

Donna Hatchett:

Well, my full name is Donna Jane Hatchett. The Jane is for my mother. That was my mother's name. Before I got married, my last name as Van Zant, which is Dutch. And then of course when I got married, I took my husband's name, Hatchett. The name Jane we have passed along in my family. It's my younger daughter's middle name. It's her daughter's middle name. So, we're kind of keeping it going. In Wichita, Kansas in 1945.

My parents ... My father was a carpenter. And in 1955 my mother had two sisters who were living in Orange County, one in Anaheim and one in Garden Grove. And they were encouraging my parents to move out to California, especially to Orange County, because in 1955 Orange County was just taking off. Disneyland was being built, and there was lots of construction. It was really starting to change. So, my parents decided to move, and we went to California. I have said more times than I can count, "Thank goodness my parents left Kansas for California." I was nine years old then. I was almost 10, not quite 10. So, I've always felt like I grew up in Orange County, although I lived the first almost 10 years of my life in Kansas.

When we first moved there, we lived in Santa Ana, and then later ... Oh, I think I was in middle school, junior high we called it then. My parents moved to Garden Grove. And that's where I finished high ... I graduated from Santiago High School in Garden Grove, and my older brother graduated from Garden Grove High School. Then when my husband and I got married, we lived in Santa Ana for four years, and then we moved to Fullerton, and we stayed in Fullerton until we left there in 2004. I don't remember the house number, but when we lived in Santa Ana, we first lived on Fairview, which I think it's still called Fairview.

Sharon Sekhon:

It is.

Donna Hatchett:

Then we lived in a house on Sycamore, which is right off of Main Street through Santa Ana. Then when we moved to Garden Grove, actually our first place in Garden Grove was Strawberry Lane. And my uncle was in the Navy, and he was stationed in Hawaii for I don't know how long it was. But, so, my parents rented their house from them, so we lived there. Then they bought a home in Anaheim, and then their last home that they bought was in Garden Grove, and that's where I lived until I got married. Well, except for a brief time, which I'll tell you about that.

When we lived in Kansas, my parents sort of divided our time and the places that we lived between the city and the country. And my parents were actually both from the country, so I think they liked living in more rural environments. So, a lot of what, actually most of what I remember from Kansas was living in the country. I do remember a short time that we lived in the city, but most of the time we lived out in the country on a farm or something like that. My father wasn't a farmer, but he liked to live in the country.

So, when we moved to Santa Ana, my first impression was "oh wow." It seemed like a big, huge city to me. But one of my strongest first memories is realizing that where my parents lived, the first house that we lived in, that my brothers and I could walk to the library. And I thought that was the best thing in the world, that we could walk to the library, because I've always loved reading and writing. So, we would go to the Santa Ana Public Library constantly. I just thought that was the greatest thing in the world to live there. I was a 10-year-old kid. It felt like a whole big new world to me. And I was really excited. Then of course I grew up with four brothers, no sisters. So, my mom's sisters both had two

daughters. Each of them had two daughters. So, suddenly I had all these girls, cousins, to play with and do things with. Yeah. So, I was really just thrilled to be there.

Actually, we haven't researched this as thoroughly as we probably could have, but we always thought that my ... My father's ancestors were clearly from Holland. One of my brothers did a lot of genealogy and traced our family roots back to the early 1700s. But my father was very, very dark skinned, and he had black hair and very dark eyes. So, we always had this sort of impression that at some point in time there was some intermarrying with Native Americans, but we've never really proven that through genealogy. It's just based on his appearance and everything. Then my mother's family was more ... From the research that my brother did, my mother's family was more German, Irish background.

So, both of my parents grew up in the country in Oklahoma, and that's another reason we made the Native American connection, because we thought, "Oklahoma. Okay, maybe." But anyway, they both grew up in small towns in Oklahoma. And when they got married, they were very young. I think my mother was 16 maybe when they got married. My three older brothers were born in Oklahoma, and then my parents moved to Kansas, and I was born in Kansas and my younger brother was born in Kansas.

Both of my parents were not extremely well-educated people, but just working class people. I always liked to tell people they were very good people. They were just good-hearted, good people and I thought good parents. They were good parents. They were pretty simple people. My mother's name was Jane, and my father's name was Vester, V-E-S-T-E-R, which I have discovered recently is actually a Dutch name.

Oh. Okay. I'm going to try to tell all this stuff without crying. It's hard for me. You teach at Cal State Fullerton, right?

