

Interview Transcript: Lois Reynolds and Michael Klindt

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Michael [00:00:00]

This is Michael K Media hosting Springfield History Museum Illumination Project. Today I have the honor of speaking with Lois Reynolds. How are you doing, Mrs. Reynolds?

Lois [00:00:16]

Fine, thank you.

Michael [00:00:17]

It is a pleasure to have you.

Lois [00:00:18]

It's good to be here.

Michael [00:00:21]

Can I first just ask, what's your origin story in Springfield, Oregon? When did you first come to Springfield and what brought you here?

Lois [00:00:34]

It brought me here because we were able to purchase a home and, you know, within this area and so forth, get a real good deal on a house. And so it brought us out of, Eugene. My dad had moved from Vancouver, Washington, and we had moved here. And he of course, worked at Southern Pacific. And during the course of the time, he was able to get all... Almost all of us children a job there at the different times. And so we were very fortunate.

Michael [00:01:13]

What, what year was that that you came to, to Springfield?

Lois [00:01:19]

Springfield? About what? 73... About 73. 74, within that time. So...

Michael [00:01:37]

Could you paint a little bit of a picture of what Springfield was like during that time?

Lois [00:01:45]

A lot similar to what it is now. You know, it was just a little small town. Had a hometown feeling, in a way. I didn't realize we'd run into some of the problems that we did after we moved here. Had always kind of heard negative things about Springfield, you know. And I... Eugene, I don't think was a whole lot better. Cause we lived in a bad area out in Eugene on West 11th, and you probably heard of that. And the West 11th area was not good, the area that we lived in was not a good area. So we came here with the hope of being able to own property instead of renting. And that worked out pretty good. Kind of real good, good deal on housing. And I remember when we first moved here, I told the kids, I said, you won't have to move again. This is our home. And so we had been moving from, you know, place to place, because later I found out that when you have several children, sometime people don't want to rent to you because of the number in your family, and then because of the color of your skin. A lot of people had negative ideas about us because we were of color, but we didn't let that faze us. We decided, hey, we're getting a good deal on the house and we're gonna' move to this area, and go from there, so...

Michael [00:03:48:15]

Do you do you know of any other Black families that owned homes in Springfield at that time?

Lois [00:03:59]

The Claytons. And they were here long before we were. And they had several children. Clarence and Cleo and so... Real, real good. In fact, some of their children are in the area now, at least one or two that I know of. And I think the others moved and went to different places.

Michael [00:04:29:03]

Did you did you have a chance to fellowship at all with them while you were here?

Lois [00:04:34]

Oh yeah. We went to the same church, and the church was a big motivator, you know, for - I would say the Black community, and Pastor Arthur Shankel. And he turned out to be one of the leading Black clergymen in the area. So, we were in the Glenwood area, and had a church there for years until he bought property on West 11th and built the beautiful edifice there. So that's where we are till this day. And Quinton (her son) is the pastor at the church on West 11th. So it's been, been really good.

Michael [00:05:34]

So it started in Glenwood. And for the folks who don't know what's the name of the church?

Lois [00:05:39]

Bethel Temple. Bethel Temple Church of God in Christ.

Michael [00:05:44]

And so that church is, would you say, an anchor for the Black community in Eugene Springfield?

Lois [00:05:54]

Not anymore. It was for several years. But when Pastor Shankel passed away, the church people went different ways and went to different areas and different churches. And so, they all at first said, said, we're going to be unified. Didn't work out that way, but we still stuck together. Those that would, and mostly my family and others that stayed and there are a few... And in fact, Pastor Shankel's daughter, Michelle, and her husband, Sam Brown, they stayed with the church, never left. But there were others that said they were going to, but decided they would do their own thing. You know, once the church you know, split up with the death of our pastor and then his wife.

Michael [00:07:04]

You had mentioned that you had heard things about, or that there was it was known that there were some issues with being Black in Eugene Springfield and at that time and that you maybe had noticed some, some problems or some issues. What might... What might have been some of those issues back then for being Black in Eugene Springfield?

