



Interview with York David Garrett

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Durham (N.C.)

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York Garrett: I was born in Edgecombe County in a black town that had the oldest charter of a city in North Carolina, a black city in North Carolina called Princeville, North Carolina. It's right on the Tar River right across the street from Tarboro, North Carolina. White and colored lived in Tarboro. Princeville was all black. It's an all black town and it had it's post office, it's stores, post office and other things that you normally have, mayor and all like that. All were black. And it continued to be that way. It is still that way. Oldest black town and the first black town in North Carolina that had been chartered as a city.

KM: Do you know when it was chartered?

YG: I should know but I don't. It was before I was born. I was born in that town in 1894 and my father had been living in that town for at least twelve to fourteen years before I was born. I was the eighth child out of a family of ten and my father who was a grocery merchant, what they called plain and fancy groceries, owned the store in Tarboro but he lived in Princeville.

KM: You called them what, plain and fancy?

YG: Plain and fancy grocery stores. All the stores were called that. Any grocery store that was being operated by anybody that was selling food, it wasn't dry goods. No dry goods. Plain and fancy grocery store. He sold meat, cheese, butter, eggs, baking powder, coffee, tea. Everything that you would find in a supermarket now, those stores did that. That's what they sold.

KM: You said his store was in Tarboro?

YG: Yeah.

KM: Why was his store there instead of in Princeville?

YG: I can explain that to you too. When my father was born, four years before he was born, the Civil War was going on. He was born a slave. But he didn't know anything about this because he was (tape not clear). When the war was over he was four years old. His mother and father belonged to some whites that had slaves. His father's mother was looked upon badly. The people that owned them were very good folks. She was the housekeeper and cook for the people who owned their slaves so she lived in the house. The house is still standing too in Edgecombe County, in the house with the people that she was a slave of, she and her husband. They had two children, my father and his sister. But before slavery time was over his father who had the same name that I have, part of the same name that I have, was a harness maker. He could make saddles and things like that and it was very, I don't know how he learned it or where he was he was a slave. But he learned it sometime before he left Africa or before he left wherever he came from to come to America. But he came as a slave and it was Indian to. So what happened, being a well trained harness maker, you understand what I'm saying, his master would loan him out to other farm people that had slaves to do work for them. He wouldn't get any pay for it. Those people would pay his master. I'm getting this from my father. He told me this when I was a child. Once my grandfather, my father's father, was sent

somewhere to do a special job with some other slave owners. This job probably took two or three weeks but the man knew how long it was going to take and he won't worried about it because he was sent there. I guess he walked. There won't no trains or nothing back in the old days. You walked or horse and buggy or wagon. But when he got back to Edgecombe County where his wife was working in the house with these white people that owned them and was the cook, his master wanted to know why he was so long getting back from the place he'd sent him. He said, now I don't know nothing about this, my father tells me this because I was a little boy, said I don't know. I got back here soon as I could. I was a good ways off. The man said well you should have been here at least a week ago. This is history that they told me. I'm not making it up. You understand what I'm saying? And he said, for that because you're a week late getting back here, I'm going to give you a good whipping. My father told him and of course he got this real good from his mother because his mother was a grown person, my father's mother was a grown person and he was just a little boy. So he got all this stuff from his mother and father.

And he said he told the man I did what you told me to do. I did a good job and I'm satisfied with that. I got back as soon as I can and I think you should be pleased with me. But I'm not going to take any whipping. The master said yes you are, I'm going to give you a good whipping for it. And he said naw, I ain't going for that. They told me this now. I won't there. It was long

before I was born. You understand what I am saying. And so the next day when he went to look for him, his father had gone and he never saw him anymore. He left. The boss man never did see him anymore and nobody else saw him anymore. He left and what they said then said he went west. West could have been South Carolina or Tennessee or anywhere else. Could have been Ohio. He just said he went west. He might have been in the same state because where we lived was the eastern part of North Carolina, Edgecombe County. But he said he left his master and never was seen anymore by any of his people. But his mother, my father's mother, continued to be with these people because they were very fond of her and she was the housekeeper and the cook and everything. As they grew up after her husband left and never came back, she married again. The person she married that time was named Bowens.

That was her second husband. She only had two children by her first husband, York Garrett. My name is York Garrett. But she married again, slavery time but she married again and by that husband I think she had four or five children. But they were not Garretts. They were Bowens because that husband was Bowens. They left Edgecombe County when she met this man. See slavery is over now. You see what I mean. No slavery and when she met this man she left Edgecombe County and went to Washington County, the county seat of Plymouth, North Carolina. Plymouth is in Washington County. There's a town in eastern North Carolina called Washington but it's not in Washington County. That's in

another county. But Plymouth is in Washington County and that's where my grandmother went after she married the second time. She had five or six children and she raised them. But she didn't lose her connection with the two children she had in Edgecombe County.

See slavery time is gone now. It wasn't any slavery then. They were free. So the white families, some of the big white families in Edgecombe County that my grandfather was connected with were very good people, white and they had slaves but they were good people. One of the men that had owned him, didn't own him anymore because slavery is over, thought a lot of him and trained him the best he could. There won't no schools way back then. You think it out - in 1864 or 1865. But he taught him and sent him to the little school that was provided and he went about as high as fifth grade which was a good way to go for black slaves. He was very good at that. Well, I mean he won't good but that's as far as he went. And this particular man liked him so well he gave him a job working in his grocery store, plain and fancy grocery store in Tarboro. When the Spanish-American War came about this white man went in the war and while he was there he made major in the Spanish-American War. This is the same war that Roosevelt was in. You understand what I'm saying. When he came back having this degree, not this degree, as officer, as a major, he was an outstanding white person. A lot of them went and came back as privates, some first sergeants and something like that. But he was a major in 1898 in the Spanish-American War. He came back and

he () and said well, this white man, this white family, he decided that he could do better than just run a white and black grocery store. So he sold his store to another white man in Tarboro that had enough money to buy the store from him. That man moved from Tarboro to Durham. This is a funny thing. Before he did that my father had grown up, had gotten married, working under this man and he had two children while he was working for this man, a girl and a boy. My father was the boy for this man who was a major and came to Durham. But when my father got married and had his first child, not his first child, his second child, he thought so much of this white man that had done all the things for him, he named his first child after this white man, William Judson - my named that son William Judson Garrett. That man's name was William Judson Burnette. No, William Judson Gant, the white man.

So my father named his first son after this white man he thought so much of the white man. And the man thought a lot of him because he gave him a start. Then this man left and came to Durham, family's here now. I've never seen them. But it's a big Gant family in Durham now and it's the same family that brought my father to where he would go and put him in business. But he didn't put him in business. He was working for the store and sold the store to another white group and that man learned to like my father just like the other man did and thought a whole lot of him and made him the first clerk in his store in charge of everything.

It's white and black. I mean a white man owned it but it was a

store that anybody could buy things from if you need that kind of thing. Now I don't want to take too much of your time but I'm going to tell you, so what happened a few years after the man who my father was so fond of that he named his first son after him liked what my father was doing well enough he became involved with him to the extent that he said he thought - Edgecombe County was a farming cotton, corn, peanut place, that's Edgecombe County and still is, one of the biggest counties that's down there though, strongest county, Edgecombe - he, one morning, now my father is married and has two children, maybe more than two because I'd have to go back to the years, one morning my father came to work and the man told him said York, I want to sell you my store. My father had never owned the store before but he was working for the other man, Gant. He said I can't buy it. I don't have the money to buy your store with. He said well, that's what you don't know.

I'm going to arrange it so you can buy it. I'm going west. He said he went west. He was just one of two or three brothers. The other brothers are still in Tarboro. They were Burnettes. He left and turned the store over to my father. My father continued to operate it and sent him the money for it just like he supposed to have done until he paid it off and then store was his true and simple. And that store was located in Tarboro, North Carolina on Main Street right downtown in the heart of the town. That's where my father was in business when I was born. I told you I was the eighth child and he had had seven children before me. But that's

where he was in business when I was born. So I've never known my father to work for anybody because he was in business for himself before I was born and continued to be in business for himself until he died. He was well thought of in Edgecombe County and in the area because that's where he'd been all his life. He said he had no father because his father ran away when the man said he was going to whip him. But his mother was still living and later on he had his mother to come back from Plymouth where she went. She came back to Tarboro and he built a house for her to stay in. He bought his first house in Princeville. Then he moved from that house in Princeville when he had three children I think to another house he built in Princeville on Main Street. That was the house I was born in. That house is still standing.