Sharon Sekhon:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Donna Hatchett:

I wanted to be sure to tell you ... And he was one of the very early students. He was from Oakland, California. His family story is quite interesting, as much as I know of it. But he was playing basketball at a community college in Oakland, and the team from Fullerton College came up to Oakland to play them in a game. And the coach who was at Fullerton College at that time, Alex Omalev, was preparing to transition over to what was then called Orange County State College, but he was coaching at Fullerton College at the time.

So, when he saw my husband play, he offered him a scholarship to go to Orange County State College. When he finished community college in Oakland, he came down to Fullerton and was on campus, and it was he and then there were two other black basketball players. Maybe you came across their names. Leonard Sims and Edgar Clark. And I think there were a couple of other black students, but there weren't very many. But anyway. I think because they were basketball stars, the fraternities invited them to join their fraternities. So, he joined one of the fraternities that was on campus at the time. I was still in high school then. That was 1963.

A friend of my brother's, my older brother had a friend who was attending there. She was in her first year at Orange County State. And she was in a sorority, and they were having an exchange, the sorority and the fraternity. So, she called me and asked me if I wanted to go, because the college was so small then. And she said, "We really don't have enough [inaudible 00:11:11] We need some more girls."

So, I went and another friend of mine who was also in high school went. And that's where I met my husband. I met him at this party.

I like to tell this story too, because I'm tall. I'm pretty tall. Well, not anymore. I used to be 5'10". Now I'm like 5'8.5", but you shrink as you get older. He was 6'4". So, I always used to notice taller guys, because I was tall. The first thing I noticed about him is he was so tall. He was just taller than anybody in the room. And if you saw pictures of him, then you know he was very handsome. And he was smoking a cigarette, and I just thought, "Oh my gosh. He is so cool." I was 17. I thought he was so cool and so good looking. The fact that he was black did not register with me initially. I was just so ...

When you think about it, you think it really was. It really was. So, I guess I stared at him enough that he finally asked me to dance and got acquainted. Then he asked me for my phone number. When he asked me for my phone number, I thought, "Oh, my parents are never going to let me go out with him." So, I lied. I made up a stupid ... I said, "Well, we don't have a phone." And we laughed about that later, because he said, "I knew that wasn't true." I said, "I know. That was so stupid, but that was all I could think of at the time, 'Oh, I don't have a phone.'" So, then I went home. Party ended, I went home.

And all the way home I kept thinking, "Why didn't you give him your phone number? Why didn't you give him ..." So, I was determined to find him again. And I had my own car. I had my own car by then. So, I drove out. I remember driving out to the college, driving out to State College Boulevard. And unless it has changed, the area that eventually became all the maintenance buildings, there by what is now the soccer fields and everything, that was the college at the time. That's where the classes were. And I remember driving out there and finding it and thinking, "This really doesn't look like a college. This isn't what I think a college looks like."

But I started asking people that were there where to find him. And everybody knew who he was, of course. Everybody knew who he was. So, eventually I got referred to the fraternity house. I got to the fraternity house, and they told me where he lived. It's now Yorba Linda Boulevard. At the time, it was called Pioneer. The college had a speech and language and hearing center, and it was an older house, and then behind it was a garage with an apartment above the garage. And somebody at the fraternity house told me, "He lives in that apartment behind the speech and hearing center."

So, I went there. Nobody was there. Everything was closed. But there was a phone number on a sign on the front. So, I went back home, and then I started calling that phone number and told them who I was looking for. And whoever answered the phone said, "Oh yeah, he lives in the back. I'll go get him. Hold on. I'll go get him." So, he went and got him, and my husband came and answered the phone. I reminded him who I was, and we talked. We made a date. And that's it. I was determined not to let him get away.

And this is why I say my parents grew up in the country. They were from Oklahoma. But my parents were good people. I can look back on it now and think, when I was growing up, I never heard my parents use any kind of racial slur. They didn't teach us that. They weren't like that themselves. So, when I met my husband, it was March of 1963, and I was in my senior year of high school. I was 17. And I thought, "Well, they're not going to let me date him. They're going to object." I mean, I just knew how it was going to go.

At the time, my older brother, one of my older brothers, was married to a Swedish woman who was like the sister I never had. She was a wonderful, wonderful person. And I spent a lot of time with her, because my brother, he was in the Navy and he was stationed in Japan. And she lived in Orange. So, I told her about meeting my husband and how I wanted to go out with him but I knew my parents wouldn't let me, and she said, "Well, have him pick you up here. He can pick you up here." So, that's what we did initially. "I'm going to stay overnight with Nadya," and of course my parents would say,

"Okay." So, I'd go to Nadya's apartment, and he would pick me up, and we would go on our date. Then he'd bring me home, and I'd spend the night with Nadya. So, that's how we dated until I finished high school.

