**JE:** This was August 19, 1958.

**ML:** Yes.

**JE:** Let me just say something about your mother again. She taught in Dunjee High School, big believer in education.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** What would she give you for Christmas?

**ML:** A book.

**JE:** [laughing] Other kids got toys and you got—[both laughing]. You saw her face when she had fear when you came home from a freedom rally.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Tell us what that incident was about.

**ML:** Well, I don’t know which one we’re talking about in particular because there were several—

**JE:** And you were driving and you had this car behind.

**ML:** Oh, see, you had to understand, we’ve had so many incidents I was just trying to get which one. You’re talking about the men in the pickup truck? I’ve been in a lot of situations but this one will never, ever leave my mind or my heart.

Mom noticed that this pickup was following us. And it started getting closer and closer behind us. And Mom said to us, when we got close to our house, “I’m not going home. I’m going to take you over to the Posey’s house.” Weldon Posey, who was Emma and Barbara Posey, Barbara was the spokesperson but their dad was a real big man. They lived off of 14th and Martin Luther King. Mom said, “When I turn this corner I am going to drive up

on the yard. And I'm going to be honking and honking. And I want you to run up there and holler as loud as you can and keep knocking on that door until they let you in."

The people kept getting close to us and you could see the weapons and stuff. As we were getting closer to the Posey's home, I said, "Well, Mom, where you going?"

She said, "Don't worry about me. I just need you to get out of the car and do what I'm telling you to do. Get out of the car, run, run as fast as you can and holler and scream and knock on that door."

"But, Mom, you can't go off and leave us like this."

Well, nevertheless, you don't argue with my mama. So we got out and ran up there and did what she told us. And she just drove on off.

**JE:** You ran as fast as you could and she took off as fast as she could?

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And you had to wonder then, didn't you—

**ML:** I wondered.

**JE:** ... if you're ever going to see your mother again.

**ML:** That's right.

**JE:** And you know, there were people in the black community who didn't want to be associated with her.

**ML:** That's right.

**JE:** Obviously, there were some on the white but I think at Dunjee High School, they asked a teacher to become principal. And he could be the principal—

**ML:** If he would fire Mom.

**JE:** ... if he would fire your mother?

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And he did not?

**ML:** Right.

**JE:** So as we talk about this lunch counter sit-ins it was many, many other things that she had faced.

**ML:** Oh, it was all around—

**JE:** And then—

**ML:** ... even in the churches. A lot of churches would not even let us meet there because of the bomb threats and stuff to the churches. And a lot of people were just scared.

**JE:** Before you went down to Katz Drug Store, in the months before that, she perhaps was preparing your minds for what was going to happen, preaching nonviolence?

**ML:** Mom was a history teacher, she loved history. We had to learn whether we wanted to or not. We had to study Gandhi. We mention to Gandhi to a lot of kids, they say, "Who you talking about?" But she believed in this theory of nonviolence, that the world could be changed if we worked together as one.

**JE:** Kids who are listening can look up Mahatma Gandhi and hear what he was talking about.

**ML:** You see, we had to do history lessons during the course of the sit-ins. They trained us like we were in the military.

**JE:** [laughs] Really?

**ML:** They'd say, "You can't go on to war and not know what you're fighting for." So we had to know about Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Boycott, we had to know. It was a list of rules that we had to abide by.

**JE:** By the way, I want to mention again here that we're recording this in the Oklahoma History Center. You're hearing some other sounds; you'll hear children coming by, but we wanted to do this right here in the setting of Clara Luper's memorabilia and a display to her and the lunch counter sit-ins.

## Chapter 05 - 3:28

### Katz Drug Store

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**John Erling:** It was determined to go down to Katz Drug Store on August 19, 1958. It was in the later part of the day, I believe, in the afternoon.

**Marilyn Luper:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Tell us about that.

**ML:** We just went in and sat down and told them that we wanted to get a Coke and a hamburger. They said they don't serve niggers.

**JE:** Your mother was talking to them probably then, Clara was talking to them.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** They said that to her, then what was her response?

**ML:** I didn't hear but knowing her, they were as determined not to serve us as she was determined that we were going to be served.

**JE:** She must have said then, "Well, we'll—

**ML:** "We'll just sit here and wait."

**JE:** "We'll just sit here."

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** You were already sitting at the counter?

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** "We'll just sit here and wait."

