Veronica Robison was born and raised in Springfield, Illinois. She talks about growing up in Springfield, her family life, what she did for fun, her job at the FBI, race relations and affirmative action, the African-American Chamber of Commerce, and several small business ventures that she funded and operated herself. She also discusses racism in Springfield, especially in terms of financial institutions and the police and fire departments, and the NAACP and Urban League.

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Interviewer: Cullom Davis
Transcription by: Susan Crapo
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Interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.
Abstract

Veronica Robison, Springfield African-American History Foundation Project

Biographical Information and Synopsis: Veronica Robison was born in 1950 in Springfield, Illinois. She has an older sister and an older brother. She notes that she never noticed any segregation growing up. She attended St. Peter and Paul School, which was a German Catholic school near her house. She followed in her sister’s footsteps and elected to enroll in Ursuline Academy rather than go to Lanphier High School. Within a month of graduating from high school in 1969, Robison took a job with the FBI in Springfield, where she was still working at the time of this interview. When she was twenty-seven years old, Robison married Norman Cook, an administrator for District 186.

Shortly after getting married, Robison also became involved with St. Paul AME Church, which led to a great deal of community involvement on her part. She worked on various committees in Springfield, which led to her helping develop the African-American Chamber of Commerce. She was voted the first president of the organization. After the organization disbanded, Robison began to try her hand at developing her own small businesses, all of which were very successful. She talks about her successful limo service, a party planning service that she still operated at the time of the interview, and a publishing company she used to publish some of her works. Robison wrote Springfield’s Black Pages to make members of the black community aware of some of the notable African-Americans in Springfield, as well as some black-owned businesses in the city.

Topics Covered: Springfield – 1950s to present; Federal Bureau of Investigation; affirmative action; African-American Chamber of Commerce; small businesses; Springfield’s Black Pages; racism in Springfield; NAACP; Springfield Police Department

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