Lois [00:07:31]

Well, it was kind of you know, I was able to get on. Like I said, at Southern Pacific, and had a good job there and didn't run into a lot of racism. I think the racism mostly was my children in school. They ran into different issues. And I remember one year my husband and I decided since we had nine kids. I'm a mother of nine. And the paper had offered them, you know, the fact that they could go to Disneyland depending on if they would stick out the whole year delivering papers, and we knew we couldn't afford to send them to Disneyland. So, my husband and I took his pickup and loaded up with the papers and we went with the, Quinton, from door to door and delivered the papers, you know, and got his trip to Disneyland. Which from what I understand, he thoroughly had a good time there. But as far as out and out issues, now they had their issues, like I say, with the school and with the paper delivery, and they tell me some things that I'm becoming aware of even now. And they'll say, "Mom, did, you know", I... I say really? You know? And my youngest daughter was quite a defender. Oh, my goodness. She was quite a defender. And if anyone did anything to her, they better be ready to counter... She was read the counter attack and defend herself and defend her friends. And so, she's always been the spicy one, the one that... And all of them kind of, you know, took up for themselves. So, I really didn't have to... Every now and then I had to come to the school. They would come and say, "Mrs. Reynolds, I'm having a problem with...", this one or that one. (Incomprehensible) mostly my younger kids and I said, okay, I'll be right there. Come down and talk to 'em. And I particularly remember an incident, I really don't call it racist, but one of the vice principals, he

told me, he said, "You know, your daughter", he said, "I gave her a pink slip for something she had did, and she took it and balled it up and threw it across the room." I said, okay. And so, I said, you know, I think the problem is she has all the older kids. She's the youngest of all of 'em, and she feels she feels like she has to be on the defense, and she that has to stand up for herself. And if she feels she was given the pink slip unjustly, she's got to try and defend herself. And I never will forget. His answer to me was, "You know, I never had looked that way. And that's a possibility." And so, he took another look at it. So, I had to rescue her several, several times. But all in all, the experience was pretty good, you know, considering. I worked at the time of my working years, I worked sometimes would be on the night shift so I could go 'cause all my kids were involved in sports of some kind. And so, I said, okay, only way I'm gone get to see them play or anything, I'll have to take the night shift, come home, sleep. And then, you know, go to some of their games. And that worked out pretty good.

Marcus [00:12:02]

Did you notice a difference between at Vancouver and Springfield?

Lois [00:12:09]

Between Van... Vancouver was a whole lot different. In Vancouver, we had they had government housing and we had a very nice home there. Very nice house, three- or four-bedroom home. I never will forget it. Hardwood floors, and they were just really nice. And then we came to Eugene and we were in a two-bedroom house. And my mom and dad had ten kids and we were sleepin' some in the attic, and some - you know, on the ground level. So we... It was just kids everywhere. But yet and still... And we were poor, but, you know, when you got a lot of family around, sometimes you don't realize how poor you really are. We just had fun and didn't realize, you know, like in Vancouver we had running water course and the house and what have you. When we came to Eugene, there was no running water and there was not even outside, you know, where you could run water out of the faucet, outside bathrooms. It was totally different. So, there was quite a difference and it was very noticeable. And we dealt with it because we didn't have any choice.

Michael [00:13:48]

So then did you more like half to leave Vancouver or did your family see that there were some opportunities and, and Eugene Springfield.

Lois [00:14:00]

Well, my dad felt that he could save money, come to Eugene and be close to where he worked because he would commute, you know, from Eugene, from Oregon, to Vancouver. So, it was not a must, whereas we were forced or anything. But just that he felt that he it would be more economical if he could work and be close to his job and so forth, and save money and of course, there was quite a difference. Oh, my goodness. And my mother would just say... And I... I remember her telling my dad, "You said we were going to be here for only a few months." We ended up being there for years, I think. And I think I think my kids were much more fortunate than we had been because when we moved over here (Springfield), it took us off of, well... We stayed in several houses, rented quite a bit over in the Eugene area. But when we got to

Springfield for the first time, we owned our home and had a big house and big yard and, you know?

