

Vienna's Racial Divide in the 1960's and 70's

JS: One thing I've always thought was important: when we came from Kansas, we were so naïve about anything. We didn't understand about segregation. This was all something you might see on television or read about. We were totally naïve. So we moved here, and talked to the neighbors. A lot of the neighbors sent their children to private school. We were like 'Oh my gosh, what have we done? We can't do that. We can't afford it, and we're not going to. That's not what it's all about.' We just went right up to Louise Archer which had just recently been integrated and signed the kids up. It wasn't long before everybody else went there too. But this is the way life is. The kids loved it. They had a wonderful, wonderful principal up there and it was a good experience. It really was. The town was very much divided. Just right across the street was the Black community. There was a little boy over there that was the same age as my two boys, or close. He'd come over and they'd play basketball. And I'd hear the other mothers saying, 'Come in the house! Come in the house!' I was thinking 'Hmm, I don't like this, I don't like this.' That was our first realization I guess of what it was really all about.

VH: Do you have a sense of when those attitudes started to change?

JS: I think it was gradual. Very gradual. Like I said, we were so naïve. We just didn't understand it. This was not anything we had ever experienced before. We very early made up our minds that it was not going to be part of our lives. We were going to raise our kids—you have to get along with everybody in the world was our attitude. But it was a gradual change.