And when I finished high school, another one of my older brothers was also living in Orange, California. He had his own apartment. He knew who I was dating as well, and he said, "Well, come and live with me. You can share my apartment." So, that's what I did. I moved in with my brother. Then when I turned 18 in August, I told my parents about my husband, about James. So, at first their reaction was very negative. They were like, "Oh, no. You can't do that. That's not right," blah, blah, blah. But I said, "Well, I'm 18. I'm not living at home." So, I refused to stop seeing him.

My parents and I had several confrontations, I would say, about it, but, I mean, I can look back on it more objectively now. Of course at the time I was 18, and you know how girls are. And I realized that I don't their opposition came from any sense of prejudice or racism. Maybe a little bit. I don't know. But most of it was because they just were aware of how many problems we were going to have, how much opposition we were going to face.

But we continued to date for ... I don't know. Well, we got married in '65. So, for more than two years we dated. When I told my parents that we were going to get married, of course they were opposed to that for the same reasons, but I just told them. I said, "I love him. I'm going to marry him. And if you don't accept him, then we're done." So, I remember my mother told me later that they had a good friend who came over and talked to them and said, "Look, if you guys don't get onboard, you're going to lose your daughter." And I think they decided they didn't want that to happen.

So, they hadn't even met him at that point. They finally met him. And I told them, I said, "You're judging him. You've never even met him. You don't know anything about what he's like or what kind of person he is or anything." So, they met him, and they got to know him. I also love to say this, that after a period of time, I think we got to a point where my parents liked him better than me. My mother absolutely adored him, and my father got along just fine with him. So, by the time we got married, which was July of '65, my parents gave me my wedding. My father gave me away. They hosted a reception. They even invited his parents to stay at their home, and they came from Oakland. So, they stayed with my parents while they were in Orange County. I think that's a good indication that my parents really were good-hearted.

I think they did. I think they did. Then of course once our daughter was born, she was born in '66, a little over a year after we got married. She was born in September. So, we had been married, I don't know, 15 months or so when she was born. Then they were done. That was the end of any opposition. Yeah. So, I mean, it ended up being a really good situation with my family. My brothers were very accepting.

That's interesting too. Well, I'm sorry to say I never got along with his mother. I loved his father. His father was wonderful, and we hit it off from the moment I met them, but not his mother. But for a while, I thought it was racial, she didn't want him to marry a white girl. But I realized after I got to observe her over the years that she was just mean to everybody. I didn't chalk it up to anything other than nobody was good enough for her children. So, I don't think his parents ... Well, I don't think his mother ... I don't think his father had any objections, but I don't think his mother was in favor of him marrying me.

Well, one thing I learned from being part of an interracial marriage is that I think a lot of people, especially black people, they would just prefer not to confront a lot of those things, because they're painful. They're very painful to think of how you are viewed by white people or some of the things that you've had to just accept.

The usual, people giving us dirty looks or just staring at us. We never had anybody do anything really overt other than say nasty things to us. But at that time in the early '60s in Orange County, it was still pretty small and there was not a lot going on. So, when we went out, if we wanted to go out and do something really fun, we went to Los Angeles. We would go up there. We'd go to discos or go to the movies, or we had friends. He was such a great basketball player. He had tons of basketball buddies. So, we would do that a lot.

Then there was in Fullerton ... Have you ever come across the Owens family? She was an early activist, but she did not take any crap from anybody. But the Owens family was a very well known family, very big family in Fullerton, tons of athletes. And when my husband came to Fullerton from Oakland, you can imagine the culture shock of coming from a predominantly black city to a predominantly white area. There were very, very few black people in Orange County at that time. It was a small, small percentage. So, they all kind of knew each other.

So, the Owens family, at that time, I think their home ... I'm trying to remember their mother's name. Penny was their father's sister. I can't remember their mother. A bunch of children. I can't even remember how many children they had. But their mother was like everybody's mom. And all these guys, I heard them say many times they could go over there and get a meal. That was just where everybody sort of congregated.

Right off of Lemon Street. I can't remember the name. Ugh. If you go off of Lemon right by the school there, it's on Lemon Street, and it's between Orangethorpe and Commonwealth. The black neighborhood at the time was there. The name of it's going to come to me in a second, I just know it. But anyway. Yeah. Yeah. Now it is. But that was definitely where ... There were a number of black families who lived in there at the time.

My husband and I when we were dating, we sort of became part of that group. They took in all the other ... Especially Edgar Clark and Leonard Guinn and my husband, they were all from ... Edgar and Leonard are from Detroit and then my husband from Oakland. So, we became part of that group. We would have parties together, picnics. We just socialized together. So, between that circle of friends in Fullerton and all of his basketball buddies, and then we'd go out to LA. We had a wonderful time. We had a wonderful time. I mean, I loved all those people. I do have wonderful memories of those times and all the good friends that we made. Some have passed away like my husband, but a lot are still around.