**ML:** Right.

**JE:** And I suppose they called the police?

**ML:** Oh, he called everybody.

**JE:** There were whites in Katz Drug Store.

**ML:** Yes.

**JE:** What did you hear from them?

**ML:** "What are you doing here?"

**JE:** You kids were so young, from your age—eight years old—up to fifteen.

**ML:** Right, I think Otis was.

**JE:** Do you recall being fearful?

**ML:** Uh-uh (negative).

**JE:** You knew you were just going to sit there?

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative). And keep my mouth closed.

**JE:** And then all around people are—

**ML:** Chaotic. The first night, everybody was taken by surprise. But as it progressed and it grew larger and larger, then a lot of things started happening. Hatred and bitterness started showing up.

**JE:** Wasn't that frightening to you kids?

**ML:** I had a chimpanzee thrown on me.

**JE:** You had a chimpanzee thrown on you?

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And that, of course, frightened you?

**ML:** Yes.

**JE:** And as a small girl, I don't know how big the chimpanzee was, probably almost as big as you?

**ML:** He threw it right on me. As we used to say, "If didn't kill you, it'll make you stronger," because during the sit-in movement, as it progressed and the bitterness progressed, people sitting on you, dropping coffee, kicking you, whatever, you learned that we're part of this army of nonviolence—no matter what. And the people that could not remain nonviolent, they were asked not to come back.

**JE:** There were those who joined you and they couldn't remain nonviolent, they'd speak out or speak back.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And they were asked to leave.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative). We could not afford to let them ruin the mission. We wanted to be able to go in and sit down and drink a Coke and eat that hamburger.

**JE:** So that first evening you stayed till they closed, is that true?

**ML:** Basically, basically.

**JE:** Because they didn't relent.

**ML:** Um-um (negative).

**JE:** So then you leave, people outside see you, I suppose, yelling at you?

**ML:** Not that much that first night, but it progressed.

**JE:** All right, what was the plan for the next day?

**ML:** You know, I've thought about that very often because I can't remember if we went back the weekend because I remember that was on a Monday. So Tuesday would have been a school night. Whatever it was, it kept going.

**JE:** It was definitely again another day.

**ML:** Yes.

**JE:** And then wasn't it the second day they finally said, "All right."

**ML:** No, it wasn't the second day.

**JE:** Okay, third or fourth day?

**ML:** It had happened one through two day, it took a little bit longer.

**JE:** Then they did finally serve you?

**ML:** As a matter of fact, when Katz Drug Store opened its doors to all people, and this is the story that most people don't realize, not only did they open their doors here but across the country they opened their doors to people of all races, creeds, and colors.

**JE:** I think they had thirty-eight outlets in—

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** ... Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa. And what you did there, those few days, opened it up.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** In those states.

## Chapter 06 - 5:00

### Arrested

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**Marilyn Luper:** During that time, downtown Oklahoma City was the busiest place you could ever go. And that was our battle zone.

**John Erling:** What was the attitude of the police? They were there to protect but did they show an attitude because they were white, I suppose?

**ML:** Yeah, we had very few blacks on the police forces during that time.

**JE:** Did you sense tension from them even though they were there to protect?

**ML:** Oklahoma City is very interesting, again, you have the bitter and the sweet. In most places, you have police that are kind and then you have some that are not kind. Even going to jail they were pretty good to us, I mean, they didn't try to abuse us or kick us or anything like that. They would throw us in the paddy wagons.

**JE:** Was there any time you were all arrested?

**ML:** We were arrested at Anamonts downtown. We were not arrested at Katz or Green's or John A. Brown's. As the demonstrations grew and grew throughout the years various places, even when we marched to Lawton, when we went to jail—

**JE:** What was that about, the march to Lawton?

**ML:** During that time blacks could not go into amusement parks or any place like that. We could pass by but we couldn't go in. Some places had a certain day of the week, like Oklahoma City, I think it was Thursdays that you could go into the zoo here.

**JE:** Was it only for blacks on Thursdays or was this for everybody?

**ML:** You had—other people could go but that was our day.

**JE:** So when you walked to Lawton, to that amusement park—

**ML:** It was Dodo Amusement Park.

**JE:** Did they open it up to you or what happened when you got there?

**ML:** Oh, we went to jail.

**JE:** Oh, they arrested you?

**ML:** Yeah, that was the time that we marched to Lawton from Oklahoma City. There was a lot of us. And then we went to Dodo Park and demonstrated and then they put us in jail. [laughs]

**JE:** If you, how long were you, an hour, two or three hours?

**ML:** Oh, it was a lot of processing time. [both laughing]

**JE:** And here you were young, twelve, fourteen, fifteen years old.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** But I suppose when you were in jail you didn't have any fear, everybody was with you.