Michael [00:15:37]

Running water. (Laughs)

Lois [00:15:38]

Running water. Indoor toilets. (Laughs) So it made quite the difference. And we were, you know, very happy with that part of it but then of course, you go run after racism. I mean, I think that's I don't care where you live. I think you gonna' to run into some form of racism. I don't care how they say we/re not racist or this, that and the other. We had one neighbor that we're still friends with. I, you know, to this day. And him and my husband were very good friends. And when my... Even after my husband passed away, I remember specifically one day I was standing out in the yard and I was just waving the hi and how are you doing? Okay. Yeah. And he said, "You'll never have to worry about anything as long as I'm here, I'll be here, and I'm going to see that everything goes well for you." And he's a good friend until to this day.

Michael [00:16:58]

Nice... Did any of your children graduate from Springfield High School?

Lois [00:17:03]

All of them.

Michael [00:17:05]

All nine?

Lois [00:17:06]

Yeah, I think all nine of them, through the middle school, through the... In fact, when we moved here, my oldest son, Quinton, was in about the second or third grade. And so from then on, all nine of them, boom boom boom, came on through Springfield Middle School, through the grade school, the middle school, and on through high school. And made some memories, I'm sure that they'll never forget.

Michael [00:17:40]

I heard a rumor and I have no idea if it's true or not. It might just be a fairy tale. But somebody told me that one of the kids was able to jump up and touch the back of the backboard on a basketball hoop. Do you know if that's true?

Lois [00:17:58]

It probably was 'cause all my boys are real tall and I have one that's six, nine and one that... And, and then Quinton was tall, and then one that had surgery that was not able to... He didn't

play, the school sports. But he coached... A team. And I think his little team that he coached, they took the championship. And then my Keith and he went to the U of O for a little bit. And so, they were... They made a name for themselves and my 3 daughters, three of my 5 daughters, they were known as the awesome trio. And they went all the way to the championship each game, and just about won (laughs). But they didn't quite make it. But they were tremendous. We had a lot of fun going to their games and my husband made sure that I went "Lois come on, we got to go watch these kids play." You know, and so forth. He was very adamant that we support them and they'll say to this day, "Look, none of us went to jail. None of us, did this, that, or the other" Dad tried to be kind of rough, but kept us in line, you know. So that's something that you can kind of treasure.

Michael [00:19:46]

And since this is for the Springfield History Museum, so we're capturing history. Do you mind sharing the name of your nine children?

Lois [00:19:57]

Not at all. You mean stating from the older? Quinton? Okay. Quinton was my oldest child and then I had a daughter. Well, I'll give you all the boys, Quentin(sp), Neil(sp), Patrick(sp) and Keith(sp). And then there was Audrey(sp), Kim - and Kimberly(sp). She was outstanding, she really... and Audrey(sp) set a record in hurdles that hadn't been broken until recently. And she's not a kid anymore, but she was very good. And then it was Audrey and Kim was the student body president and and the princesses for, I forget what it was. But when they had to go around the track, she, she was one of the ones that had a crown on. So, they did some things that made us very proud. But. Kim And then there was Rebecca(sp), Janice(sp) and Deborah(sp). And right now, Deborah(sp) works with the governor of the state of Oregon. So, I see we have been so proud of her and her accomplishments. She's stuck right on in there. Quentin has his own insurance office, he's an agent. I told my son; I don't think my name in that... (laughs) I don't want any retaliatory... But just some very pleasant things. You know. But that was the nine of them.

Michael [00:21:51]

It's my understanding that Deborah was also an educator in Springfield.

Lois [00:21:56]

Right. She was principal of several of the schools, grade school, junior high. I don't know about junior high. I take that back. But of the grade schools in different areas. And she did that for quite some time until she got pulled into work with... One of her mentors was a gentleman that worked at the Capitol, I think, and he really helped her. To just pull her up. And next thing I knew, she was working with the governor and the, the newly elected governor. And she recently... She got our house painted white, and I said what are you trying to do prepare for the White House? (Laughs) And she said, "You're right mamma!" (laughs).