Well, I'm glad that you're aware of my husband's past, because I think he was pretty ... Moving to Orange County when he did, when he was so young, and staying in college there, and then of course we met. He was about to graduate from Cal State, and I was about to graduate from high school when we met. And after he graduated ... His degree was in I think it was called social science at the time. Excuse me. So, his very first job after college was as a counselor at juvenile hall. Then he was there for just a couple of years, I think just about two years, and he took the test to become a probation officer. And he did that for 34 years I think it was.

Oh yeah. I remember him. He was a cop in Santa Ana, which was challenging. And then of course I think, besides basketball, he and my husband shared this whole career in law enforcement. So, yeah, I remember him really well.

Of course when my husband was finishing college he lived in Fullerton. He didn't always live in that little apartment over the garage. He moved to a different apartment. He lived with a friend. He and a friend shared a little small house on Berkeley Avenue. When we got married, we really wanted to live in Fullerton, and we went all over Fullerton looking for an apartment. No one would rent us an apartment. That's why we ended up living in Santa Ana, because we finally found an apartment complex

in Santa Ana that would rent us an apartment. Every place we went in Fullerton refused to rent to us. So, yeah.

But the first house that we bought, we bought in Fullerton. It was called Aquila, A-Q-U-I-L-A. That was our first home. We lived there for I think about seven years maybe. And then we bought our second home in West Fullerton right off of Malvern and Gilbert. And that's where we lived until we moved to North Carolina.

As I mentioned the other day, I mean, superficially, he was very handsome and tall and talented, but he was a very, very quiet person. He isn't the guy that would come in and take over the room or anything like that. He was very, very quiet and very soft spoken. And I remember him telling me one time, because he was a probation officer for so long, and that's not an easy job. And we used to kind of laugh about it, because he would often ask me to buy him a couple of boxes of kleenex when I went grocery shopping. He said, "I have to keep these in my office, because when you tell people that you're going to send them back to jail they start crying, and you've got to have some kleenex."

And then he told me, he said, "Sometimes people get angry, and they get mad at you, and they start yelling at you." And I said, "Well, what do you do when they get mad and they're yelling at you?" And he said, "I just stand up." Remember, he was 6'4". "I don't have to say anything. I just stand up." So, he just had this kind of way about him. He used his physical presence and his voice to I guess be disciplinary when he had to. My daughters, of course they laugh about it now, but they laugh about how when they were growing up they didn't get spanked, but they said, "All we had to hear was dad's voice, just hear his deep voice," and they knew they better straighten up. He had kind of a presence about him.

And he was the same way playing basketball. You know how they talk about people, athletes talking trash to each other. He didn't do that. He just played. And he was tough, but he didn't get into arguments with people. He didn't complain a lot. And I don't know how much you know about basketball, but in basketball big guys, they take a beating. So, I asked him one time about all the guys that were bumping him around, knocking him around on the court, and I said, "Doesn't that bother you?" I said, "What do you do when they're all putting elbows in your ribs and everything?" And he said, "Oh, I don't worry about it." He said, "I just get them when we go down court. I get them on the other end." So, he was just kind of calm and matter of fact about everything.

So, he was a very strong but quiet person, and that was good for me, because I'm more of a talker than he was. Sometimes it makes communication difficult if you're ... But I think that's pretty typical of a lot of men. You know how they make a joke, if a woman says, "We need to have a talk," and the men are like, "Oh, no." I appreciated that about my husband. I think I always, always knew that he loved me. He did a lot of things that showed that he loved me. We were married for 45 years when he died.

And he was a really good father. He was strict. He was much stricter than I was with our daughters. I think a lot of that just came from his own upbringing and the fact that he was a probation officer. I mean, our daughters never got into any kind of trouble. They probably knew if they did there'd be hell to pay. But he was a very loving but strict father. We had a great family life. We are still very, very close. And I think a lot of that is because of him. That's just kind of his personality.

He was ambitious. He always wanted to learn new things. He decided at one point he was going to learn to speak Spanish. So, he started studying Spanish. We enjoyed a lot of the same things. We especially enjoyed going to the theater and to movies and music, and we just shared a lot of the same interests. And now this guy that I'm dating now, I mean, he'll go to the theater, when you could go to the theater. You can't do that anymore. But I could tell that he just wasn't as into it. And movies, he'll watch movies that I suggest, but my husband and I used to love to watch all these little quirky, odd little



movies. So, I miss that. I miss that connection, because he was just always open to learning new things and not being stereotyped. I always appreciated that about him, that he was always willing to do new things.