KM: It still stands?

YG: Yeah. Then in 1901, see all this time my father is in business in Tarboro, all this time. He never had his business in Princeville. He just lived in Princeville. In 1901 he moved from Princeville to Tarboro and bought him a lot and built him a home in Tarboro on E.C. James Street. It was an eight room house which was very pretentious back in those days to have an eight room house and belong to him. So when they moved from Princeville and came to Tarboro I was five years old.

KM: When they moved from Princeville?

YG: Princeville to Tarboro.

KM: The eight room house was in Tarboro?

YG: Yeah that he built. He built all those houses, didn't build them himself but he had it done. But his house in Tarboro was a brand new house and he had built and paid for it and moved from Princeville. He still had his house in Princeville. He didn't sell his house in Princeville. He left it and rented it out and came to Tarboro. That's when he established his residence in Tarboro, North Carolina instead of Princeville, North Carolina. He continued to be a citizen of Tarboro, North Carolina not Princeville anymore. But still then Tarboro had no black schools. All the schools in Tarboro were white schools. Edgecombe County, they had no black schools in Edgecombe County because Princeville was right across the river and was all black so the people who owned Tarboro, in charge of Tarboro, the white folks, they took all that money and gave it to the colored town and you had the school. The school was called Princeville Graded School that I graduated from. You see what I'm saying now? It wasn't any Tarboro Graded School, black. There were white graded, high school and everything. Very good schools. But there weren't any black graded schools in Tarboro until after I finished grammar school. Now that's all I want to tell you about that. That's all the important things except then my father had living, he had lost some children, People, if you twenty-two children some of them died at childbirth. I said there were ten children. I didn't say ten that lived. You follow what I'm saying now? Six children lived to be grown. Eight of the children were teen-agers when

they died. But then we stopped, we were still going to school in Princeville but we were living in Tarboro. That was the county seat and my father had been well known, well thought of all that time and he continued to be a citizen of Tarboro and got into politics and things like that. They had two mayors of Princeville, black, but he was living in Tarboro, working in Tarboro, so he wasn't too close to the Princeville side because he was getting money and everything from the Tarboro side where there were black and white. Princeville was all black. Tarboro was black and white. It was fifty-fifty. One half of the people in Tarboro were black and the other half was white.

KM: So both blacks and whites went to his store?

YG: Yeah and they continued to do that until he died. That's enough about that. But what I was lecturing on now, so what happened when I was in about the sixth grade of Princeville graded School, there were prominent, well-known principals at school that finished over in Ohio, came south. A lot of whites and blacks went south to help the people in the south after slavery. This man was named John Jones. Very fine man and he was principal at Graded School and he taught the two top classes. It was eighth an grade school. The seventh and eighth grades he taught, the principal taught. Well you understand way back then how things would have been. And this man, I was very fond of him. He was a very sturdy, strong man and he did more personal teaching than he did - just any students he had, he had enough to

go make it, he would take them under his wings and help them out.

They didn't have any regular graded schools according to how you graduated at that time. But when you got to be in his class if he kept you two years, he trained you good, then he'd let you go, fix for you to go away to school, Shaw, St. Aug's, Elizabeth City, A&T, Winston-Salem, or whatnot. Understand? And he was good enough that the students he sent there made good at those schools.

My oldest sister that went to school in Tarboro when she got, in the same school I'm talking about, when she got old enough that they couldn't teach her anymore, I don't mean couldn't teach her but she couldn't go any further, my mother and father sent her to Shaw to Estes Seminary. She graduated from Estes Seminary. But that was just a high school. See what I mean, Shaw. And she graduated from there and came back home and taught school. My oldest brother that lived he finished the same school that I finished and my father and mother sent him to Shaw. He was at Shaw and stayed six years and got his, finished the prep school at Shaw, which was Shaw Prep School, then went to college and graduated, got his AB degree in Shaw in 1908 rather than going to med school. At that time Shaw had a med school. He could have gone into med school his second year of college which was your choice or you could take another year in college and go into med school after you got your degree? Half of the people from Shaw and going to med school, half of them got their degrees in medicine and the other half didn't. But they got their MD just

the same. One third of the families in North Carolina, medics and things like that that finished Shaw, are very outstanding, prominent physicians in the state. One of them was Dr. Warren who is the father of Mrs. Wheeler, the lady who owned the () Farmer's Bank. Her daughter Julia is Dr. Warren's grandmother, grandfather. He went to Shaw and graduated medicine and came back home to practice. Dr. Struthers, Dr. Mills, all those people went to Shaw and came back to North Carolina to practice, spread out. But a whole lot of medics finished Shaw University before the school gave up medicine.

My brother who was going to take medicine had bad luck. The year he graduated in 1908 in May and had put his application in for Shaw and had been accepted to go to med school that fall, had about five close friends of his that was the third year medicine then because they didn't go to the same college. But they were close friends of his. They were just like this. He was going them but in the year that he finished Shaw, got his degree, he came down with tuberculosis. He graduated in May and died in August after spending six years in Shaw. That was my oldest brother. I just loved him. I'm the middle boy. See what I mean.

You've got a big brother, he's crazy about you, especially in going to a big school, Shaw University and all this football team and all this stuff. I'm just a little kid and I became enamored with all of this. (Laughter) But I just gave you that background to show you something about how that school was. There's this man

from Oberlin that brought it about. While I was in the school, Princeville Graded School, this man died, died in school while school was going on. I was in his classroom. I was only in the sixth grade. He hadn't had me long enough for me to graduate. If he had I'd gone to Shaw. The first year he died they brought another man from the West End that was () but he had a good degree and was well trained. But a whole lot of, hundreds of negroes from the West End came in here and they got good spots because they got good schools to start with. They weren't in slavery. See what I mean? But North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia we were slaves. I mean the group. He died and two years, the first year after he died there was a man, Episcopal family, very important Episcopal family, people that were over the Episcopal Church there in Tarboro, and they were very popular people, good family, solid family and well educated. They were connected being Episcopalian they were connected with St. Aug. This man had three children. He was a preacher, had three children, a boy and two girls. They sent the boy and he was trained, he didn't go to the public school in Tarboro because they had a parochial school run by the Episcopal church, private. That was the only black school there was in Tarboro but it wasn't acceptable because we all went to the public school. This was just a private school called the Perry so-and-so School. The name was Perry. And they trained this boy himself. I guess he had twenty-five or thirty members. Members of the Episcopal Church

and anybody that was a member could go to this school and take care of them in the parochial school. Do you follow me? So when this boy finished, they taught him well enough to go to St. Aug's.

At that time when you went to St. Aug's you were either in the first year high school or below. That's what St. Aug was, the same St. Aug that's here now. He went there. He was from a prominent family of Episcopalians and they had a close connection with all the people at St. Aug's that's interested in sending their son to St. Aug. He went there, stayed and graduated from St. Aug's. Then he wanted to go north to go to college. But they didn't think he had enough training from St. Aug's to get into the school he wanted to go to. So he went () great white high schools, academies up in the east coast. Name one or two, you might remember them. They're white schools. They're there now. They're the people who provide all the people for Harvard, Yale, Brown and all like that, those schools, three or four different ones but they were academies. Understand? This young man wanted to go to Yale but they didn't think they knew from St. Aug's what they taught him. He finished St. Aug's but they didn't think he'd do well unless he got some extra work in one of those academies. I can't think of the () but they're still big things. Right now most of the big white people that go to Yale, Harvard, Brown and Cornell go to these prep schools before they go there. Now you've heard of those prep schools but I just can't call their name now. That's where this man went to that school for a year

