

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Keith Douglas

COLLECTION: 4700.1596

IDENTIFICATION: Cartoonist, caricature artist and former art teacher in New Orleans and Baton Rouge public schools; known as “Cartoonman”

INTERVIEWER: Barbara Faulkner

SERIES: McKinley High School Oral History Project – Social Organizations

INTERVIEW DATE: June 19, 2001

FOCUS DATES: 1960s - 1990s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 3177, Side A

Introduction; born September 19, 1952 in Natchez, Mississippi; grew up in New Orleans; taught at McKinley High School for nine years; worked at radio station in Baton Rouge for three years; currently teaching at Southeast Middle School in Baton Rouge; prefers teaching high school; shares his cartooning skills with students; mixes cartoon approach with more traditional ways of teaching art; first art memory was getting in trouble at home for drawing on the walls; started cartooning in elementary school; almost got a paddling for drawing during class, but spared punishment when principal recognized his talent; competing with friend to see who could draw better stick figures; has collection of 30,000 comic books; high school art teacher, Dan McLean; studied at Xavier University under printmaker John Scott; other talented artists and art teachers at Xavier; mother convinced him to pursue teaching as well as art, better to earn a living; intended to make money with his art; inherited his father’s ability to hustle; father makes money in his sleep; taught reluctant students at Alfred C. Priestly in New Orleans; teaching at Priestly killed his creativity and assassinated his personality; didn’t want to turn into a rotten, burnt out teacher like some of his colleagues; moonlit as a caricaturist at night clubs; worked as weather artist for television station WWL; paired with weather reporter Bob Breck, a new arrival to New Orleans who was “pretty jive”; likes cartooning because it makes people laugh; drew New Orleans Saints cartoons that sportscaster Hap Glaudi showed on the air; drew for various New Orleans magazines; learning about the value of your work; invented Marshall Quickdraw character, doing caricatures at children’s parties, to escape financial trouble; had agent for a while, but had a disagreement over exclusivity; has caricatured more than 30,000 people; lots of street artists in Baton Rouge, such as Emerson Bell and Wayne Dane; people understand talent as what they are unable to do themselves; Baton Rouge artists have not really pulled together; Douglas is not very well connected with other local artists; he is currently exploring painting; promoting his art work; Douglas’ love of music; love of dance and learning to jitterbug from his friend Jitterbug Jim; draws better while listening to music; would like to paint as performance to live music; artist on

TV who makes \$25,000 for painting at conventions; transition of moving from exciting New Orleans to slower-paced Baton Rouge; teaching job in New Orleans was sucking the life out of him, so came to McKinley High halfway through school year; impressed by polite and respectful demeanor of McKinley students; thrilled to escape violence of New Orleans schools; saw four fights a day in New Orleans, only four fights in nine years at McKinley; Baton Rouge restored his creativity; thought his status as financially successful artist was a good model for his students; creating a clothing line based on his cartoon characters; wants to be crossover success, popular among all races; created line of characters called "Bayou Babies"; teaching kids at McKinley about making an idea into a workable concept; former students who have gone on to study art at LSU; former student who now has art job; importance of professional presentation of art work; Wayne Dane lacks professional polish to his work; has invited former students to work with him at paid art gigs; been invited to consult with top website firm; Douglas' children's book ideas;

Tape 3177, Side B

Children's book about wooly mammoth in New Orleans; developing character called Shoebox Brown, an elderly shoe repairman; always thinking about marketing; ideas for movie industry; many artists fall short in translating their work into money; father said Douglas should spend his money on enjoyment instead of art supplies, but Douglas enjoys his art supplies; more money equals more projects; art as visual entertainment; his character Sweet Daddy Claus, a black Santa; did live remotes for WXOK radio station as Sweet Daddy Claus character; created whole back story for Sweet Daddy Claus, which he's trying to publish in book form and make into a film; self-image as creator; licensing artwork; use of alliteration in naming characters; kids don't exercise their imaginations as much now that they have video games; more creative play when Douglas was a child; never wanted to copy other cartoon characters; tells the storyline of one of his Shoebox Stories about a young basketball player who learns the value of education; another story about everybody having their own value; inspired by handicapped McKinley student everybody called "Turtle"; using cartooning skills to teach special education kids; art as creative problem solving; creative punishments he used in classroom; making abusive boys carry around "paper girlfriends" to learn how to treat girls well; making a boy wear oversized paper mittens after touching girls inappropriately; wants students to enjoy his classes; Marshall Quickdraw cartoon show to teach history; dangerous combination of ignorance and lack of education; people want to get everything without working; people's standards have fallen so youth don't appreciate opera, ballet and theater; young people can't discern between people who can and can't sing; next generation can't be relied upon to financially support the arts; comparison of various pop singers; kids today will steal your money rather than do the legwork to make their own; use of tough love and accountability; repairing broken homes through education; importance of art and creativity to high school students.

TAPES: 1 (T3177)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 28 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 41 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence

RESTRICTIONS: None