We traveled. We liked to travel. And when our daughters both got into college and they both played volleyball in college, we would travel and go to all their games. And then our younger daughter played professional volleyball after college. She played on the Beach Tour, and she also played in Italy and Puerto Rico. Again, he took a little Italian language book with him, and so we would go out, because she was in this small town in Northern Italy and very few people spoke English. So, he was determined that he was going to communicate as much as he could learn in Italian, and she taught him some things. But he was open to life. I think he was open to life and getting everything he could out of it. He learned to play golf when he got older. He was just always trying to do new things.

Yes, we did. The Commitments. Do you know it?

Sharon Sekhon:

Yes.

Donna Hatchett:

Oh my gosh.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yes.

Donna Hatchett:

I love you.

Sharon Sekhon:

Yes.

Donna Hatchett:

So many people don't know that movie. The band wanted to be soul singers. They wanted to do soul music. Yes. That's the best movie. We loved that movie. We watched it over and over again. And Doctor Zhivago.

We lived in California, and we hadn't ever been to Hawaii. And when our older daughter was at USC, I think it was her senior year, they went over to play the University of Hawaii over the Thanksgiving break. So, we decided that we would go, because we had never been to Hawaii. And it was her senior year, and we were kind of trying to go on all the road trips. So, we went to Hawaii, and of course that was in Honolulu on Oahu. But we absolutely fell in love with Hawaii.

I think part of the reason that we did is because, well, it's so ethnically diverse there. But when we landed at the airport in Honolulu, we got a shuttle to the hotel, and the shuttle driver ... We were pretty accustomed to maybe people being a little standoffish with us or not all that friendly or whatever, but this guy was so friendly, and he seemed especially friendly. He was a Hawaiian guy. He seemed especially friendly with my husband. Then when he found out, when he was asking us why we were there ... So, when he found out that our daughter played volleyball, he was just ecstatic. He was so

excited about that, because they're big volleyball fans in Hawaii. We just felt very, very comfortable there, very welcome, and people were so incredibly friendly, especially to him.

So, then a few years after that, some friends of ours who had a timeshare on the Big Island, they kind of organized this group, and his whole senior basketball group went. We all went. And we stayed at this resort on the Big Island, and we ended up buying a timeshare there. Can't get rid of it now. I'd like to get rid of it. But anyway. We went to Hawaii every year, and we went to the Big Island usually. One year we went to Maui and Kauai. So, we've been to the other islands, but mostly ... And then when our younger daughter was playing on the beach volleyball tour and when she was in college, we went back a few times, and we went for her beach games.

So, we've been to Hawaii. I don't even know how many times I've been to Hawaii, but it was absolutely our favorite place. So, when my husband died, I had his ashes packaged in three different packages, and one of them we took ... There's a little bay that's near this resort where we own the timeshare. So, we went. My whole family, we all went over, and we put some of his ashes in the bay in Hawaii. That was our favorite place, favorite place to go. I would go live there if I could afford it, but can't afford it.

He was very good with the people on his caseload. I mean, he didn't tell me very much about his individual cases. Occasionally he would share something with me. But I remember there was a woman who was on his caseload one time. Well, this sounds horrible to say it. She had killed one of her children. I think it was a situation where she was in an abusive marriage, she was under a lot of stress, and this child, I think he wet his pants or something, and she lost her temper and beat him so badly that he died. And she served some time in jail, and then the judge, I guess they put her on probation. She ended up on my husband's caseload. He did a lot of work with her, a lot of counseling with her.

And I can remember one ... And he never gave people his contact information, his home information. Well, I think what happened was this woman called the probation department one night and she was in a really bad way. They got ahold of my husband, and he called her. And I could hear him talking to her, and I heard him say, "Well, don't kill him. Just cut him on the leg or something." And I was like, "What in the world?" So, when he finished talking to her, I said, "What were you telling her to do?" He said, "Well, her ex husband was coming over to her apartment, and she had a knife and she was threatening to kill him if he came into her apartment and started abusing her. So, I told her don't kill him. Just cut him on the leg with a knife and he'll go away." I said, "Well, that's unusual counseling." He said, "Well, she doesn't need to be killing anyone." So, I just thought that was such an odd thing to do.

But that woman, she ended up successfully completing her probation, and then she went to school. I think she became an X-ray technician. She got her life on track, and she got it together. I remember she wrote him this wonderful letter thanking him for all the help and support that he gave her. He had several cases like that.