Michael [00:22:56]

Yeah, let's hope so. Right?

Lois [00:22:57]

Oh, I hope so! (laughs)

Michael [00:22:58]

So I mean, it sounds like from, you know, there... There haven't been a whole lot of Black families to have laid roots in Springfield. But it sounds like for your family who did lay roots in Springfield, that you've left quite the legacy.

Lois [00:23:19]

Yes.

Michael [00:23:21]

So, I'm really glad that we get to... That we get to capture it. Capture that story.

Lois [00:23:26]

Well, I'm glad you're interviewing me. And I get to tell you a little bit about it.

Michael [00:23:33]

What are some of your most impactful memories in Springfield? Like some of the things you'll just always remember?

Lois [00:23:43]

I'll always remember that we lived in... Just kind of the houses were like, you know, kind of close together. And we lived close to two policemen that turned out to be good friends. And so, I went to the funeral of one of them, and after the funeral I said I always felt safe because I knew I had a police officer on this side of my house and I have one on that side of my house. And they were pretty good, pretty good people.

Michael [00:24:19]

I talked to another gentleman for this project who said that back in those times the police were from the community, so they had a... There was a different sense of the way that they kind of looked out for people around here. Well, I think maybe as a whole, but there was also a lot of I wouldn't say stop and frisk, but there was a lot of things that happened that we knew that was just kind of um... Directed. You know, maybe at you because you were Black, or this... and I remember some of my nieces... Relatives came from Eugene just to visit. And a car full of Caucasians, you know... Chased them and ran after them. And there were incidents that happened again - that tell you that was directly related to race, you know, and a lot of racism. And my husband was in the garage, he was very friendly, very... He was sit there and wave at

everybody you know, and they went by name calling, you know? So I just said, oh, oh well, you just gonna meet those kind of people I don't care where you go. And if somebody that don't like you just because of the color you are... So um... You learn to deal with it.

Michael [00:26:01]

Would you say that for the most part, it has gotten better?

Lois [00:26:06]

I would say yes. For the most part, it's gotten better. And a lot of people have... That did give you a lot of problems have passed away... And the new generation and so forth... And I don't bother family. They don't bother me. So it has not been... I can't say it's been unpleasant, but some of the different scenarios have been. But you learn to deal with it and you learn to live and say, look, I'm not gonna'... Like some of my friends move their kids from one school to the other to escape racism. I said, no... I'm not moving mine. I am going to let them deal with it. I'll help all that I can, and try to help them to deal with this situation, not run away from it. So...

Michael [00:27:15]

What... What sort of message might you have for the young people today?

Lois [00:27:27]

Treat everybody right. And I think if we did that Black, white, whatever and treat people as people and not try to judge persons by the color of their skin. And I found out... This is for me, and everybody may not agree, but being in the church makes all the difference in the world because you're actually taught the principles. You know, that's what it's all about, is treating people as people and not looking down on anyone because of their situation or because of their color and not yourself. Because you find some Black people are racist, too. You know, they have issues. And so, I say treat people as people, learn to love people for who they are. And we've got laws that will, you know... If you can't handle an issue, you know, there are laws and are people that handle those laws that a lot of times are in a position where they can be influential you know, toward the person that may have did you harm or what have you. But most of all, I think has been kind of a pleasant well... Not a bad experience. I learned to just deal with people as people. So I was saying love people for who they are, you know, not for color or anything.

Michael [00:29:18]

In terms of the Black community around here. What are some things that you'd like to see develop within the Black community here?