**ML:** Right, I was not there by myself.

**JE:** And your mother was there too. Do you know how many times your mother was arrested?

**ML:** Arrested? Twenty-six.

**JE:** Twenty-six times. And then John A. Brown Department Store—

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** ... that was August 22 of '58, thirty-five students took part in that.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And you were part of that as well?

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative). One thing that I can remember, when we entered John A. Brown's to go the cafeteria, there were blacks shopping in there, in John A. Brown's. And they were shocked to see us, and they see us, they didn't know what was going on.

**JE:** They had a restaurant there at John A. Brown.

**ML:** Yes.

**JE:** That's where—

**ML:** You could spend your money, the same story.

**JE:** That's where you were headed to while these blacks were shopping

**ML:** Right, um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** They were, “Wow, what did they dare do, go to that restaurant?”

**ML:** And see, we were not loud, we were orderly, one behind the other. And we would take turns asking them if we could be served.

**JE:** Not all blacks supported you, did they?

**ML:** Of course not.

**JE:** And why wouldn't blacks support this cause?

**ML:** Because they were used to the system. Like many of us before we went the northern route. That's the way they thought that things were. See, you have to understand something, let me go back. What I didn't tell you is that for my mother and her sister to be educated, my grandmother, who was a maid, had to move out of her home and move to Nichols Hills to raise somebody else's kids in order for my mom and family to receive their education.

**JE:** Moved out of her house to a family in Nichols Hills? So your mother then was left without a mother? That's the kind of background you're talking about?

**ML:** Right. We learned a lot from those experiences and my mother was a dreamer like her father. She would tell us all the time, “When I go to school, I told the kids that my father was a pilot. They would laugh at me and they would say, ‘Clara Shepard, you know your daddy's not a pilot. They don't let black folks, they didn't say black during that time, ‘colored folks be pilots.’” She'd say, “Yes, they do.” Say, “I'm going to show you. What my daddy does, he piles bricks here, he piles bricks there.” She would always get a kick out of that.

She graduated out of Hoffman, Oklahoma, and she would say that she was in the top five of her class. But there was nothing but five in her class. [both laughing]

I always wondered, what gave her that incentive to work with kids as many years as she did.

**JE:** She didn't even have the best books, did she?

**ML:** Oh, no.

**JE:** In her school.

**ML:** Pages were missing.

**JE:** They were used textbooks.

**ML:** Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

**JE:** Because she was black.

**ML:** Right.

**JE:** So John A. Brown, that went on for many days, didn't it?

**ML:** Yeah, it went on.

**JE:** That took a while. I think it was Mrs. John A. Brown who asked to meet with your mother and the two of them actually became friends.

**ML:** Right. I remember when the zeta phi beta sorority honored Mom, Mrs. Brown sent the most beautiful flower you've ever seen, for Mom to wear.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound), what a victory.

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**Chapter 07 - 4:50****Clara Celebrated**

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**John Erling:** Could your mother celebrate a victory? Was she happy?

**Marilyn Luper:** You know, she was happy because we were making a difference. When an individual location would open up, I can't remember any massive celebration. And now that you mention it, you asked me have I ever seen her really celebrate, and the answer to that question is yes. And that's when President Obama was elected president of the United States.

She stood up, straight up out of that wheelchair and tears started running from her eyes, like I would figure that manna could rain down from heaven, I've never seen her so happy. So to answer your question, I know there's other times, but that time I'll remember as long as I live.

**JE:** The Skirvin Hotel protest and sit-ins.

**ML:** Oh, yes.

**JE:** Downtown Oklahoma City.

**ML:** Yes. We protested everywhere, Anamont, we've gone to jail from Anamont. We had a squat-in there. That's where that guy put the chimpanzee on me, at Anamont.

**JE:** You went on and on to all these places, Forum Cafeteria, Split Tea Restaurant in Nichols Hills, Bishop's Restaurant, all these places. Did you kids get tired of it?

**ML:** Oh, of course, of course we got tired, but we started seeing something that we'd never seen before. A lot of the signs started coming down, the colored signs and the white signs. We saw the change coming about. We used to say, "My feet are tired but my soul's happy."

**JE:** That had to make you feel really good inside.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** So now we're talking even into the early '60s and '64 was the Split Tea Restaurant—

**ML:** Right.

**JE:** ... and all. So it wasn't as if it happened in '58.

**ML:** Un-un (negative).

**JE:** It was, uh, four, five—

**ML:** It was continuous.

**JE:** ... six, seven years—

**ML:** It was a war.

**JE:** You were continuing a war?

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative). The war gets its justice, segregation, and discrimination.