I can remember one time we were going into a football game when I was working at Santa Ana College. We were going to go to a football game, and we were walking into the football stadium, and I heard somebody say, "Mr. Hatchett, Mr. Hatchett." Well, I always knew if they were saying Mr. Hatchett, I thought, "Oh, this is somebody from his caseload." Well, this was a young man who had been on his caseload. He wasn't at the time, but had. And he came running up to my husband, and he said, "I just wanted to thank you for all the help you gave me." And he was another example of somebody who got themselves out of trouble, got on a better path.

I think he had a lot of people like that. I mean, obviously he had a lot of people who didn't do well, but that's just the nature of the work. But I think he did have exactly the right personality and demeanor to do what he did. And after he retired from the probation department, he was home for, I



don't know, six months, I guess, and they contacted him and asked him that he would come back on a part-time basis. They placed him at one of the continuation high schools. So, we worked with the kids who were at the continuation school and their parents.

He was really good working with young people. I think they wouldn't have asked him to come back if they didn't know that he was pretty good. He was good at his job. He used to say ... I've heard him say more than once that he thought people should be required to take parenting classes before they're allowed to have children, because he saw lots of people who had major problems because of the way they were raised, because of their parents.

I don't even know he and my husband became acquainted. Probably basketball, I'm guessing. But Eddie became an attorney in Santa Ana. And we were just friends. We were friends with he and his wife, and I can remember during the time that we were all in our young, married couples, I think they were moving from an apartment to a new house or they bought a new house or something. We helped them move. We just did social things together. But Eddie was just ... I didn't know him real well. Very, very nice guy. Bright, very bright. He died at a pretty early age, I think. I can't remember what was the cause of his death. Heart attack or something. I don't know. I can't remember. But I think his family was a pretty longtime family in Santa Ana.

Well, again, basketball. Jerry and my husband knew each other, played basketball together. I think I mentioned when we were talking the other day that at that time there were so few black people in Orange County they all kind of knew each other. But he and Jerry played basketball together, and that's how we got to know Jerry. Then when he married Adleane, got to know Adleane. Then we did social things together. We went to the same events and just got to be friends that way.

Then when Adleane started ... Essence 7 was really her idea. And when she started it and she invited obviously women that she knew of who had daughters of color who were in predominantly white schools and neighborhoods. So, when she invited me to become part of it, I jumped at it, because I kind of struggled that ... If you read that article that they did on us in the LA Times, when you're white and your children are biracial, it's difficult to teach them all the ... I didn't really know how to do their hair very well. I just kind of by trial and error I guess. Then I had friends who would tell me, "Well, you need to do this. You need to do that." So, I gradually figured out how to do a better job on the hair.

But I struggled with a lot of things like ... Well, there's a little example in that LA Times article about Crystal coming home and wanting to have blond hair, long, blond hair. Well, my older daughter one day, they were playing around the house, and she had this little blanket on her head. And I said, "Why do you have that blanket on your head?" And she said, "Oh, it's my long hair." She said, "That's my long hair." And I said, "Well, why do you want to have long hair?" And she said, "Well, because all the pretty girls at school have long hair." I said, "Well, you're a pretty girl." She said, "No, I'm not." That just broke my heart, broke my heart when she said that, because she just felt like ...

Sharon Sekhon:

And she's drop-dead gorgeous!

Donna Hatchett:

She is drop-dead gorgeous. Both of my daughters are. But she didn't see herself that way and all because she's comparing herself to white girls with long, blond hair. So, I needed that group for my daughters and for myself. We were very happy to be involved in it, and Adleane's an amazing person. She really is. She just takes on the biggest projects. She's like, "Oh, well, we'll get the Ebony Fashion Fair

to come here." Well, that's a big deal. That's a big deal to get the Ebony Fashion Fair to come to Orange County, but she did it. She's not intimidated by big responsibilities, not at all.

So, she started the group, and all the women who were in it, we were all into it. And the fathers were very involved too. I don't know how much you've learned about it, but the fathers got very involved. We did all these different activities for the girls just to give them a chance to be together and play together, spend time together. So, the fathers were often ... We had a Halloween party for them one year, and my husband and the other fathers all got together in our garage and made a haunted house thing and then took the girls through that. And the fathers got involved in the Ebony Fashion Fair.

It was really a family thing. I think in most of the things that had been written about the group, it was described as a mother-daughter group, but, I mean, all of these girls had fathers who were involved too. So, it was really a family thing. My girls have great memories of that. I think it was extremely helpful to these girls to have a group of black friends that they could just hang out with and just do things with and feel pretty.