and when he got through that school he was admitted to Yale. He was admitted to Yale in 1902. His name was William Augustine Perry. He got his Augustine from (), I mean that's where he got his name, the family, Episcopal family. He stayed there four years and in 1907 he graduated. He was a physician too. His mother and his aunt was a physician and all like that and learned how to play organ and all that stuff. He was a very talented young man. He was admitted to Yale and when he got there in 1902 he finished in -he must have got there in 1903 because he stayed there four years -he finished in 1907 and in 1907 he was valedictorian of his class at Yale University from Tarboro, North Carolina. Then this man who'd done so much for me from () was dead so he came back home and applied for the job as principal of the Tarboro-Princeville Graded School to be principal of that school. The white school wouldn't have it because the town Tarboro was controlled by them big ruthless white people in the United States, () Company, so and so and so, that's in Edgecombe County, Tarboro. There's a group of white people that owned the county. They were white but they thought well about the colored people in the county that they thought well of. So when he came back to Tarboro and asked for the job the people in charge of the Tarboro Graded School, of course it was still Princeville Graded School, gave him a job as principal of the Princeville Graded School. And he said what he wanted to do, his desire was to set this school up on a good strong basis so

that it could compete with anybody in the United States anywhere as a grammar school. And it just so happened the first year he came there I was in the sixth grade. There were just a few boys in his class and all the others were girls. I'd known him since I was a kid like this and he had known my family. He took a particular interest in me and he tutored me for four years. I was the first boy from his tutoring that graduated Yale in (). Valedictorian of class and wrote Yale's battle song. He wrote the battle song. "Eli Here I Come," he wrote that song. When I graduated, I should have graduated two years before I did but he, most of us weren't able to go nowhere so he kept on and taught us all the things that he could teach us. You know if you don't ever go any further you'll know this. After he stayed there four years he felt he'd done his job. He had taken Tarboro Graded School and put it on a sound, sound, sound basis from first grade to eighth. I was the first, girls graduated, but I was the first boy that graduated under him and I'd been under him four years. That's why when I left Tarboro Graded School and wanted to go to Shaw and my mother wouldn't let me go to Shaw because my brother had died with tuberculosis and she felt that the school had killed him. My sister died but she graduated from Estes. She thought the school killed him. It wasn't that. We couldn't do anything with tuberculosis then. You follow me? We didn't have any drugs for it. So when I come along, I'm the last boy in my family. I had girls over me but my brother's dead so she says she didn't

want me to go to Shaw because I'd go there and catch tuberculosis and die. So instead of going to Shaw where I wanted to go when I finished Tarboro Graded School they sent me to Elizabeth City instead which I was supposed to have made the first year high school class in Elizabeth City. The principal wanted you to have two years of high school. They didn't have but two years in high school. I was supposed to have made the first year class but I had extra credits from this (tape not clear). They said you're further than the second year. You're as good as the second year. All the work you've done is the second year in high school. But I went there so I stayed there six months and graduated because I had all this training that this man had given me passing me for four years. Then I still wanted to Shaw but my people wouldn't let me go so I went to Howard instead. I had no trouble at all. I stayed in Elizabeth City one year, went to Howard and made the third year academy in Howard University and that was a school just like them big white academy schools up the way. Most of the teachers were white at Howard then. I did alright with them (tape not clear) finished the academy. I didn't want medicine because I didn't figure (). I thought I wanted dentistry. I was in Howard three years before I could get out of the academy or college and go into dental, then Howard well medical, dentistry and pharmacy. By the time I got through with that I knew I couldn't be a dentist because in those times the dentists did all the work themselves, mechanical work. () and I was not

oriented for that type of thing. I can't even drive a nail straight or saw a board straight. It wasn't my type and I didn't go for it so I knew that so I said well, I've been glued to my father all my life til the time I was born til () and I knew all about selling stuff in the stores. So after I came back home I asked pa, said what you going to do. I said well, the only thing I can see that you trained me for if I can get in the pharmaceutical school I can be a druggist. Only thing you teach me is selling and () that would be my field. The only thing about it, it'll be a profession. (Laughter) So he said if that's what you want to do, do it. So instead of entering dental school or Howard Medical School I didn't want to do, I went to Howard Pharmaceutical School and graduated and came out of school, passed the board. My pa was still in business in this store in Tarboro on Main Street and saved some money and all the children were out and he had enough money to buy things that I needed and I opened up my first store, brand new store, everything custom built, in Edgecombe County, Tarboro. That was in 19-- something.

(Laughter) It was 1920. I finished Howard in 1920 in pharmacy and I took the boards that year. It took me a year to build it and furnish it and everything, new store I was opening in Tarboro.

I opened my first store May 2, 1921 in Tarboro. I stayed there til I came here.

KM: What did you sell at your store in Tarboro?

YG: I thought it was the best black drugstore in North

Carolina. It was Garrett's Drugstore. There was no black store in Tarboro, drugstore and the law was that no black could be served at any white place because it would be illegal. If a man came to the store, had some prescriptions from a white or black doctor and the prescription had to be filled and they could go take thirty or forty minutes to fill it they'd give the druggist, all these white stores now, the prescription and he had to go outside and stay on the street somewhere til he got through and come back and get it because he couldn't stay in the store and get his medicine. The law, the state made the law. No colored person could be served anything like that in a white establishment but he could in a colored establishment. But see there wasn't no colored drugstore until I came there and opened the first colored drugstore that Tarboro ever had. It was easy for me to do that because my father had been in town all that time. He was in business selling colored people () before I was born and was still doing it. I just hate to make this statement but it's true, he was one of the best known and outstanding black person in Tarboro and continued to be until he died. I'm not building him up. I'm just saying what the situation was so that's what I had to draw on. That's what I go from and also my brother who stayed in Shaw for six years. He was a fine (). He liked him and he had a good raising, good looking and all like that. By the time he stayed in Shaw back in those days with all those people that he would come in contact with in Raleigh he's one of the best known

black college guys in Shaw University. His name was William Judson Garrett. He was named, that was the one that was named after this white man that had helped him. You know what I mean, with a name like that he was an outstanding person. But then he had an outstanding name. His name wasn't John Smith. He wasn't Willie Brown. He happened to have a name of his grandfather which was, I mean his grandpa was York Garrett. His father's was York David Garrett. The David came before I came in. He had a brother who was York David Garrett, Jr. That's me. After () when, how long you been here?

KM: About forty-five minutes.

YG: Another thing, how long you been in Durham?

KM: About a year.

YG: Well you weren't here. They had an affair for me a little over a year ago.

KM: I saw the flyer from it.

YG: They did this because of my father and my brother. I wasn't well known. I wasn't (). It was in me else I wouldn't have gone where I did. But with a name like that, for thirty years before my father died he was the treasurer of the () statewide and was a member of all the secret societies like Masons and all like that and was the Grand Lord Yorks in all those things. And so when I came along and they got to know me and my name being the same as his, older people would say what's your name. I said () Garrett. You York Garrett's

boy? Yeah. You alright, you're going to make it because he's a fine man. (Laughter) I got credit for him. As I got bigger and got circulated two-thirds of the most important doctors in North Carolina had been () of my brother six or seven years before and they liked me and took over and took me in as their, kin to York Garrett, that was my father. So when they asked me (). They said he was a fine man. And they started giving me the grips and everything. He was a member of five secret societies when he died.

KM: Which ones were they?

YG: He was a Grand Lord's officer of the Masons. He was the Grand Lord's officer and treasurer of (). He belonged to Knights of () but he didn't do any Grand Lord there. He was, old members of the Masons, the women's department called you know what it is, Eastern Star and all Eastern Star organizations had to have a man in it, two men, at least two men to make it legal, to protect the women. So he was a member of Eastern Star. The Household of Ruth is a women's department of the (). They had the same thing coming up. They had to have a man so he was a member in the Household of Ruth. He was a member of four black societies, men and two women's societies when he died. That was for the state. He was the only one in the state to ever be called with activity with the secret societies. That was his life. He was different than me and was so much so that I never took any part in any of it. I think what I might have happened, this

sounds funny, being the eighth child, by the time I was conceived I guess my father was going to so many meetings every weekend that my mother just got sick of it. (Laughter) She was a member of those things too. She was in Eastern Star, Household of Ruth and all of that. That's all because she couldn't be in no men's organizations. So it must () so I didn't want to join nothing like that and never did. The people that I come in contact with now can't believe that I'm not a Mason, that I'm not a () because all the ones that are still living knew my father was one. He was a Grand Lord on all of these things. (Laughter) But I never joined it. The only thing I ever joined, secret society I every joined, was a fraternity.

KM: Which fraternity?

YG: I'm afraid to tell you. I went to Howard in 1913. In 1913 Tau Delta Mu medical fraternity was started. That's the year I went there but you could only join it if you were in med school. Understand? But at that time there were three fraternities in Howard, Alpha Pi Alpha, the B Chapter, the second chapter. The first one was at Cornell and the second was at Howard. Omega Si Pi. The first Omega Si Pi was at Howard. And then the Pi Beta Sigma. They were all at Howard. I was exposed...