**JE:** And by this time you're getting to be a teenager when you do this.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And that's when then you got attention, maybe, in school. They knew that you were participating.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And that's when you got some negatives.

**ML:** Well, no, they knew I was participating from Jump Street. But as you get older and people get older, by then in Oklahoma City, we did it from the boycotts, taking pictures, everything that we could to keep it going here.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**ML:** The reaction was just different. Some places they didn't even want us to come in their churches.

**JE:** Let's talk about the churches. Some supported you, some didn't. White churches, what about the white churches?

**ML:** Well, you know, white churches was segregated. The most segregated hour in Oklahoma was the eleven o'clock hour on Sunday morning. You couldn't even go into a white church. If you did, they had a special place, probably in the back, up in the balcony, in the dark.

**JE:** Where did you go to church?

**ML:** Fifth Street Baptist Church.

**JE:** And even some black churches were afraid to support you.

**ML:** Right.

**JE:** And why?

**ML:** Because they were afraid of the threats. We would get letters, we would get phone calls all night. We'd get people throwing stuff at our house.

**JE:** The KKK made their presence known.

**ML:** Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

**JE:** So these white churches, I have numbers here like seventeen of them welcomed them, two were segregated, one turned away.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Of the seventeen that welcomed them. And the whole movement grew to about 150 people.

**ML:** And more.

**JE:** Was that from recruiting or people just wanted to come in and join?

**ML:** Wanted to come in and join.

**JE:** But it wasn't all just blacks, it was whites too.

**ML:** Whites, blacks, Indians.

**JE:** First of all, they saw that it was working.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** So we want to be part of that.

**ML:** Right.

**JE:** Val Jeans.

**ML:** Val Jeans Restaurant.

**JE:** Your mother was caught by surprise when it desegregates while she was there with sixteen students, that—

**ML:** Right, and we didn't have no money to eat on.

**JE:** How did you pay for it then?

**ML:** We were sitting in line demonstrating and this young white lady, I didn't know the lady, paid for all the kids.

**JE:** That had to be impressive. Because you, as youngsters, could think that all whites were bad. Did you have that feeling?

**ML:** I didn't personally because I was not raised that way. I was not allowed to judge you by the coloration of your skin. I didn't have that opportunity.

**JE:** It goes both ways, doesn't it?

**ML:** Yes, uh-huh (affirmative). We were taught that there is good and bad in both races. You find the good in everybody and you are not to be judgmental of people. Because even during the midst of the city issue my mom would tell us they were trained like this. It's a thing that has gone through decades and decades of segregation and it takes time, patience, love, understanding. We had to do what was right to do. The Bible says that we have to love our neighbor as ourselves.

## Chapter 08 - 5:28

### Kerr and Heston

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**John Erling:** I'm sitting here wondering and I'm sure you did the same, what was it about your mother—somewhere she got this mission to break down walls. The book was *Behold the Walls*.

**Marilyn Luper:** Um-Hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And to be so tenacious. She was educated enough to do it. When the civil rights movement came along, it was really on the backs of what we call the small people.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Isn't that true?

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And the well-educated really didn't because they were afraid for their jobs.

**ML:** Right, they, that's right.

**JE:** But here your mother was a well-educated person and articulate.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative). Let me tell you something, as a child I told you that my mom was raised in Hoffman, Oklahoma, which is a very small community. Her brother became very, very, very, very sick. They took him to a hospital, and that hospital refused to treat him because of the fact that he was black.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**ML:** And her brother died. I would often wonder where she had that “take a lickin’ and keep on kickin’.” I could give you story among stories about her and the things that she went through as a child. But she had a deep belief, deep in her soul, a belief in God that you cannot touch. She would often teach us, “Keep trying, you’re going to make mistakes when you try. You don’t make a mistake just by sitting down. But when you get to the point that you make that mistake and you’re knocked down, make sure when you hit the ground, you hit that ground with your face up. Because if you hit it with your face up, you can get up.”

**JE:** [laughing]

**ML:** That’s what she would teach us.

**JE:** That’s great. Once again, we’re here in the Oklahoma History Center and the exhibit, which is dedicated to the sit-in demonstrations. Right next to us here is a mockup of Katz Drug Store and the stools that you sit in. So that when you look at that, that just brings back a lot of memories, doesn’t it?

**ML:** Right.

**JE:** The sounds you hear in this museum are those of people that are visiting. In her book, your mother writes, “Meeting with Robert Kerr and Mike Monroney to discuss civil rights bill.”