Lois [00:29:28]

More... since I have been, you know, somewhat disabled. It's kind of hard to, you know, get out and to mingle a lot in the community, but maybe just to fellowship more. We just had a big family reunion put on by the Reynolds, you know, family. And like some of my relatives that live over in the Eugene area. Edward for one... Who doesn't know Edward? He has been very... He owned a restaurant for a while and just got involved in a lot of things. But I think just uh... Loving one another. There was a time, I think, when we were kind of more or less taught to almost ostracize one another, which is bad, very bad. So I think I would like to see more commitment. I wouldn't say separate. We're not in the deep, deep South, but sometimes, you know, you might think hey.... Some thing are taking you back a little bit. But I think just I would just like to see more communication. And most of the time you're associating with those that you know and those that you have grown up with. And like we have another Black church out on West 11th, way out on West 11th - St. Mark. Probably have... Well, that's where Mattie Reynolds went to and Mrs. Mimms all of 'em went to the church out there. And they were just telling me that not long ago my father in law, Sam Reynolds, they did a bus stop in the city bus line and... And made a bench. They used to call him cigar smoke and Sam, and someone defaced the property. So, there have been things that have been done. So just, I think sticking together, coming together. And not only... I think most of Saint Mark's is Caucasian and a lot of, you know, Caucasian churches. Ours is mostly Black. And just the few, you know, that will come and intermingle. So it's just the coming together, loving one another and helping wherever you can. So, I can't specifically put my finger on, you know, what would be a good way other than just to care for one another. And then not only one another, but whoever you see that may have a problem that you can help solve the problem, whatever.

Marcus [00:32:58]

So when you first moved here, is there anything that you can recall that you fell in love with? Like you moved here and were like, wow, this is I really love this aspect of this area the you move to. Like maybe it might be a restaurant, or was it the mountains, or rivers. (Incomprehensible) particularly when you moved here?

Lois [00:33:27]

Now... I'm sorry, tell me that again.

Michael [00:33:30]

Yeah. So, like, he was asking if there was anything in particular that you fell in love with around here that when you moved here.

Lois [00:33:40]

Not really. Because first of all, you're trying to get to know your neighborhood and know the people around you, and know how they're going to react to your being there. I know when we first moved there, the guy right across the street from us, he said, "There goes the

neighborhood!" So we said, mmm. But my husband was very wanting to kind of get things done and make improvements on the house if there need be anything we needed to do. And so he proved a lot of people wrong. But I remember the one gentleman making that comment, that had other words, he thought we were going to be the reason for the neighborhood going downhill. Proved him so wrong. And one lady in particular and had a dispute with one of my kids about one of my sons love these fish, all kinds of fish. And he had a huge tank and he had taken his fish one time and transferring them over to her house. And they got into a dispute, and she had taken a petition and went around the neighborhood to get us out of the neighborhood. You know? And the one policeman friend, he just took the papers... She was trying to get people to sign it and what have you. And he just took the papers, joop (makes a tearing motion). Tore it into, you know... And so we heard about it later. Didn't try to retaliate or anything just said well... Yeah. Then later on, her son asked if she could ride to church with me. I said sure, come on. What kind of Christian could I be if I want to take you? (Laughs) But there was no particular place I fell in love with, 'cause we were... When we first got to the Springfield area, just trying to find our way around and see who was friendly, who was not, and this that and the other. And it all in the end, worked out pretty good.

Michael [00:36:21]

Did it look... Did it look a lot different around here than it did then?

Lois [00:36:26]

Not really. Very similar to, you know, being in the same area and a lot of people I take people on an individual basis. I remember I was working at the railroad at Southern Pacific, and my daughter, my oldest daughter, had to stay after school and this man in the car chased her... Tried to catch her. She was on her bicycle and I was working. And so she just called me at work and she said, "Mom, this guy he just keeps following me, and every time I turn he turns, blah blah blah." So we were able to resolve that when I called her aunt, who lived not too... Lived over in the Eugene area, and she went and picked her up. And my daughter had a sense enough to run into the store and wait there until her aunt came and picked her up. So there was some isolated incidences that... Incidents that worked out okay. But you got crazy folk, I don't care where you go. You got people that are kinda out of their mind. I told her, I said that's when Roots came out... (laughing) And he was reacting to what he saw on Roots, I think. I said, but I don't want you out, especially at nighttime, riding a bicycle by yourself no... But all in all, it was a pretty good, pretty good experience.