(End of Side A - Tape 1)

Side B - Tape 1

YG: ... () unless I was in college and I took one year in college then decided what I needed was pharmacy so I didn't

have to go back to college for pharmacy. You see what I mean? So I just switched from, after I finished one year in college went on to pharmaceutical school. Being in pharmacy school must have been outstanding enough that I'd been in pharmaceutical school one year and I was initiated into Tau Delta Mu medical fraternity. See they took medicine, dentistry and pharmacy with a core. There were forty members in it, original members in the fraternity. Twenty medics in med school at Howard, fifteen dentists in med school at Howard and five pharmacists. They didn't have to have five pharmacists but they couldn't have any more than that because the quota was for forty people in the fraternity. The first time I was eligible to be made I was inducted into Tau Delta Mu fraternity and not Alpha because I wasn't in college and not Omega because I wasn't in college. I was in med school. You understand what I mean. So the fraternity that I joined was in 1914 was Tau Delta Mu fraternity. At that time all fraternities were closed. You couldn't be a member of but one. Being a member of Tau Delta Mu I wasn't eligible to the Alpha or Omega or Pi Beta Sigma because each one was closed to itself. But after about a few years so many physicians and dentists in the medical profession come into contact with these strong Tau Delta Mu fraternity people they wanted to be a medical fraternity so the three organizations came together and made a special pact that if you were a member of Tau Delta Mu or if you were a member of Alpha Pi Alpha or if you were a member of Omega Si Pi you could also be a member of one of

the other groups only if you were, so I had access to be in the other three groups after the rules changes. You understand what I'm saying. So when I came to Durham I was still Tau Delta Mu medical fraternity but they didn't have an active medical fraternity in Durham. Follow me? But they had a strong Beta Pi chapter of Omega Si Pi and I didn't know. One morning I woke up and one afternoon somebody came to me and said last night you were voted into Omega Si Pi Beta Pi chapter. In that time it wasn't well known that you could be in that and medical too. I hadn't thought nothing about it. I said naw, how do you do that? I said you all don't know but I am Tau Delta Mu. He said we knew it. I said well you sure? He said yeah. I hadn't heard about the (). I had been out of school so long and I was busy running the drug store. You know, I had come to Durham then. I said yeah well I'll find out. He said well you won't embarrass us. At that time the Beta Phi chapter of Omega Si Pi fraternity was the strongest chapter in the United States. It was the Beta Pi chapter here in Durham. But it was a graduate chapter. It was the strongest fraternity in the United States at that time. I had been voted into it and they said you are going to embarrass us a whole lot if you tell me you can't be voted on and tell you and bring you in? I accepted and was Beta Pi, Omega Si Pi. I continued to be and still am Tau Delta Mu because that was my original fraternity, () medical and dental, Tau Delta Mu. I didn't mean to get into that. That don't mean nothing.

KM: So you said you were just voted in?

YG: See when you got voted into those fraternities you didn't know anything about it until it's done. They work you up. If they want you then they tell you you have been accepted for so and so and so and so. I was accepted into Tau Delta Mu. I didn't know I was even being voted on. But they couldn't take but five pharmacists and they had three in there at the time from a former class. So there weren't but two places available. I got one of those the first time. I didn't apply. You don't apply. They go over you in the school and pick out who they want. Then they notify you after you already been elected. You understand what I men? But that's all about that but this other thing you were asking about that I want to tell you this again. The man who came from Yale and spent four years organizing, putting it in good shape, the principal of Graded School had it where it was one of the best black graded schools in North Carolina when he got through putting all that time in. He came to Tarboro because he was a Tarbornian. He finished here and all and finished Yale and he came back and his mother and father and his sisters were still living. When he came back and did what he did for that and I felt so good about it that he told me, he kind of petted me, but I did my work real well with him, he was hoping that when the time would come that I would go to Yale. But my people weren't able to send me to Yale so I went to Howard. (Laughter) See what I mean? Then I didn't finish going through college because I found out I

didn't need to go through college to get the pharmacy degree and that I could do the best (). I didn't think about it anymore but I've never forgotten all the things he taught me about Yale. When my last son was born and was a pretty smart boy I thought and everybody else thought so too, when we moved to Durham he was two years old. He went through all the schools in Durham.

I don't mean all the schools he went to school in Durham. When he got old enough and big enough he finished a year sooner than he should have in high school because he did some work in summer school. His class was 1949 and he finished in 1948. But all his close friends were in 1949, Hillside. He was valedictorian of the class he finished in that was a year ahead of himself. So I felt real good about it. You don't know him. You've never met him, Nathan Taylor Garrett.

KM: Yes I talked to him.

YG: That's my baby son. So when he graduated from Hillside and was ready for college I was in better shape than I had been because he was my last child. I had come here and done pretty good and owned my home and owned the own store, still the oldest store in Tarboro. I hadn't sold that then. See what I mean? Then later on I opened up a store here. One time I had three drugstores going at the same time. But I asked him how would he feel about it? If he could be accepted to Yale would he go? He said I'd rather go to Central. You know what I mean, you saw all the people around here. You know Shaw or somewhere like that. I

didn't ask him if he wanted to go to Howard because the epitome had been built in me from that man that did so much for me years ago that I wanted to get some benefit, not benefit, I wanted to get some connection, be connected with Yale. So I asked him that and he said well you have to take an examination. They had a broad examination for all the Ivy schools. See what I mean, for Yale, Harvard, Brown and Dartmouth. They had the examination down in Raleigh every year. When you take that exam, mostly whites take it, if you pass it then you are eligible to go to either one of those schools if any of them will take you or have room for you. When my wife took him down to take the examination in Raleigh for college they asked him what school did he want. He told him his preference - Yale, Harvard or Dartmouth. When he passed the board they said yes you passed and you will be accepted and they have a spot for you in Yale. That's just where I wanted him to go. So he went there and stayed and when he was going on twenty he graduated from Yale and that was his mark. And he went.

That was my answer. I couldn't go but he went for me. He was pretty lucky too. I mean Nathan. You say you met him? I thought he was lucky too. He did a lot of good things. Made up his mind things he wanted to do. Things I would never have done and didn't want to do. But he did it and he's doing it now. He's teaching at Central now. He and his wife finished law school in 1986, Central. But a long time before then when he was in Detroit he gave up medicine. I wanted him to take medicine but he didn't

want it particularly and he gave it up and went into business administration from a school out in Detroit and he graduated and took the board in business administration in accounting, CFA board and he passed it. At the time he passed that there were no black CPEs in North Carolina and couldn't be. It was an all white organization. But they couldn't stop him from practicing in North Carolina because he had passed his national board. He stayed in Detroit and came here two or three years to do work for Mutual or the bank, North Carolina Mutual Insurance then go on back to Detroit because he was a member of the CPA Board of the United States and he could do the work so he did. Now he's still doing his thing. Of course he's getting older. He told me last night he's getting ready to quit. (Laughter) And I guess he is. I told him I didn't blame him. I'd be ready to quit too if I'd done as much as he's done.

KM: So when did you come to Durham?

YG: 1932.

KM: And why? What brought you here?

YG: 1928 and 1929 the eastern part of North Carolina went down to everything, not for whites or blacks, for everybody. That was the time when they had the bank's holiday and all that mess. The whole country was down. At that time I had been in business for seven or eight years in Tarboro and did alright I thought. But I wasn't doing any better and then I had four children. I had made up my mind, I never had a scholarship to any school and never

wanted one. I had made up my mind I could send my children to school and I didn't want a scholarship. To hell with the scholarship. I was working and I could pay their way through. And I did. I was going to and so when things got so bad I decided I'd better leave if I wanted to do what I wanted to do I'd better leave down eastern Carolina and come () North Carolina license, that's all I had. Go to a town in North Carolina where they had industries and when the children got big enough if I couldn't send them to college like I had hoped to do they could go to school there in Charlotte, Winston-Salem, Greensboro or Durham or Wilmington. I didn't mean particular about any of those exactly, I didn't care which one I went to but I felt like what I had learned and what I had in the store I had and the way I operated it if I was in a good town I could make my living. I was going to move my store from where it was to a good town. I just believed myself if I was in a town where some business was I could get my part of it. If the business was there but down east it wasn't there then. Things had gone to flat bottom. I was trying to get out before I lost everything I had. At that time my father was dead. He died in 1928 and left us in pretty good shape. But I could lose everything he'd left if you weren't making enough to take care of yourself and your family. So I decided to go to some town in North Carolina that I could make it. My wife and I made a trip to Wilmington, Charlotte, Winston-Salem. We just stopped in Greensboro because I had some good friends there because

Greensboro had four good stores. Then Dr. Darnell who was the medical director of North Carolina and a member of the Alpha Pi fraternity and a graduate of Harvard Medical School which is the best medical school in the United States, he was a Greensboro boy.