**ML:** She had the picture in her book meeting with them. The young people also had opportunity to meet with them.

**JE:** And Senator Kerr refused to vote for it.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And what was his reasoning?

**ML:** Remember, we’re in Oklahoma. Oklahoma has never been—they were what it is.

**JE:** He was opposed to the government interfering in private business matters.

**ML:** Right, um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And your mother writes, “I asked him about the black votes that he always received and the number of black votes that he consistently got, even when he was governor. And he said, ‘The blacks that worked for me were paid off. They worked for me, I paid them off, and I owe them nothing.’”

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** Wasn’t that awful strange to hear? Probably the most powerful senator that Oklahoma has ever, ever had. He walked—

**ML:** But he thought about us.

**JE:** Yeah. He walked with the powerful in Washington and that he would say that.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And your mother was shocked.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative), because, see, a lot of people had that faith in him because when he would come into the community you would think that he was solely interested in our community.

**JE:** So I guess he was there to get your vote.

**ML:** That's right.

**JE:** Actor Charlton Heston came here.

**ML:** Yes.

**JE:** Did you—

**ML:** Oh, yes! Over the years we've always remained friends. He came here to lead the demonstration along with Dr. West and Dr. Lifpot and some other doctors. It was funny because we were so proud of the fact that Moses was coming to Oklahoma. [both laughing] Moses was coming to lead the march and it was some march.

**JE:** Right.

**ML:** It was some march. He was one of the nicest people you ever wanted to meet. We lived on 1819 Northeast Park, here in Oklahoma City, which is not far from Douglas High School. We lived in a two-bedroom house where the bathroom was in between two bedrooms. We had a living room, a dining room, and a kitchen. And he and his wife came to our house and stayed a long time with us.

As a matter of fact, he had a camera with him that cost more than a house. [both laughing] When they left and flew back, he left the camera there and we had to send it to him.

A few years ago in Oklahoma at the Caball Hall of Fame, Charlton Heston was honored. His family, his wife, and daughter and Tom Sellers invited us to sit at his table with him.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**ML:** And he would always send Mom notes and stuff that that was one of the most meaningful experiences that he ever had. He didn't just come in to the march and leave.

**JE:** He lived with you.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And his spirit stayed, right. Remember his great voice?

**ML:** I loved it, I loved it.

**JE:** Yeah. Well, that's nice to hear about him. It wasn't just to march and get out of there. He stayed in your home.

**ML:** Well, he didn't just come in, no, he didn't stay with us, we didn't have enough room for him to stay there.

**JE:** Okay.

**ML:** [laughing] We were allowed an opportunity to talk to Moses.

**JE:** Yes. [both laughing]

**ML:** And a lot of the kids, I mean, God, you talk about popular. “Hey,” a lot of the kids had a chance to meet him and he was pleasant to all of them.

**JE:** Moses—

**ML:** And thanked them.

**JE:** ... Moses led people through the wilderness. He was leading through this wilderness of segregation—

**ML:** [laughing] Right.

**JE:** ... that we have right here in Oklahoma.

**ML:** You know what? He was very appreciative to the young people here for taking up the cause against injustice.

**JE:** Well, that’s remarkable because he sure didn’t have to do that at all.

## **Chapter 09 - 7:00**

### **March on Washington**

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**John Erling:** The march on Washington for jobs and freedom, did you go to that?

**Marilyn Luper:** Yes, I did.

**JE:** Well, now you’re going to have to tell me about that because that happened. Headed to Washington, August 27, 1963.

**ML:** Right.

**JE:** This is when Martin Luther King Jr.—

**ML:** I have a dream.

**JE:** ... I have a dream. Talk to me about being there. And how close you were and how you heard him and all that.

**ML:** I have never, ever seen so many people in my life. I’ve never, ever seen so many buses in my life. People from all races, creeds, and colors, all religious background, name it, they were at the march to Washington. It was an experience that if you live a lifetime, if you missed it you would never be able to recapture it. Because it seemed like that everybody that was coming to Washington at that time was there for a given purpose. And a given purpose was to make America a better place to live.

**JE:** You didn’t know that he was going to make the biggest speech of his life.

**ML:** Of course not.

**JE:** Nobody knew that.

**ML:** Un-un (negative).

**JE:** But you there for, as it said, the march on Washington for jobs and freedom. How did you get there?

**ML:** We took buses from Oklahoma City.

**JE:** Who paid for that?

**ML:** We raised money. We would sell pickles and whatever to—catfish and hot dogs.

**JE:** Where did you stay when you got there?

**ML:** You know what? I don't remember. I really don't remember where we stayed at. I don't think we spent the night. It had to be outside DC, because DC was so crowded during that time.