Well, I think there definitely is still a need for it. I think of my granddaughter, the younger one. She went to private school through the sixth grade, and there were very few black students at her school. Then when she went into seventh grade, my daughter took her out of there and sent her to public school. And she just loved it. There were so many more black kids at her school, and she enjoyed it. Then when she chose a college, she chose ... She's at Georgia State University in Atlanta. It's very ethnically diverse, very much so. They've got students from all over the world there and a very high percentage of black students.

She's a presidential scholar, extremely, extremely bright girl. When she went in to college as a freshman, she was so far along in Spanish that they put her in third year classes instead of first year classes. I think my daughter, this fall, she'll be starting her junior year, and she'll be completing her degree in Spanish this year. Then she still has to complete her degree in international business, and then she added another little major in commercial real estate. So, I think she likes to be challenged.

Also, she's the only African American on the volleyball team, and this is the beach volleyball. So, again, she's the only one. In the history of the university, she's the first student athlete to be a presidential scholar. So, she gets a lot of attention, a lot of support. And she's been involved in a lot of different networking things with community leaders. So, somewhere at some event she met a very successful African American woman who's in real estate in Atlanta, so I think Bailey thought, "Oh, okay. I'll get another degree in real estate." So, anyway.

But I think that the fact that she could have gone anywhere. She was recruited by Ivy League schools. She could have gone to Stanford. She wanted to go there. And I think a big part of it was because of the ethnicity of the student body. So, clearly there's still a need.

When I was in high school, I was a really good student in high school. That was in the '60s. So, what do you do if you're a girl in the '60s? What is expected of you? That you're going to get married and have children. I remember going to talk to my high school counselor, and, I mean, I was a straight A student. He was a man, probably 60 at the time. He should have said to me, "Where are you going to go to college?" But he said, "Well, what do you like to do?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I like to read. I like to write. I was on the student newspaper in high school."

Sharon Sekhon:

Weren't you the editor of it?

Donna Hatchett:

I was the editor. Then you saw that one of those little things you had was from a little thing that we did at the ... Garden Grove had a small, daily newspaper at the time, and they started this thing called a teen page. They brought in student journalists from the high schools and we did a teen page every week. So, yeah, I was very interested in journalism.

But I made the mistake of telling this counselor that I like to read, I like to write, I like journalism, and I like to do hair, because I liked to fix my hair and fix my friends' hair. And he said, "Oh, well, you should go to cosmetology school." And I thought, "Okay." And I had mentioned the other day neither of my parents even graduated from high school. So, I don't think they had very high expectations either. So, I decided I'll go to cosmetology school, so that's what I did when I graduated from high school. I went to cosmetology school. And I graduated, and I got my license, and I started working, and I got married.

Bartmore Beauty College I think it was. It was in Garden Grove. It's probably not even there anymore. But anyway. It's probably not even there anymore. But anyway. So, I didn't really like it. I mean, I wasn't that good at it, and I really didn't like it that much, but it was a job. I was earning money. Got married and had my children, and I had both of my daughters. We had some friends. I won't say their names, because the woman, I thought she was kind of ditzy. And she told me one day that she was going to Fullerton College, and I thought, "She's going to Fullerton College?" And I thought, "Well, if she can go to college, I can go to college."

So, I went over, and I enrolled at Fullerton College. That was 1973. So, I'd been out of high school for 10 years by then, and my daughter, my younger daughter was three years old. And what do you think I signed up for? English, social science, and journalism. I feel very fortunate. I had an English teacher who was so encouraging and supportive, and she told me all the time what a great writer I was. And she told me once. She said, "It's just so nice to have somebody like you in class who really wants to be here, and you really get it." Then my journalism teacher, he was the same way. He was so supportive.

Sharon Sekhon:

Do you remember their names?

Donna Hatchett:

Yes, I do. I'll never forget them. Her name was Barbara Meyer, and his name is Louis Barrett. And then my social science teacher, sociology, was Barry Wishart, and he was also very supportive and encouraging. When he found out my husband was a probation officer, it turned out his wife was also a probation officer, and she and my husband worked together. Anyway. Small little world.

Long story short, I got a tremendous amount of support at Fullerton College. I loved Fullerton College dearly, because every instructor I had there was so encouraging and supportive. And I was a reentry student. So, here I was. I was working part time, doing hair, had two small children, my husband, and going to college. I did all that. It took me three years to get my AA from Fullerton College. Then I transferred to Cal State Fullerton. Same thing. I think reentry students are probably really appreciated by professors, because they're all about getting their education. They're not just there to party. I didn't do any of the ...