He came back to Tarboro, North Carolina and married the daughter of the founder of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company and then me and him, this outstanding physician, medical director of the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, the biggest and strongest black company in the United States. That's who he was. He didn't stay in Greensboro, he came to Durham and they made him medical director of the North Carolina Mutual then and he lived in the house that John Merritt had built. His wife was John Merritt's youngest daughter. You know what I mean? So when I got back, made this tour, and I decided that I was going to Winston-Salem. When I got to Winston-Salem I found, I ran into a young man, he won't too young, a little older than I was, that was practicing medicine in Winston-Salem. We had lived in the same house, boarded at the same place when he was in med school and I was in pharmaceutical school. So we knew each other. We had lost sight of each other when he left and came back to North Carolina.

I stayed there and then went on back to Tarboro. It just so happened in Howard Academy there was a young lady that I knew was a classmate of mine, fine girl, they had become married. She was in Howard Academy, a classmate of mine. He was in med school. They had gotten married and I didn't even know it. They were

living in Winston-Salem when I went up to find a place to move my store to. It had gotten to them. He knew me and she knew me. () So I said okay. I told him what I had in mind and he said yeah, ya'll can come down. We're close personally. Said I got a building here that if you like I can turn it into a drugstore. If you come here and want to move your store - see I had a store, bought and paid for, one of the best drugstores. I mean it was built special, furnished and everything for the place where I was in Tarboro. My father paid eight thousand dollars for the furniture the day I opened up. He paid for it for me. (Laughter) I still had it. It was still in Tarboro. I was going to move that store somewhere so he said you can come on up here. I tell you what I'll do, I've got a nephew, I've got a sister and brother-in-law that's a physician. He's practicing here in Winston-Salem. If you come here I can guarantee he'll give you his support, I'll give you mine and you'll come here and make it. You can't do nothing without some doctors if you're working on doing prescription work. He talked to me and I said that's the best thing () and Quick, his name was Dr. Quick. I said I'll take you up on that. I said of course I don't expect you to do nothing for me. I've got my store and I'll move it here when the time comes but it will take me about six months to get straightened out. Dr. Darnell had asked me just as he was talking he knew what I was planning to do because I wrote him. He was secretary of the North Carolina Old North State Medical Society.

Dr. Darnell this man I'm telling you about, and I wrote to him because he had the records of all the people in North Carolina, blacks, dentists, pharmacists and everything and their addresses and names and everything in the different towns. I got a letter from him. I saw all the different doctors and I asked how would they feel about me. They knew me. I had been to school with them at Howard. And would I get a good acceptance if I moved a store there. Some said yes, some said no, some said I think so because the stores were in those towns already. Some of them were not doing so good, were not doing as well as I was. They were doing better than I was doing because the towns were better but they didn't have the equipment and everything to do what I could do because I had a better store than they did. Except one place and that was here in Durham. So when I got through and went on back home, my wife and I, I told them I was going to Winston-Salem. Dr. Darnell said have you signed any papers for that? I said I don't have to sign the papers. I want my store like (). I run into a good friend of mine I had known for a long time going to Howard. His wife was a classmate of mine and we were all close and she had met my wife and they were good friends. He said well, the reason I asked you to come by to see me before you went back to Tarboro, I own a drugstore here in Biltmore Hotel. It's mine and it hasn't done well. I wanted to know could I sell it to you. I said hell no. I ain't got no money to buy nothing nowhere. I got a store. I knew about that store, it was good. That was the

only store in North Carolina that was a better store than mine was in Tarboro. He had bought that store and had all that money he had and the faithful had and Mutual had and all like that. He spent thirty-seven thousand dollars on that store, the Biltmore Drugstore, equipment and everything and it didn't pay off. The reason it didn't pay off, what he didn't know and should have known is there's a lot of jealousy between all professions and especially physicians. When he came here with his big job and working for himself and a physician and everything too and opened up this big store all the other physicians decided they wouldn't support his store. There were four other stores here at the time.

They wouldn't support his store because they weren't going to make him bigger and they wouldn't give him any business for the store, not enough to make it pay. The store was losing money ever since he opened it up. So he wanted to unload it. But he wanted to unload the store and I said I ain't buying nothing. After I went on back home and a number of people came to see me from here, all the officers in the Mutual and big people in the Mutual came back and told him that Dr. Darnell was interested in getting me to come to Durham and if I could work it out and could see where I could, not to sell my store, not to move my store to come here. If I could work out a deal with them and could make it then he guaranteed that I'd get along alright. And if I couldn't make it, being able to increase our sales after three years if I don't like it I could drop it and go back to where I came from. And they

didn't put no weight on me but they told me so that I'd have been foolish not to try it. So I decided I would try it after I talked to my wife and she said I'd really rather come here than go to Winston-Salem. That's what my wife said for personal reasons but we won't go into that. She knew these people and she liked them but I'd had a big full life for twenty some years and I knew people all over the state because of my father and my brother. (Laughter) There wasn't a family from Winston to Asheville of any note that I couldn't get in town and say Garrett's in town, tell him to come by the house. Come here, stay with us. You know what I mean. That's the acceptance I had because of my father. No because of me. Anywhere in North Carolina. So I didn't have no trouble socially. You understand what I'm trying to say? That was easy. So what had happened, I didn't get married when I first got out of school. I got out of school in 1920 and I didn't marry until 1921. I was in school at Howard seven years and all that time I knew a whole lot of chicks. I mean good people. Lincoln Howard football team, so-and-so, Hampton, all over the state. Just a mecca. I knew everybody. Not everybody, you understand what I'm talking about. I knew enough and because of that fact any town you went to you had it made when you got there. Who is that? Garrett's in town. Tell him to come over here and stay with me. We're having a party tonight. Bring him on by. Anything like that. So I saw all that stuff and it didn't make me no difference. So I got to know young women, people, they're all

decent people, all over the state for four or five years before I got married. I was a bachelor and I was eligible. And I knew the facts of life. (Laughter) So that was no problem to me. But because of that we had a word we used to say and when I learned this in Howard, go to any town you want, just take yourself. Don't take nobody with you because the thing you're looking for is always there. It'll be there when you get there. See every town you went to the best women and best girls in town you knew them all and they knew you. I don't mean just me. you understand what I'm talking about. (Laughter) So it was easy. You had nothing to worry about. And I didn't know who I was going to marry and didn't give a darn but I was going to get married when I got my feet on the ground good. And when I went back home and was an eligible bachelor and all the schools back then had more women teachers than they did men and most of the women teachers were single. And most of the women teachers didn't mind having some man they could go out with that was eligible or something like that that they'd feel good about. And of course, that was the way it was. Any town you went to you knew two or three girls in the town. (Laughter) So why should you bring anybody with you, they're already here. If you had to go into Wilmington, they're down there. If you had to go into Asheville, they're there. (Laughter) If you go down to Norfolk, they're already there. That was simple. That was simple. Now listen, don't misunderstand me. You asking me some questions. I'm giving you

some answers. You're getting my point. Because of my father's name () because my brother's, how well he did at Shaw, and then too it's some other things and because of the school I picked, Howard was a fine school then and it ain't too bad now and I did real well in Howard. I did well enough in Howard that my second year at Howard I was always a B or above student, all the time in school if I liked the subject and the dean of the school of Howard Academy was a black man, a fine man () he had to see my mark in one subject of the class. The dean looked at all the subjects and I passed everything except that one subject. He didn't send for me. He sent for the instructor. He said look here, here's a man that's got A's and B's on down the line. You had him in Latin and you gave him a 52. He said that's what he made, second year Latin. I didn't like it no how. (Laughter) He said that's what he made. He said I can't get this. It's going to mess up his book and his card and everything (). He said well that's what he made. So then he sent for me. Said can you explain to me why you got, he was teaching math and all this kind of stuff and English and everything, I just didn't like Latin. He said can you tell me why you (). I said if he says that what I made that's what I must have made because I didn't study () and didn't pay it no mind. The man said I'll tell you what you do, the dean talking to the instructor, said well see, can you give him another exam card. I don't want to send his marks up like this. I'm getting it to go

higher and higher. You see what I mean? He don't want to (). He said no. I'll tell you what I'll do. If you bring him in here right now let me talk to him. He said Garrett, if you promise me, he was the Latin teacher, if you promise me you'll never take anymore Latin as long as you live (). I said I won't no, because that's not my field. He said alright then I'm going to change your mark right now from the 52 to 75. (Laughter) Told me he'd put a D if you promise me you never will, said you ain't going to show me up. He said I didn't teach you a damn thing. (Laughter) That's the only mark that I ever had in Howard that I didn't pass and I passed that because he changed the mark for me. But that sounds crazy but that's part of my life. (Laughter) Have you ever heard of anything like that? When you're in school it happens. I bet it happens out at Duke. Well I hope I told you something you like to hear.