**JE:** There were about 250 thousand participated?

**ML:** Yes.

**JE:** Can you hear Martin Luther King speaking to you right now as you think about that?

**ML:** Oh, yes. He was so young and articulate that he captivated the minds and struggles of some of the people that you knew from other states that were freshly out of jail. He was talking to all of us, "Don't give up. Don't give up the dream of freedom."

**JE:** He said, "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation [both reciting at same time from here] where they will not be—

**ML:** Judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

**JE:** "I have a dream."

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** How close do you think we are to that today? Or how far are we from it today?

**ML:** We're closer than we were as a nation, but we're not close enough. My theory about this is real simple. We made progress as a nation, and thank God for affirmative action, because many of us who had key positions in industry or whatever, as minorities, would never have had that opportunity unless they were forced somehow to do so. Although you were educationally equipped to compete, you were immediately put out and judged before you could get in the door because you're black. So it's hard to compete in a race when you start in the back forty.

**JE:** Right.

**ML:** In America we've made a lot of progress. And then when we put the president in everything was cool. Now this is a Marilynism, I'm going to tell you, now this is a Marilynism: All at once America went to bed, they went to sleep. They woke up and they had a black president and things started changing back again.

**JE:** There was resentment to having a black president.

**ML:** Yes. Let me tell you something, I get involved in these news stories and stuff and I can remember they said that when President Obama was elected that he had four representatives that got together in Washington. Said, "Anything that he brings to us, we're going to slap it away." And one of them was from the state of Oklahoma.

**JE:** Which one was that?

**ML:** I don't, I don't know, you have to do your research. [laughs] That's what you dealt with from day one.

**JE:** Well, the leader of the senate was Mitch McConnell and he was one of them.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** He was the one who spoke it. But you do know there was a representative from Oklahoma that was in that meeting is what you're saying.

**ML:** Yes, um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And you don't want to state who that was right now. Don't you think that this strife between blacks and whites, but also between Jews and Palestinians, and Hispanics, they have their fights and so on, it will go on to the end of the earth.

**ML:** I have another theory. I think that everyone in America should be tested.

**JE:** How do you mean?

**ML:** Because according to the Constitution, if you have a drop of black blood in you, you're black. [laughs]

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**ML:** There's so much intermingling in America that you'd be surprised who's black. No kidding.

**JE:** Right.

**ML:** And I say we're fussing about nothing because all of us are basically the same thing. I have the same dream for my children as you have for your children.

**JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**ML:** I have the same quest and a desire for education as you have for yourself. The only difference, the only real difference in us, it may be financially—I'm broke—but, but it's the color of our skin. We're very similar as people. You bleed, I bleed.

I look back and I think about my grandfather who fought in the war. Never had an opportunity, never, to sleep in a hotel. Never had an opportunity to eat in a restaurant. Never had an opportunity to go to college, but was injured in the war and came back and was mistreated at VA.

Oh, it could be bitterness in this country, it could be there are bigots, and whatever, but until we honestly say that this thing is bigger than all of us, you have no choice but to love me—if you're a Christian. That's what the Bible says. We have to work together. Either we're going to work together hand in hand, because we're in the same old boat, or we're going to sink together.

**JE:** So again, don't you think this is going to be an ongoing thing?

**ML:** No.

**JE:** Oh? You think that eventually ...?

**ML:** No, eventually all things must change. Most people thought that slavery would never go away.

**JE:** Your grandfather fought in World War I, was it?

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative). My father fought in World War II.

**JE:** Now today, we have Ferguson, Missouri, there was major demonstrations there. We have "Black Lives Matter."

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** It was a group that was organized within the last year or so. We're in 2016 now, so it continues to point out the tension and the unrest between blacks and whites.

**ML:** Well, there will always be tension and unrest in any community. Even here in Oklahoma City where all the black women were raped by the policeman here, that's an insult to humanity that that many women could be raped by one man who was carrying a badge.

**JE:** And that happened in 2014 or '15. We point that out to show you—

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative). Yeah, that's here lately.

**JE:** Right.

**ML:** He was just sentenced. But the good people in this country are going to have to speak up. And the people that were active that were my age and getting ready to retire and all that, we remain in solitude and just say, "Well, let somebody else pull this wagon, I'm tired."

## Chapter 10 - 5:40

### Allstate Insurance

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**John Erling:** What did you end up doing, out of school?

