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Interview with Ruth Martin

Ruth Martin

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**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview #328
MARTIN, Ruth**

MARTIN, Ruth

Department of Health and Environmental Control employee, Family Planning department

Interviewed: June 5, 1984

Interviewer: Michael Cooke

Index by: Alyssa Jones

Length: 43 minutes, 11 seconds

Abstract: In her June 1984 interview with Michael Cooke, Ruth Martin discussed her time as a DHEC employee in the sickle cell anemia program. She covered topics of DHEC's involvement with community groups, sickle cell anemia community groups and their success and failures, and the James R. Clark Sickle Cell Foundation. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Sickle cell anemia, Department of Health and Environmental Control, James R. Clark Sickle Cell Foundation, community groups

Interview Session (June 5, 1984): Digital File

Time Keywords

00:00:00 *Start of Interview*/Interviewer's Introduction

00:00:16 *Question:* Can you tell us a little about yourself? *Answer:* RM was born in September of 1934 in Blacksburg, South Carolina. She received a B.S. in Biology from Winthrop College. She taught for a few years in public school. RM worked all over the country for years before returning to South Carolina. She became interested in sickle cell anemia in 1972.

00:02:21 *Question:* Who were some of the initial founders of the sickle cell group in Columbia? *Answer:* RM listed some of the people that she could remember.

00:04:19 *Question:* Did they have any full-time workers? *Answer:* No. It was a volunteer organization.

00:05:32 *Question:* What is DHEC? *Answer:* Department of Health and Environmental Control.

- 00:05:42 *Question:* When did you join? *Answer:* 1974.
- 00:06:32 *Question:* Are you talking about throughout the state or just in the Columbia area?
Answer: Throughout the state, but really just the organizations that had been informed at the time. RM listed some of the organizations: Spartanburg and Chesterfield.
- 00:07:00 *Question:* Could you tell us a little about your work with those groups? What were your impressions of their community effort? *Answer:* RM was impressed by the groups.
- 00:08:50 *Question:* At what level of education? *Answer:* Mostly high school.
- 00:11:14 *Question:* Which leaders of these groups stick out to you? *Answer:* RM listed a few memorable organization leaders.
- 00:12:37 *Question:* Did they have any idea of where the sickle cell program should go?
Answer: Not at that time in the 1970s.
- 00:13:19 *Question:* What type of problems did you have in the middle years of operation?
Answer: Maintaining a group.
- 00:14:42 *Question:* What types of people were in these groups? Some are now defunct while others are still functioning? *Answer:* RM described the differences in the people and why the organizations failed.
- 00:15:59 *Question:* You couldn't delegate. MC listed some of the defunct organizations.
Answer: RM discussed why some of the larger groups became defunct.
- 00:17:17 *Question:* What led to the disintegration of the Greenville organization? *Answer:* Greenville lost members without replacing them.
- 00:19:03 *Question:* What about some of the other places, like Gaffney and Chester? *Answer:* Gaffney was organized by young people.
- 00:19:21 *Question:* What do you mean by "young people"? *Answer:* They were college-aged people, young 20-somethings. They were more interested in their future careers.
- 00:19:55 *Question:* Was there a college in Gaffney? *Answer:* No, they were just that age, but some were in college, getting ready to go to college, home for a break, or pursuing a career soon. It was not a stable group.
- 00:20:32 *Question:* What about in Newberry? *Answer:* RM was unfamiliar with the

Newberry organization.

- 00:20:41 *Question:* Do you know anything about the situation in Greenwood or Sumter?
Answer: RM never worked with either of them.
- 00:21:06 *Question:* Do you see a pattern with why some groups still exist and others do not?
Answer: Yes, it is in the way that they organize their groups. Compared to a stable, educated organization of volunteers, the groups with unstable organizations would not make it.
- 00:22:49 *Question:* How long have you been in your present position at DHEC? *Answer:* RM had been in Health Education, Consumption, and Education since 1970.
- 00:23:04 *Question:* You no longer do counseling for sickle cell? *Answer:* No.
- 00:23:24 *Question:* Can you talk about your volunteering for the James R. Clark organization? Can you tell us what that foundation is about? *Answer:* The James R. Clark Sickle Cell Foundation educated the community about sickle cell anemia, provided social services, raised funds for those services, and provided counseling in the Columbia area.
- 00:24:44 *Question:* You really branched out? It's no longer just Columbia. *Answer:* No, it was still the same area. The Columbia area has always been the Columbia area and the James R. Clark foundation has always served that area.
- 00:24:58 *Question:* You have always had considerable reach outside of Columbia? *Answer:* Yes, outside of Columbia proper.
- 00:25:21 *Question:* What years are you talking about when you weren't very active? *Answer:* The late 1970s and the early 1980s.
- 00:27:22 *Question:* Has the direction of the foundation changed over the years? *Answer:* Yes, especially since people became more aware.
- 00:29:22 *Question:* You automatically receive allocations? *Answer:* Yes.
- 00:29:57 *Question:* How have you been raising funds? *Answer:* **[audio unclear here]** The foundation had been raising funds through other groups and grants.
- 00:30:57 *Question:* What about the federal government? *Answer:* The federal government gave the foundation the grant.
- 00:32:37 *Question:* Is that one of the requirements of the grants? That you pursue the

- activities in a larger part of the state? *Answer:* Yes.
- 00:33:21 *Question:* How has the role of DHEC changed? What has been their relationship with various sickle cell community groups? *Answer:* The community groups' initial money came from DHEC.
- 00:34:30 *Question:* You petitioned for support. Do you know what specific representatives were approached? *Answer:* No, RM was not a part of that.
- 00:36:03 *Question:* Has the role of DHEC changed? *Answer:* Yes.
- 00:37:18 *Question:* That was after 1972? *Answer:* Yes.
- 00:37:43 *Question:* What were your responsibilities? *Answer:* RM discussed her responsibilities, along with the responsibilities of some of her co-workers.
- 00:38:23 *Question:* Did the program have a title? *Answer:* RM did not recall a title for the program. RM and MC continued to discuss the program and its members.
- 00:40:50 *Question:* Your responsibilities changed, from sickle cell to other programs. *Answer:* It was no longer just a sickle cell program.
- 00:41:19 *Question:* It split up the program. *Answer:* Yes.
- 00:41:37 *Question:* What was the extent of her activities once she became the program? Did the community groups find that satisfactory? *Answer:* [audio unclear] RM mentioned money and cuts to the program.
- 00:42:26 *Question:* When did those cuts take place? *Answer:* RM said she was not the person to ask about financial cuts, she was in the Family Planning department.
- 00:43:11 *End of interview*