So, anyway, it took me six years to get my BA, three years at Fullerton, three years at Cal State. And then when I graduated from there ... Well, while I was at Fullerton, I did get some awards and things. I think I got recognized, because I did work hard. I got that Woman of the Year thing at Fullerton College, which was surprising to me. But I guess people were just impressed that somebody could juggle all the stuff I was juggling and still do well academically, but I loved being in school. I loved it. Then when

I went over to Cal State Fullerton, I mean, I didn't get as involved there, because by then I was like, "Okay, I want to get finished. I want to get my degree and get finished."

So, when I did finish, then I got my job shortly after graduating. Well, I worked for the Orange County Human Relations Commission while I was finishing school, and that came about because of one of the people I knew at Fullerton College, Irma Rodriguez. I think they had something like ... They used to have dean of students for women and men. Anyway. So, Irma knew me through the newspaper stuff and that kind of thing, and so she was on the Human Relations Commission, and she asked me if I would be interested in working at the commission. I did work there for ... I don't know. I guess I was there for a couple years. It was just part time, but I did their newsletter and I did press releases and things like that. I worked with Rusty Kennedy there.

Then I finished college. I went through the Coro Foundation, and I went through one of their programs for ... They had a program for ... I think they called it for women over 30 or something like that. I can't remember how they defined it. But we did internships in that program. They assigned you to internships. So, I did a bunch of different internships. One of the women that I got to know in that group, she did one of her internships for the City of Irvine, and she told me, she said, "They have a job opening in their community services department for a public information person. Why don't you apply?" I did. So, I got hired there. I worked there my last year of college. I worked for the City of Irvine.

Then after graduating, then I went to work at Santa Ana College as public information officer. And that's where I got involved in some of the other organizations that I was active in. I was active in some professional groups and did some other leadership training and things like that.

That group was before Essence 7. That was a community group that was organized by ... I mentioned all my friends that I had through the Owens family. There was a woman. Clara Hernandez was her name. She died last year. She's actually African American, but she married a Latino guy, and that's how she got Hernandez. But I think she was one of the big forces and Mary Owens who you heard about her. Mary Owens was very instrumental in starting that group.

So, we started doing all kinds of things for the kids, not only for our own kids but for kids in the community. But actually at that little park there on Lemon, that group was also instrumental in getting the building that's there built, because we did a lot of things at that park, and we did a lot of things for the school, for the kids at the school. We called it a book drive. Basically we raised money, we bought books, and then we would set up the books in the library, and the kids could come in and choose a book, because a lot of them didn't have a book. They didn't have their own books at home. But there was no building at that park, no community building.

And at that time, Fuller College had a construction program, and they used to build a house in the city and then sell it. So, we approached the president of Fullerton College and talked to him about maybe getting the construction class to build this building, and so they did. Now, I think since then I think the city has expanded it and changed it. But we did a lot of things like that, and we would hold little parties at the park for the kids. We would hold dances and social events for adults. But everything we did was geared to raise money so we could buy things for the kids at the school.

We used to have a fashion show. We did a fashion show every year. We did all kinds of different things. It was a fun group, and it was another one of those situations where I think the kids enjoyed being able to get together, all of our children, because we all had children. Then there were all these community children who got involved as well. So, we did a lot of different things. I'm trying to think who's left from that group. Some of the Owens family might still be around who would remember all the things that we did in that group. Mary Owens has died. Clara died. But some of the other people I think are still around Fullerton.

My husband and I got pulled over frequently. It makes you angry. The first time I remember where I felt like we were being harassed by the police, we were dating. That's before we got married. And we were walking down Commonwealth Avenue in Fullerton. We were just taking a walk. There used to be a little Dairy Queen or something down there, and we were walking down there to get an ice cream. And this cop stopped and asked us what we were doing and where we were going and kind of grilled us and then let us go on our way. But I'm like, "Why do you ..." For me, dealing with the cops and how they dealt with black people, that was a whole eyeopening thing for me, because, I mean, I learned after a while just to expect it, because then we would get ... When we were driving, we'd get stopped.

But what made it kind of amusing actually, we could find it amusing, is because, when my husband became a probation officer, he had a badge. And his badge was in the case with his driver's license. So, the cops pull you over on some trumped up reason, and they ask to see your driver's license. And when he would take it out and show them and they'd see his badge, then they would say, "Oh, oh. Well, okay. Have a nice day. Off you go." It's scary. Well, you know what? I won't say that we were scared, because I think these days you're more scared, because so many black people are killed for no reason. I don't think we worried about that so much except we were just mostly irritated at being pulled over.

When my husband and I got pulled over, we knew it was because he was with a white woman. It was like, "Did you kidnap her or what?" Yeah. I think most of the time ... I mean, it was the case then, and it still is the case. A lot of the police officers are just exercising their power.