**Marilyn Luper:** I was the first woman that Allstate hired in Oklahoma. I worked there for almost thirty-eight years.

**JE:** The insurance company, Allstate?

**ML:** Yes, I was the insurance agent.

**JE:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**ML:** There were three hundred and some white men and me. Hey! No, I'm just ... [laughing]

**JE:** Well, that was quite a deal, wasn't it? And what year?

**ML:** During that time, 1974.

**JE:** They hired you? I mean, not only were you black but you were a woman. You were crossing two barriers.

**ML:** Well, let me tell, let me tell you an interesting story. Our family just didn't have money and when I got the job with Allstate I went and got me a suit from the thrift store and got it cleaned all sharper than Peter Green.

I walked into Sears, had my swag on, and this man who was twice as big as I am that was Allstate agent, came up to me and said, "Are you Marilyn?"

Well, there wasn't nobody beside so I just said, "Yes I am."

He said, "Are you Marilyn Luper?"

I said, "Yes sir, I sure am." I thought he was my greeting team. Hey, your welcome wagon. And he said, "I need you to turn around and go home."

I said, "You need me to turn around and go home?"

He said, "Yes, we don't want you here."

I said, "You don't want me here," and I'm looking around and seeing who else he could be talking to.

He said, "Let me explain something to you, girl, we don't want you here for three reasons. First off, you're a woman, you need to go home and have some babies. The second reason you need to go home is because you're black."

And I said, "No kidding." That didn't go well.

"And the third reason you need to go home, you need to go home because you're a Luper."

Now that pissed me off. I looked at him, much bigger and taller than I was, I looked at him and I thought about all the things that we'd gone through here, all the coffee spills, all the spitting in my face, that chimpanzee, all the jail time. I said, "Mister, I don't give a damn whether you like me or not because I'm not here on a popularity contest. I'm here because they hired me to come here. And I'm not going anyplace. And I'm not scared of you."

The man said, "This woman is crazy."

But as the years went on, he ended up leaving the company, but we became friends.

**JE:** You came in because you had already been hired.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And he was telling you to get out.

**ML:** Well, get out, they didn't want me there, they didn't have no women working.

**JE:** You hit something key there, you said you became friends. How in the world did that come about?

**ML:** Because, A, you might as well like me. I don't have any reason for you to dislike me.

**JE:** Yeah, but I bet I can brag on you, you were a performer, you had a results, you made the company money.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** And they saw what this woman, this black woman, and this Luper woman has done, and they said, "Oh, I get it, doesn't make any difference." Is that true?

**ML:** They started hiring and they still hiring from then. But they were not hiring any women

when I went to work for them.

**JE:** But then that opened up too, didn't it?

**ML:** Yes, um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** So look what you did there, and it was performance based—

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** ... because if you hadn't worked out, they wouldn't have had hired a woman for a long time, probably, or black, for sure.

**ML:** And see, nothing, see, I'm used to rejection. I figure if I ask you enough you're going to give me what I want. Because I'm going to hang in there until I get it. And selling insurance is just like that. You don't want to buy from me? Then I go over here and ask her, ask her. I just keep on trying until I make it.

**JE:** Well, it worked well for you because you had been rejected from consciousness—

**ML:** All my life.

**JE:** ... all your life, so being rejected about selling insurance was not a big deal.

**ML:** No big deal, um-um (negative).

**JE:** And so there was your mother in all that.

**ML:** Yes.

**JE:** There was your mother.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative). And when I would run into situations that seemed so difficult for me, I called her and started, "Mama, blah, blah, blah."

And you know what my mother told me? "Go to the hardware store, Marilyn, and get you some tough skin. Goodbye." [both laughing] End of conversation, get some tough skin, you being well, life is hard and life is not fair, deal with it.

**JE:** Yeah, yeah. At some point as we get older, we think about our parents. And then particularly you, you think, *How blessed I was to be the daughter of this wonderful woman.*

**ML:** You know what? You're absolutely right. I was in Chicago, I think, at a leadership conference when Martin Luther King was killed. And the NACP flew the youth leaders that were there at the conference down to Memphis.

When we got into Memphis I thought it was some type of organization because everybody had these white things around their head. That was after the riot down there that had happened the night he died. We went down there and our purpose for being there was to bring some peace and calm to the community, going into the neighborhoods and talk to the people in the area.

From there, we all went to Atlanta to the funeral. Well, my mom was there. But I never did see her. She was at King's funeral, I didn't see her then, I saw her when everybody was came back to Oklahoma. But when you said that it reminded me, all the opportunities that I've had to participate in some of the biggest marches and demonstrations in history.

