

Rose Thaice

Interviewed by Nelly Walker & Taylese Parker

My name is Rose Thaice. There's a lot of Roses in my family but I don't know if I was named after one of them. My aunt was Rose, and she has a daughter Rose, but I'm not sure where that came from. I was born on November 15, 1943. My mother was Henretta Glover Thaice, and my father was Charley Thaice. They both passed away at a young age. My father was only 35 years old when he died. So I don't mind thinking that I'm doing OK because I'm going to be 70 on my next birthday! My father's parents were Lucille Dingle and Joseph Thaice, and my mother's parents were Rebecca Glover and Billy Brown.

I was born in Eutawville in Orangeburg County South Carolina. At that time, Black people associated with Black people, and White people associated with White people, so it was segregated. Dr. Martin Luther King was fighting to change that. Where I grew up was like the country or a suburb. It was rural. I lived mostly with my mother because my father passed away when I was ten years old.

I have two sisters and a brother. My older sister's name is Ruth, my younger sister is Rebecca, and my brother's name is Charles. My brother is older than me, and Rebecca is the baby. She's named after my grandmother. The funniest thing is that Ruth's birth certificate says her name is Rebecca too. Ruth was 8 years older than my brother and twelve years older than

me, so by the time Rebecca came, Ruth was well into her teens. My mother must have forgotten that she already had a Rebecca because they called her Ruth. It was like a nickname, but then it became her actual name. Everybody lives up here now. My older sister goes back down there in the winter and stays up here in the summer.

When we were growing up, we had to do our chores when we got home from school. We would have to feed the pigs and chickens, things like that! We also had a cow, so we had to watch them and feed them. Yes, we played outside — there was hardly any inside! The bathroom was outside and there was no running water inside the house.

My brother and sister and I used to play in a little dirt pile near the house. So we'd take cans and make mud pies and other things out of it. We didn't have any toys, and no doll babies, so we would make things out of grass and mud and sticks! If we found a tire or an old wheel, we'd find a way to play with that by rolling it around.

One time my mother and father were in the fields picking cotton or corn or something. When my brother came back to the house and he had a wagon — you know a wagon like you have the horses in front of? So he came back to the house with the wagon and I was there pushing behind it. I was in between the house and the wagon when it rolled back on me and crushed me between the porch and the wagon. He saw me, but it was a hill. He didn't realize that the wagon was going to roll back so fast down the hill and hit me. So I was in the hospital for months. My mother said she was

going to beat him, but she didn't. It was an accident. I think I still have a little scar right here by my nose.

Sometimes when we were kids we would get together and play cards. We didn't go to the movies and there was NO MALL! For clothes, my mother would buy fabric and she would have somebody else make them. We didn't get our hair done, either; my mother used to roll our hair up in brown paper. That was how we did it. Yes, I had childhood friends and some of them are still my friends. I visit them when I go down South. One of them was Martha, but they called her Babe. She lives in New York now. She was one of the members of the Bennett family.

Oh yes, we had rules. My mother would want us back in the house before the sun went down. She was strict because she was afraid. She didn't want us out there at night. And they were more strict with the girls than with my brother. If you came in after the sun went down, you would get punished and you might get a beating. We would usually go places in a group of girls, and every family had the same rule — home before dark! So, when it started getting dark, everybody would go toward their own houses.

My favorite teacher was Ms. Collier in the First Grade. She would take time with me and had time to teach me. Yes I kept in contact with her after I came up here. Then when I went back down South to visit, I would see her once in a while, and she remembered me too.

I went to Central High in South Carolina. We had to take a bus to school. When I was there it was all Black, but now it's different, it's very diverse. . It was a big school. When I first started High School, I used to have to bring my own lunch, but then later on they opened up a cafeteria. I liked school and I liked Math. No, I never played sports.

Sometimes a DJ would come to our school and we'd have a dance. Back then it would cost 25 cents to go to the dance. Remember, this was many years ago now. You'll be saying the same kind of thing to your grandchildren someday. When we were teens the place we went the most was church. I was even an usher at church. No, we didn't have a lake, but if we did, who could swim? I never learned how to swim. The highlight of my teenager years would be going out, like to a party of something like that. They usually happened around the holidays. But you still had to be back in the house by dark.

There were no jobs for us down there. That's why I moved up here! When I was young the only thing you could do would be plant and pick cotton. You'd work in the field all day and maybe get a penny a pound when you were done. So, we didn't have jobs like you do. When I was your age, it was real hard.

The Second World War didn't really affect my life too much. The biggest thing that happened at that time was that my older sister had a baby. That was a highlight of our life at that time. But, when I was young, my dream was just to leave South Carolina. It was so hot I just couldn't take it anymore. Everybody has air-conditioning now, but when I was young it

was just HOT down there! Even now, if I go down to visit in the summertime, I don't go outside. I just stay in where the air-conditioning is.

I left South Carolina when I was fifteen and I came up here by myself and lived with my aunt. I came up here so I could get a job. At first I wanted to stay in New York because that's where all of my friends stopped. But I would go for a visit, but not to stay. Now I'm glad I'm here. Up here, I went back to school I took up the computer and did data entry at Blue Cross & Blue Shield for about 10 years. I liked that because I could sit down. I didn't have to stand all day. Then, after that job, I went into home day care. I liked that a lot. Then, when I couldn't do that any more at home, I was a foster mother for about five years.

My best friend during that time was Elizabeth Thompson. She was from South Carolina too. She was raised mostly up here though. I met her when I was eighteen on the job and we were best friends since then. We didn't go to each other's house visiting that often, but we talked on the phone all the time. She has since passed away.

The worst thing that happened to me was when my mother passed away. It happened when my daughter was just a couple of months old. So that really left me on my own to figure things out after she passed. But having my daughter was the high point of that part of my life. It was difficult raising a child without help, but you just have to be strong. My daughter's father was not there. He came back from the service and said, *'that's not my child.'*

So I think my greatest accomplishment has been raising my child by myself, and that took a lot. When she was growing up, the most important thing I tried to teach her was to stay out of the street. Her name is Leslie Jane Thaice. Now she has three children of her own: Shakir Thaice, Sharod & Jazzmin Haywood. And my great granddaughters are Sasha and Sharia. I'm excited about having grandchildren and great grandchildren.

What I look forward to in the morning is to take my shower, then my daughter comes by and I take her to the train station. Then I'll have the car all day.

There are no particular words of wisdom that I got from my family because *everything* they said was that. It would be hard to pick out one thing. My mother was always the one I looked up to. She was my hero. She was everything. Even the way she cooked — I can't get those tastes no matter what I do! Of course, when my grandkids come over they think I'm the best cook ever.

My advice to you is to stay in school and get your education because that's the most important thing you're going to need.