Marcus [00:38:34]

I got I got one last thing for you. Can you recall, I guess, off the top of your head some funny moments or funny memories that you made with either (incomprehensible) or your family.

Lois [00:38:46]

Some funny things that...

Michael [00:38:48]

Funny memories.

Lois [00:38:52]

(Laughs) I probably wouldn't have to go back a long ways (sic), but there were some things that happened that could have been called funny if they hadn't been, you know, could of caused some problems. One of my boys, my younger sons, loved to play jokes. And he would just... And my daughter and them had rented an apartment, and the apartments were joined kind of at the rooftop and he climbed... Got on the out his window into her window, threw a sheet over over her head, and Heather's screaming. I said, Boy, somebody gonna to hurt, you. You don't do that! You know. But there were a lot of things that happened that that were kind of comical when you stop and thought about it. You know? That could have, had it been a difference setting, could have been him getting hit over the head with something, you know? But not a whole lot of comical things, you know.

Michael [00:40:19]

So the last question I have being that this is for the, the museum and there could be people in ten or 20 or 30 years watching this wondering about this time. What message would you have for those people in the future watching this?

Lois [00:40:39]

I would say that we made it and we were kind of like pioneers coming and going down dusty road and trying to find our way and the new part of the country. Cause we came from Arkansas, you know, and my mom and dad were raised in Arkansas. And I was saying just the fact that it was a whole different experience. You know... Coming to Oregon. They say going down the Oregon Trail... Came down the Oregon Trail and we made it. And you can make it no matter what part of the country you're in, you can forge your own way, you make your own destinies and so forth. And so I would say with just, you know, have been an experience that, you know, you have to make your own way, make your own friends. One thing I think about my dad, 'cause he had ten kids. And him and my mom. And he was such a hardworking man. He never... You hear men today that desert their families, and sometimes women will do that, but mostly men. And he never deserted his family. And we talk about that today. My sisters and brothers and I. And we say, one thing we can say about him, he stayed with us! And, you know, ten kids, that's enough to make you pull your hair out. And he just stuck it on out with my mom, and stayed there until she passed away. And then eventually he passed away. But those are memories that I cherish. And we were at his grave the other day. And I said, well done Barney Stubbs(sp) (laughs). Well done. You did what you should have done. A good example to men. And my mother was... She never deserted us. And I don't know if this would even fit in with... She never brought anyone to the house other than my dad. And I appreciate that as a woman growing up and... And as a young woman. Then you develop the character from what you see happen in your home. Which if parents... Your mom, your dad... And so I appreciate that so much today. I say you left you left a good legacy for your daughters and I... I said, I shall never,

ever forget. My husband and I were together for 63 years. And I said, you know, and that's only because, that's all I seen, you know? I see my mom and dad as they stuck it out. And I realize everybody, they're different problems in their family. But you learn how to deal with them. Through the thick, through the thin. You say oh, I'm going to make it. And you leave a... Try to leave a good legacy, you know, for your children, grandchildren. I try to call my grandkids every... As often as I can, my children, and just let them know I love you, I care about you, and I just want to say hello. Their birthdays... Which every time I turn them around, somebody's got a birthday! I have 30 somethin' grandkids, and every time I turn around somebody has a birthday, somebody has something else. And so, I just thank God for the legacy that I have as a mother now... Taught me how to live, you know, before my children. So forth, so much for me.

Michael [00:45:40]

And with that, we've got to hear about a true rich legacy. We got to honor pioneers who paved the way out here for us, and we're reminded of the importance of family.

Lois [00:46:04]

Oh yes...

Michael [00:46:05]

And with that it's been an absolute honor and pleasure speaking with you.

Lois [00:46:20]

My Pleasure... My Pleasure

Michael [00:46:21]

Thanks for taking the time to talk with us.

Lois [00:46:23]

Thank you.

Michael [00:46:24]

And as my Michael K Media signing off for Springfield History Museum Illumination Project. Till next time.

Lois [00:46:25]

Thank you so much.

Michael [00:46:26]

Thank you.