Never would have happened if she had not been my mother.

**JE:** Right. Robert Kennedy was there that night and he spoke to the crowd to help quiet—

**ML:** Quiet them.

**JE:** ... and settle them down. But you're right—

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** ... those things would never have happened if it wasn't for her. All of us have parents that shaped our lives. But you're sitting here today, we're speaking to you because of your mother.

**ML:** That's right, you're absolutely correct.

## Chapter 11 - 4:50

### How to Remember Demonstrations

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**Marilyn Luper:** And let me tell you something else you don't know. She taught school for so many years, and she was a better teacher than she was a civil rights person.

**John Erling:** Hmm (thoughtful sound).

**ML:** She made history interesting to her students, where she would set up the classroom like it was the House of Representatives. Each class had a president, etc., etc. So when they got through with her history course they knew how the United States was run and their job, etc.

When Mom first got sick, they set up a conference telephone call where 275 of her students were on the telephone at one time. I didn't think that was humanly possible, but they wanted to just say thanks. It didn't matter who they were, she was hard on them and hard on us too. You had to learn how to read and you had to learn how to spell. Because if you didn't know how to spell, you couldn't eat it. So if you couldn't spell hamburger, you wasn't going to eat no hamburger. You'd be surprised what you can learn how to spell [both laughing].

**JE:** That's great. How would you like these sit-in demonstrations to be remembered by today's youth? African American youth, white youth, what would be their takeaway?

**ML:** What would I like for the young people to take away today? You can make a difference. It doesn't matter your age, because we were young. It doesn't matter your religious background or anything else. If you want to stand up for something, if you see injustice, fight against it, don't be a wimp.

What bothers me is that with all the electronic devices that we have that young people don't know their history. And that's a danger to this country. If you don't know your history, then what do you know? Anybody can pull anything off on them and you're

going to accept it. Go back and read where we've come from. Go back and read about the Holocaust and the problems that other people have gone through and where they get their courage to hang in there. I want them to get some guts. And they can look back and see young people throughout the ages that have stood up for something.

**JE:** Well, your mother was speaking through you right now.

**ML:** [laughing]

**JE:** You've said a lot. Is there anything that you can think of that we haven't covered?

**ML:** [laughing] Oh, let me see. Yes, I have. The police chief right up here, I am really sorry but I can't think of his name right this minute.

**JE:** Was he the police chief of Oklahoma City?

**ML:** He wasn't police chief at that time but he was way up in the division. And worked with us. I can't remember his name right now, but when he died, his wife came over to my mom's house and brought Mom a box that he had saved for her with things from the police department that he wanted her to have. See, that's why we didn't have violence here in Oklahoma. We often wondered why didn't we have a lot of violence? Because we had people working together. Some, I say undercover or whatever, everybody wanted to see a change come about but they didn't know how to bring about this change. But this was the longest nonviolent demonstration in the history of America—the sit-ins.

**JE:** And over five or six years.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative), nonviolent.

**JE:** In 2016, we've seen demonstrations, 2015, that became very, very violent.

**ML:** Um-hmm (affirmative).

**JE:** But here, when you were overthrowing years and years and years of prejudice, the state of Oklahoma did not have violent demonstrations.

**ML:** Um-um (negative).

**JE:** Yeah, that's good. The state of Oklahoma in 1907, had a segregationist constitution. Black students could not go to white public schools, and that's why we have the story of Ada Lois, if you will, Fisher, and others. So we want those kids to know that all these people did for us what we can do today.

**ML:** And they must realize and understand that those students down at OU didn't just get to OU. They're standing on the backs of blood, sweat, and tears of people that paid the price so that they can be there. And they have a responsibility, a responsibility that other young kids coming up in this nation to tell the story. Because we have to be able to celebrate ourselves, make people feel good about where they've come. Because if they don't understand where they've come from, then they cannot understand where they're going.

**JE:** Right. Well, I want to thank you, Marilyn, this was very wonderful. Thanks for sharing this

story. And thank your mother, would you please?

**ML:** I will.

**JE:** All right.

**ML:** I miss her a lot too.

**JE:** Yeah.

## **Chapter 12 - 0:33**

### **Conclusion**

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**Announcer:** This oral history presentation is made possible through the support of our generous foundation-funders. We encourage you to join them by making your donation, which will allow us to record future stories. Students, teachers, and librarians are using this website for research and the general public is listening every day to these great Oklahomans share their life experience.

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