KM: So you took the Biltmore?

YG: Yeah, they told me on condition, that was in 1932, and this is 1993. I had it until they closed it up.

KM: When was that?

YG: Urban renewal. Tore everything down in (). It was still there in the hotel when they closed everything down. I was old enough to go out and then my wife was living. She died that same year though. So my son, one of my children, took pharmacy and he had been to California for ten years and came back here. He had his ups and downs but he was just like he was and he was my

son and her son. So he asked me to open up this store that I have down here now for him and he would be willing if I opened it up for him which I could do and he couldn't, he ran into a bad way with the examining board of the North Carolina Pharmaceutical Society. Somebody on the board didn't like him and you had to have seventy-five to pass. He took the examination three times and he was seventy-two and seventy-three twice. So he couldn't get a North Carolina license because North Carolina was the only state we knew that had () from forty-eight state. Anytime you took the North Carolina board and didn't pass you couldn't get (), which was illegal, not illegal but that's what the law was. And so I had my license and had a nephew with his license and this boy had a license in South Carolina and Washington, D.C. but he couldn't get one from North Carolina. He went out to California, L.A., and got a license out there. But after he got () about the time when I was getting old and he figured I () so he decided to come back home and he was here and that's when they tore down the stores down there. So he asked me to move the store instead of getting rid of it and taking the money to just move the store as it was down here where I am now and let him run it. He would do the work and I had the license. I told him okay. I didn't want him to do it but I did. But he had bad luck. Three years after he opened that store he died with cancer and left me (). But then in the same year that we opened that store my wife died. We'd been married fifty-three years. We were

very much dependent on each other. And this is our home here, all the children you know. So we decided when he died, I sold part of the store that I didn't want to somebody else and just kept the prescription department rather than just stay here all day long and do nothing I go down there and do something, meet somebody and do something and that's what I'm doing now. I ain't working. I may make two or three hours a day and it don't make any difference if I don't make any. But I'm better off doing that than being home. Now I'm doing fine today because I'm here talking to you. But if I won't with you here talking I wouldn't be doing anything here. (Laughter) Do you understand what I mean? I realize what's good for me and so I just take it easy. And my son is lovely. Her little daughter, she's lovely it. They all have four children, three boys and one girl. My daughter wanted to go to Howard because I went to Howard and I let her go to Howard and she never came back. She's still in Washington, D.C. Worked for Howard for several years in public relations. Did real well. And after she did that she's the first woman I ever knew to come up with this women's lib stuff. They gave her a job at Howard and kept her offering another job () and she liked what she was doing. She didn't even care about advancement of pay. So she didn't take it. So they finally told her one day, Mrs., she was named Hayes then, said you get to the place we keep offering you things you take them said you're going to run out of places and you're going to be left behind here. So she said don't worry

about me because I don't know how long I want to stay at Howard anyhow. I went downtown about four or five months ago and took an examination for the Department of Labor and passed it. They told her they could put her to work right then. When they heard about it at Howard they said naw, you stay and we'll give you another job and raise your salary. So she took it. About a year after that the job that they had for the man that was going around recruiting high school students all over the south was a man with a family. At that time Howard was paying him eight thousand dollars a year. He was moving up to something at Howard. They asked her would she like that job and she said she wouldn't mind.

It was three thousand dollars a year more than she was getting paid. So they said you got it. So she took the job, she thought, and when they gave her the contract her contract said six thousand dollars a year. She () said wait a minute, wait a minute, said the job was supposed to pay eight thousand dollars. Everybody knows it (). Said naw, we didn't say we were going to pay you eight thousand. We were paying him because he has a wife, a man with a family like that and children. Said he needs that money but we think you can do real well with six thousand dollars a year. It would take care of all the things for you. She said well I don't think that. She went downtown to the Department of Labor and told them you still have a job open for me? The man said yeah but we need you to go to work next week. She said I can't come next week. I want to give a two weeks

notice and I'll be here in two weeks. So she left Howard University and went to the Department of Labor and stayed with them for twenty-five years. She was as lucky as she could be. She's smart too but she's lucky too. Twenty-five years and by the time she got ready to be retired from there she'd worked herself up in the Department of Labor that she had a job that no woman or man, no black woman had ever had. They sent her to European Economic Conference in Geneva, Switzerland and she represented the United States in Geneva, Switzerland in 1966, three and a half years. No woman had ever had that job and no black had ever had that job. She did so well with it when she came they kept her on promoting her until she got as high as she could go in the Department of Labor. Not an elected job, not no political job, just a regular job. When she had a chance to retire she had three or four more years that she could work but she said she was getting the top salary she could get according to the government.

She said she just as well take that early retirement and get your pension. So she took that instead and gave up the job. But in the meantime, she had a young man that she had known and they had known each other for twenty-five years or more. In other words she had been married twice. The second time she got married she married a guy that was secretary to the dean. They called him executive director of the dean of the Howard Dental School. He was a fine guy I thought, she thought. When she married him his close friend was a man who had been married before and he had

children and he lost his first wife and he married again to a lady who was a very nice lady but she didn't like children. He had two children by his first wife, this man. When Carter came to be president he appointed this guy superior court judge, judge of superior court in District of Columbia. His name was Pret. Carter gave him a job for life as long as he could hold it. But you see he's not doing do that now. In the meantime, he took his children that were little children by his first wife who died and had known my daughter all their life because there were three or four couples, all real close together all the time at Howard. You understand what I mean. They all got along real well but they were close but they weren't kin or something like that. But Gloria had a way with children and children liked Gloria. This man who had these two children, he and his wife separated and he gave her a divorce and she went back to California. But the children were up then, you know, but they had gotten used to Gloria. So Gloria was as close to them as she was when - she didn't know his first wife. She died before Gloria met them. She knew his second wife and Gloria, and it happened that they got together some how or another. He was the best man when Gloria married the second time. This man was that had these two children. When his wife left him, I don't mean left him, when they separated he had nobody and Gloria and her second husband broke up, not mad, broke up when she was in Geneva, Switzerland. So when she came back from Geneva she had nobody. They'd known it

all this time, the children, so they got together and they got married. So twenty-five years after she married the second time she married the best man of her second husband. So he was the best man after all. (Laughter) Here's his picture. This is my daughter and her mother. That was her father, Judge Pret. (Laughter) That didn't have nothing in the world to do with our conversation but it's some history that you know about. So I happen to have a granddaughter in law that's mayor of District of Columbia. (Laughter) So I don't feel bad about that.

KM: Is this the house you moved into when you came to Durham?

YG: Yeah. We lived somewhere else before we came here because we lived in a hotel for awhile until we bought this house. Bought this house in 1934 and have been here ever since.

KM: Have you seen the community change?

