



Martin O. Weddington Papers.

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## WHAT THE RONDO AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD MEANT TO ME

Martin O. Weddington

Walking up Rondo meant, I was going home. Rondo produced athletes for John Marshall Jr. High, There once was a Welcome Hall Presbyterian Church between Central and Mechanic Arts High Schools. The Welcome Hall Playground St. Anthony and Central, Rev. Camp Pastor. was the training ground for cornmeal valley. This playground had no

grass and the ground was hard as a rock. When a football team got played a game out at Highland, the players would throw themselves on the grass it felt so soft. Most of the kids never had a pair of shoes that fit. or equipment that fit. You had to be tough. Rondo was home.

We had a semipro semi-pro baseball team, "The Twin Cities Colored Giants." No matter where we played and no matter what the crowd size was we never got paid much. Sometimes the story was, "we just broke even" BUT I am going to give you boys some from j my own pocket.

The Salvation Army did provide a camping experience for colored kids at Silver Lake. This was as far away from home as some of us had ever been. There was a time when black was not beautiful or wise to say. If you called me black, that meant fight. You had to be tough, but Rondo was home.

Rondo was a business street. I can only recall a few corners that did not have a building for a business. Such as Rondo and Virginia, Avon and Oxford. S At St. Anthony and Rice was a barbershop that only cut white folks hair. St. Anthony had the pool halls and Jim's and the hollow playground rink. We had sharks but no oceans. You had to be tough. Going down Rondo meant, I was going home.

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Walking up Rondo meant I was going home. The Rondo neighborhood, to me, extended to Central Avenue on the north and Iglehart on the south. We walked to the nearest streetcar line. The first house in which I slept in St. Paul, in 1924, was on Jay Street between St. Anthony and Central. When I lived at 221 Rondo, it was called lower Rondo. The Rondo gangs were not all black then. I was the only Black in my first gang. Rondo was my home.

*ST. James was at Fuller & 1231.*  
*2 Church, & playground*  
The Welcome Hall Center was lower Rondo's playground, and sometimes we would not allow Oatmeal Hill kids to cross it. You walked around it. It was like our "Holy Ground." Rondo was my home.

We could visit a jail without going downtown. We had our own jail at Western and Rondo. We had some of the best hills and sidewalks to slide down at Farrington, Virginia, Western and Arundel Streets. Lower Rondo kids went to the Cathedral, Madison, Scheffer and Neill Schools. Rondo was my home.

Rondo had your friendly undertaker, beauty, barber and tailor shops, groceries, fish and meat markets, restaurants, auto and shoe repair, tent meetings, schools and the circus grounds.

*prostitution*  
For your entertainment, there were boudoirs, bordellos, etc. You could purchase moonshine by the shot, teapot, half pint or home brew. Or play *paper* cards, roll cubes or play policy with the Chinaman. *shoot dice*  
Walking up Rondo meant I was going home.

I now live at 714 West Central and Rondo is still my home.

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WHAT THE RONDO AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD MEANT TO ME

WALKING UP RONDO MEANT, I WAS GOING HOME. THE RONDO NEIGHBORHOOD, TO ME, EXTENDED TO CENTRAL AVENUE ON THE NORTH & IGLEHART ON THE SOUTH. WE WALKED TO THE NEAREST STREETCAR LINE. BACK IN THE TWENTIES RONDO WAS NOT AN ALL BLACK ST. I WAS THE ONLY BLACK IN MY FIRST GANG. BLACK WAS NOT ALWAYS BEAUTIFUL OR WISE TO SAY. CALL ME BLACK, THAT MEANT FIGHT. I HAD TO BE TOUGH. <sup>LOWER</sup> RONDO HAD A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING. YOU HAD YOUR FRIENDLY UNDERTAKER, BEAUTY, BARBER & TAILOR SHOPS, GROCERIES, FISH & MEAT MARKETS, RESTAURANTS, AUTO AND SHOE REPAIR SHOPS. WE HAD THE DEN DROP INN, OLLIES PLACE, BERT CARTERS, ROAD BUDDY, GARRICK'S, WALKER'S, <sup>BUDDIE</sup> MOORE'S, SPERLINGS, CARTER'S TAXI, KEYSTONE HOTEL, BOOTLEGGERS, BOUDOIRS, & LADIES FOR ENTERTAINMENT ETC. YOU COULD BY MOONSHINE BY THE SHOT, TEAPOT, HALF PINT OR ORDER HOME BREW. YOU COULD PLAY POKER, SHOOT DICE OR PLAY POLICY WITH THE CHINAMAN. THE BEST KNOWN DRUNK ON LOWER RONDO WAS JOHN THE CONQUEROR. HIS FAVORITE SAYING WAS "HAVE MERCY JESUS." (MY HAIR WAS CUT BY EARNIE ONCE, WITH ONE SIDEBURN POINTED AND THE OTHER SQUARED) THE WELCOME HALL CHURCH WAS A PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH. IT HAD A COMMUNITY CENTER & A PLAYGROUND. THE PLAYGROUND WAS THE TRAINING GROUND FOR CORINEAL VALLEY AND PRODUCED ATHLETES FOR MARSHALL, CENTRAL & MECHANIC ARTS. THIS PLAYGROUND HAD NO GRASS & THE GROUND WAS HARD AS A ROCK. WE NEVER HAD SHOES OR EQUIPMENT THAT FIT. I HAD TO BE TOUGH. WE HAD SEMI-PRO BASEBALL TEAMS, "THE COLORED COPHERS & THE TWIN CITIES COLORED GIANTS." NO MATTER WHERE WE PLAYED OR THE CROWD SIZE, WE NEVER COULD PAID MUCH. THE MANAGER WOULD SAY, "WE JUST BROKE EVEN, BUT I AM GOING TO PAY YOU BOYS FROM MY OWN POCKET. THE SALVATION ARMY PROVIDED A CAMPING EXPERIENCE FOR COLORED KIDS AT SILVER LAKE, DURING THE DEPRESSION, WISE OLD MEN TAUGHT YOUNG MEN HOW TO PLAY TONK & SHOOT POOL. THEY WOULD WIN .35¢ & FED THEIR FAMILIES WITH THEIR WINNINGS. IF YOU WANTED TO WORK ON P.W.A. YOU HAD TO JOIN THE C.I.O. & BRO. SAM ROSS WAS THE ONE TO SEE. WHAT IF DOORS WALLS & BILLBOARDS COULD TALK. NO ONE KNOWS WHERE THE        GOES WHEN THE DOOR CLOSE. THE FRONT SIDE OF BILLBOARDS CARRIED OUTDOOR ADVERTISING. THEIR BACKS SAW OUTDOOR RECREATION AREAS AND WEEDS. WHEN STREETCARS STOPPED AT MIDWAY AT NIGHT, THEIR TROLLEIES DID JUMP OFF THE WIRE. I LIVE ON WEST CENTRAL. FROM MY BEDROOM WINDOW I CAN SEE  $\frac{1}{2}$  OF OLD RONDO. RONDO IS STILL MY HOME. "THERE WAS A RAGMAN, HE CALLED HIM A SHEEVEY. WE LAUGHED AT HIM. HIS SON BECAME A DOCTOR, RUNNING DOWN R.