

Emma M. Jones (125 Amory St.)
Interviewed by Vivian Jackson (2003)

My name is Emma Jones, and my nickname is Baby Doll. I was born in Atlanta Georgia, but I won't tell you what year, because then you'll know how old I am! I came to Boston in 1943. I left there so long ago, I hardly remember what it was like in Georgia when I was small. I have gone back to visit a couple of times and it's so different now, I could hardly tell where I was or how to get across town. That's how much it's changed now. It's improved, though. The weather in Georgia was really different from here. Much different. It's really hot. You couldn't live there if you're use to this kind of cold. When I went back there I couldn't stand the heat. I even took an umbrella to cover up, but it was too hot. In every state the climate is different, and in the south it's much hotter.

When I was a child, I lived with my parents. I was in a small family — my parents, me, one sister and one brother. And I was the baby. I had a little puppy dog when I was small, but I can't remember his name. He was a cute little puppy, kind of a gold or bronze color — what was his name? People use to stop on the street and pick him up he was so cute.

I went to different schools. First I went to primary school, that had up through second grade, then the next school I went to had third and fourth grade. Then our fifth grade was in the same place as the high school ... that was a big school. I finished high school but I didn't go to college.

I like Springtime and I like the Fall. Spring is nice and cheerful and pleasant, and the fall is not too cold or rainy or snowy. What kind of music do I like? I like good jazz music. I like snappy music like bebop, nice and snappy so you can dance to it! I don't think I have a favorite song ... but maybe there's one that's a religious song. I can't think of the name of it. Do you know this one? It goes: " When I've done the best I can and friends don't understand, then my Lord would call me home ... " That's the best one, but I can't sing it.

Do I like sports? Sports is all right, but I'm going to tell you I don't like football. It's too rough. I used to see a guy that had bruises all over his neck from football. It's too rough. I don't like sports that much. Like if you play baseball, you just hit the ball and run like hell! I'm serious. What good is it? You sitting there looking and someone hits the ball ... then they just run ... What do you get out of it? I did like basketball a little, but I didn't really like any of them too much.

What did I like to play when I was young? Well, when I was young, I was a bad little girl. You know, baby girls are spoiled. Everybody would be playing, my brothers and all, and if they didn't let me play, I'd tear it up. If they were flying kites, and they didn't let me hold it, I'd break it to pieces. Skipping rope, I had fun with that. We use to play house ... and we'd play with tin can strings and pretend it was a telephone. You didn't

do that, did you?

Do I have a favorite color? I love green. Oh, you like blue? Blue stinks! (laughter) Everybody loves blue, but I don't like blue. I love green ... and then I like purple, too.

What did I like to do when I was your age? When I was fifteen? Well, to tell you the truth, I come from the old school. You probably knew more at ten than I knew when I was fifteen. They were so strict when I was young that we didn't even know anything about anything. My step mother didn't teach me about anything, so when I was 12 and got my period, I didn't know what it was! I started crying. Instead of trying to teach me what it was about, she said "that'll teach you to keep your dress down." I didn't know what she was talking about! She should have told me that's where babies come from, but she didn't. She should have told me about all of that, but she didn't, even though she had already raised two other kids. Since I've been grown up, I realized the foolish way she use to tell us things. I think I was about 17 before I knew the difference between boys and girls!

She's dead and gone now, but that's the truth. At my age, leaving home like I did was the best thing. I had to get away from her because she was mean. My sister was married, and my brother was married, and I was the last one at home. She didn't want me now because she had three more kids by my father. She would whip my butt, and she'd say "you'd better not tell your father," so I'd be too scared to tell him. One night when I was 17 years old, she got mad because I had the light on to do some ironing. She had been drinking. When she jumped on me I fought her back, because I felt it was wrong, and she couldn't see that I was doing all this work for her. So I jumped out and ran to my cousin's house which would be from here way past Dudley Station. I was crying. And they was mad because it was night time. But I said "Momma was beatin' me up," and my cousin she said "Sit down, let me tell you something. She's not your mother. If that lady ever put her hands on you again, you tell your father." And all this time she was telling me NOT to tell my father.

I remember when I was in the fifth grade. We had to walk to school. As long as the weather was bad, we could ride in the car. But anyway, my father had a car because he was a foreman ... he forgot something that morning and he came back to the house when I was leaving for school. He called to me to come back, and when I did he said "where are you going?" So I said I was going to school. I was scared because I thought I did something wrong, but he said come back. Then her said to my step mother "why are you sending that child to school with that dirty dress on?" The dress was soiled because I had worked in it, and that was the dress she made me wear to school. So she changed my dress. Yup, when she died, they didn't even send for me. But I don't think I would have gone back.

Did I have the same friends in high school as I did in grade school? Well, I was always a kind of a loner. I liked to keep by myself. You can confide in me, because no one can get it out of me? I can keep a secret, so you can't get it out of me. All the best friends I

ever had were men friends. you can confide in them and they won't tell anyone, but with girls they would get jealous of you, or tell what you had told them. When you get my age you ain't got many friends because I think they all gone now. I'm not a baby anymore, and I won't be around here long. You know what I'm saying? After I got on my own, I had a good time, I've had a good happy life, and I know what it's all about. I don't think I missed anything! If you're talking about liquor drinking, I know what it tastes like. If you're talking about beer, I drank beer. And I put them down just like I picked them up; you know what I'm saying? I've been around, because when I got on my own, I tried to make up for the good times I felt I missed ... and so far, so good. God has blessed me so, I have had a wonderful time and enjoyed everything. I enjoy life, you know?