YG: Not down here. They tore down all the best part of Fayetteville Street down there but they didn't tear down anything down here in urban renewal. All these houses were here when I came here. The houses were owned by people who lived in them. People built them and lived in them. We were lucky enough to get this house because the man who owned it had a grocery store, supermarket down on Fayetteville Street, down there where everything was torn down and the chain stores came in. Hurt him real bad. He was selling to everybody, credit and all and he had to change from running a store like that and he got in trouble and

had decided he couldn't stand that pressure. But he got behind with his debts and notes and things and I think () Life Insurance Company had the first mortgage on this house. He was making it alright until he got into that trouble with the urban renewal stuff. You understand what I'm trying to say? So he needed to get out of the area and go out in the country and build him a house and a store down there and he would be ahead of the competition with the A&P and so-and-so and Winn Dixie and all that mess. So he wanted to sell the house and we had been here just a year so we bought the house from him.

KM: You had been living in the hotel before that?

YG: Yes one year. We had never moved our furniture from Tarboro because I wasn't sure I was going to be here. The plan was for so many years if it works okay, if it don't I'd turn everything back to them and then go back and get my store and carry it on to Winston-Salem. But we never had to do that because I made it here. The longer we stayed the better things got and I never had a worry in the world.

KM: So did you sell the store in Tarboro?

YG: No what we finally did, had a sister she wasn't a druggist but she was a manager and was very good. She knew everything about running the business. She was one in the family and she was older than I was. She was a twin. She had been working with me in the store, was working with me in the store when I came here. Then when we decided not to move the store I

left her in Tarboro to operate the store with a druggist while we were up here doing and I'd be back and forth. And then that continued that way until she got too old to operate the store regularly because she's older than I am. When that happened we, I think we did pretty good, we just closed the store. I had built the building especially for the store and five apartments in Tarboro. The building was still there. Four years ago opened a new one in Tarboro and did the same thing. Where the store was was in a white neighborhood and they passed a law that as long as we had it and was operating it we could continue to do it but when we stopped nobody else could come in the store. They were going to take the store and tear it down and give me the money for it. Follow me? So that happened about the same time, I still had the furniture and everything down there that I bought when I first got out of school so we took the furniture out of it. They tore the building down. We took the furniture out and brought it here and combined it with the furniture we had at the Biltmore and moved down here where I am now. But after my son died that I opened the store for I didn't need it so I sold most of the furniture to somebody else and just kept enough to do what I was doing. But my sister, she's dead now, she continued to operate the store as long as she felt like doing it. She didn't have no pressure on her particularly because if she made any money, she did and if she didn't make any it was okay because I was in good enough shape to take care of her. She never had any children. I had three

sisters. One of them is married and has three children. One is in internal medicine in New York. The other one is in medicine also, got his board, orthopedic surgeon in New York. That's my oldest sister's boy. She had three boys. The other boy is living in New York. He was principal of the Hempstead High School. He went into education. The other two boys went into medicine. But they're still living and they have children. The oldest boy that's an orthopedic surgeon living in New York had a son that they thought should have gone and taken medicine because they had taken medicine. He didn't () or whatnot...(End of Tape 1 - Side B)

Tape 2 - Side A

YG: So they went along with him so he went to Cornell and graduated and the best veterinary medicine school in the United States is at Cornell. It's an Ivy league school. The best physicians in the Ivy league schools is Harvard. The best law school in the Ivy league schools is Yale. The best business school in the Ivy league schools is Penn with Wharton School. Am I right? And the best veterinary medicine school is Cornell. When North Carolina University, North Carolina State found out that they were going to move Tuskegee Veterinary Medicine School somewhere, A&T tried to get it and they beat them on it. When this boy came out of school and asked for a job to do his residency they grabbed him and said come down here and do your residency and we'll take care of you fine if you can and later on

if you want to do any better you can have a job here. So two weeks ago, he's been down there six years, now he's twenty-eight years old. He finished Cornell veterinary medicine and then he came down here to do his residency and found that he liked so well they game him a job to stay there. They said if he stayed here until he got his Ph.D. he would have a job for life if he wanted it. So he graduated from North Carolina State University Medical School ten days ago with his doctorate (). That was my great nephew. His father is the one that's the orthopedic surgeon. So I've been kind of lucky. But now that was my oldest sister's children. My youngest (break in tape) which she was the oldest one and the youngest one was the one that helped me in the drug store. She never had any children. She got married but she didn't stay married so she didn't have any children. But she stuck with me because she liked what I was doing. She stuck with me and when I first came here she came here with me back and forth. I'd be here with a druggist and she'd be with him and I'd be in Tarboro, back and forth. I had run the store there for a long time because I thought I might go back there instead of staying here. I didn't know how it was going to turn out here. If it didn't turn out - and things got better by that time see then I had two doctors if I'm back in Tarboro if I could persuade them to come on back to Tarboro then I could make it there. I'd have two doctors to depend on. But after I wasn't there anymore one of them went on back to New York and the other one went to

Martinsville and now he's back in New York. But I don't need them. I don't mean I don't need them I mean, you understand what I mean? I'm over the hill now so I'm just going to enjoy sitting here talking to you. (Laughter)

KM: So when you came to Durham did you like it here?

YG: Well see I knew all about Durham before I came here in a social way. You see what I'm talking about? I thought that Durham was one of the towns in North Carolina that I knew four or five girls in. (Laughter) That's just one of the towns in North Carolina. Tell you the truth, North Carolina's that way now. The group that's one the top, they're the same thing in every town. In all those towns they're known in every town they go to - Charlotte, Greensboro, Winston-Salem, High Point, Wilmington, Durham, Raleigh, Goldsboro, Wilson, Rocky Mount, Roanoke Rapids. All those towns have black medical, you know what I mean, impressive people in them and they're black and they know each other and they're all just like this. They stick together and they do things together. It's as easy as that. Unless you just get so big that you can't speak to nobody no more, you don't forget your people. Follow what I mean? And then when you get as old as I am now you don't follow them around too much either because you ain't got time to be worrying with nobody ninety-eight years old. (Laughter) Can you understand that? Why would they want to be bothered with somebody ninety-eight years old when they could be with somebody seventy-two years old? (Laughter)

KM: Were there other black pharmacists here?

YG: There were four black drugstores here when I came.

KM: But you managed to succeed with all that competition.

YG: Yeah. Well I had some help because Dr. Darnell was who he was. This big doctor, big state man and tied up with the biggest black company in the United States as medical director and he called all the shots. Because of that they offered me more than just buying the store. The family was close from the inside. They look after each other. The president of the Mutual is C.C. Spaulding. The second founder of the Mutual is Dr. Moore. Dr. Moore was the man, his name was Moore. He finished Shaw University and was the first black doctor to come to Durham. But he married a woman that was in school at St. Aug's medical, in nursing school. He met her while he was at Shaw and she was in nursing school. After he graduated they got married and they came here. They came here as the first black doctor here and he was one of the vice presidents and second president of North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company. He brought all the Spauldings here because the Spauldings were his people. He was a Moore but the Spauldings were his people, cousins. They filled the town up with those people and they were good people and they were running the town, owned the town. Ed Merritt, his son was John Merritt, and he married Dr. Moore's daughter, one of his daughters. Dr. Moore had just two daughters. Another cousin of Dr. Moore, Ed wasn't no kin to Dr. Moore, he was John Merritt's son, but John Merritt had

a sister that managed () Mutual had a sister and when C.C. Spaulding was brought here by Dr. Moore to take over and help run the Mutual of North Carolina, Mutual Life Insurance Company, he brought C.C. Spaulding here and when he brought C.C. Spaulding here C.C. Spaulding was single. He was a young man. He was single. Follow me closely now. But John Merritt had a sister. So C.C. Spaulding married John Merritt's sister. So all of C.C. Spaulding's children were first cousins to John Merritt's children. And Dr. Merritt was over all of them. He wasn't a Spaulding but that was his family. He brought the family here. But he just happened to be named Moore instead of Spaulding. Down east you're all mixed up, whites and blacks are all mixed up. So when that happened he came here. He had close connections from his wife from the town that I came from. My father had known his family all my life. So I wasn't no kin to them but the family was on the inside together. So that made McDougale, you ever heard that name - he's dead, but you've heard of McDougale Terrace, you've heard of () his name is McDougale () he was one of Dr. Moore's second cousins. He was fine and learned a whole lot about banking. He had been sent to school for that. He's the one who helped start the () department at the bank and was the strongest man in the bank until he died. And the family had so much family stuff in them that stayed together. I don't mean stayed together, they () so Dr. Moore was John McDougale's, R.L. McDougale's second cousin. Dr. Moore just had two

children, one that John Merritt married and the other daughter married McDougle. They were cousins but they weren't too close kin. They weren't exactly kissing cousins but they were cousins.

He just had two children, no boys. So everything Dr. Moore had went to McDougle and part of his stuff that he had went to the Merritts because the Merritts were the biggest thing on the other side anyhow. So what happened when the children got married when Lyda Moore married Ed Merritt whose father was the founder of the Mutual and whose husband was treasurer of the Mutual until he died, they got married and they had two children. The two children they had are Dr. C.D. Watts and Sampson's in Raleigh daughter. They didn't have no boys, just two girls. They were all () Dr. Moore's grandchildren and C.C. Spaulding's first cousin and John Merritt because of the marriage of his sister with her cousin. So the family is all tied in this way. If you get tied in with them and know them well enough then you ain't got to worry about a thing. If you do what they want you to do or do what you want to do if they agree with it you ain't got nothing to worry about. So what they did for me they promised me, they called a bunch of the officers and things, not at one time, before I came to Durham in 1913 the year I went to Howard I stopped by Richmond first and met a lot of people in Richmond that I had never known before. I was inter-mingling with a family that was a very strong black family on Clay Street in Richmond. I got to know this lady, an old lady. But she kind of, nothing wrong, like

we weren't doing anything. So she found out I was going to Howard and had never been to Howard. Said York, if you'll go to Union you can stay with me. You won't have to have no house rent to pay or nothing like that because you're a nice boy. I wasn't but about seventeen or eighteen years old that's all I was then. I'll help you get through school. I said I don't need the help. My father's going to get me through school. I'm going to Howard. My application's already in. So I went on to Howard. But I got to know that family real well. While I was with that family there was a young man that was just a little older than I was. His father had started the Penny's Savings Bank in Richmond, Virginia, big bank. There were big banks in Richmond. The bank closed but he'd been trained in Penny's Bank and he had left Richmond years ago in 1913 and I hadn't seen him then. This is 1932 when I came here. I knew about him but hadn't been seeing him. When I came here he was not in Richmond anymore. He was controller for the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company and living here in Durham right up the street here. He remembered me and I remembered him. So he found out that they were trying to get me to come here. He came and told me, said York, I'm controller for North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company. If you want to come here, he knew I didn't want to come because he'd known me a long time. He knew I had a whole lot of connections. I'm talking about girl connections. He had them too. (Laughter) He said if you want to come here, you'll make it because I can see that you

make it. Said we have a whole lot of people at the Mutual and at the bank and at Mutual Savings and Loan that are working, more women than you have men and they all get good salaries and they all spend money. But they all need accounts. They need somebody that can carry them. If you can come here and open up accounts for all those people I tell you about and send to you, you won't have to worry about a thing because I'll see that they pay you. If you go on to loose () over it I'll find out it before they do and they ain't going to be owing you a whole lot of money.

Understand what I mean? If you do that and take care of all these people like you need to be taking, it's going to be a little harder this way because they ain't going to pay you good but they're going to pay you. If you have a thirty day or sixty day or ninety day account they may pay in six months but they will pay you because as long as they've got their job they're going to have to pay you. That type of thing. You understand what I mean? That was W.D. Hill. You've heard that name since you've been here because () named after him. I had known here before I ever came to Washington, before I ever went to Howard. That relationship still stayed close until he died. So I had him and I had Mrs. Carter Moore's, Dr. Moore's wife, she and my wife's mother were first cousins. I had McDougle who married Dr. Moore's daughter. He's the head of the bank. (Laughter) Are you following me? So when all those people told me if you come here and want to make it you can make it if you want to make it and

anytime you don't want to stay you can leave anytime you want to. You won't be any worse off then than when you came. So I never left.

KM: I read in this thing about the back room at the Biltmore. What was that?

YG: Well that was it. When I came here the Biltmore drugstore was a good size store. It was front and back. I don't know where you got that from but it's the truth. All the best people, I don't mean best people, all good people put it that way that frequented in a social way would always, not all of them, not the same ones all the time, would wind up in the back part of the drugstore where we played bridge and stuff like that and didn't have anything against the front part of the store. So while the prescription was being filled and people were waiting on it they could socialize and () and play bridge and all that stuff together and coming and going just like this. Not only that, I was a single person, not a single person, I was a the central person that they all got to know and they could depend on me. Anybody that had something to do, they wanted to do or supposed to do or hoped to do and didn't want everybody to know what's he was doing they'd come by and tell me, I'll be out for two hours. Anybody calling me, take the message for me on the telephone. Then they'd go on. All of them won't married, women and men. (Laughter) They'd come back, say Doc, did I get any calls while I was gone. Anybody looking for me. I'd say yeah, so-and-so was

looking for you and I told them you'd be here in a few minutes. You were up the street or something like that. I said no, ain't nobody called you. Alright then I'm going on home now. (Laughter) That type of thing. The back room was a socializing place for a whole bunch of people of certain types, mostly professionals and business people in Durham. They had access in this drugstore not in the department, in the back behind the prescription counter. I had tables and chairs and things like that back there, lounge. It won't cooking. I don't mean that. But they could do what they had to do and wouldn't nobody know what they had to do because they won't doing it there. You know what I mean. If you wanted to play bridge we had bridge going in there sometime we'd start at eight o'clock, didn't have nothing to do with stopping the business in the drugstore. The drugstore stayed open until eleven o'clock every night. We'd have things going on there and there would be a group back in the back (). Six or eight people waiting and as these people leave another couple would sit down and start to play. They'd play until two or three o'clock in the morning, any morning they wanted. It didn't make me any difference because I'd be home or there would be somebody in there I could leave the key with and he'd lock up when they got finished. I didn't know you'd seen that on there but that's what that was. I operated, after I bought the place, it got to be a social gathering, not for women, for men in the town and all the men at the social gathering there were people who were

officers of big jobs with the Mutual, the bank or the building and loan and teachers too. There were a lot of principals of the schools here, youngsters, you know what I mean, Knoxville College, so-and-so, Yale, Harvard taught in these schools. All those were frequenting the place and I was the, it was my place after I bought it. They were welcome and I took good care of them. I didn't put their business in the street and they didn't put my business in the street if I had any. Of course I never had any. (Laughter) So it was fine.

KM: So the back room was there before you came?

YG: That was part of the building. The hotel was a great big building and the drugstore was in one section of it. There were three stories to the hotel, top floor, second floor, bottom floor and the basement. On the bottom floor there was the drugstore and a place for you to get food. They had a dining room upstairs but the place downstairs was like a quick food place where you could order your food and sit down there. They had a piano and a box, I mean what do you call it, organ thing...

KM: A jukebox?

YG: Yeah. That was in the (), one end to the other. It went the length of the whole hotel on that floor. The only thing on the floor where I was was just the drugstore. It went the length of the store from the front window back to the back door and one story up and that's where the drugstore was. That was much too much room for just a drugstore. So we used half

of the store, won't no petition, half of the store was the drugstore with a fountain, cigarettes and cigars, magazines and things like that, booths, a fountain, ice cream, all that kind of thing then right on back, everything a drugstore was supposed to have we had in the drugstore plus prescriptions. Then behind that department where you used to be you didn't see nobody fill the prescription because they'd go back to the back to do it. It was a space big enough for me to have two spaces back there, one just for the prescription department they'd be working in, I had two or three people hired as druggists. Then a bigger space in the back to socialize for not women but men in town that wanted to frequent the place that were good customers of mine. I knew everybody. So that got famous and I operated it and it was decent. There was no mess. If any mess was going on went on somewhere else. If I knew where somebody was and an emergency come up they could reach me and I could reach them. I mean the person they were looking for.

(Laughter) Are you following what I'm trying to say? I developed that habit and got in a position with the people and I was pretty well liked and pretty well trusted because I wouldn't put nobody's business in the street. Didn't then and don't now. I put my own business in the closet but not in the street. That's what they were talking about. That got to be so well known for twenty or more years it was well known that if you want to socialize and don't want to be buying something go on down to the drugstore and go on in the back because it's got tables back there

and chairs and things like that and play bridge and play () or just talk about what you did, the best football game, basketball and on like that. That's what it was. That's what it had to be. I liked it and my wife liked it because I was spending so much time not at home being in charge of the store that you couldn't have run the store unless there was somebody in the store that you could depend on. That's what happened to the store before. When Dr. Darnell and them owned the store they had nobody in the store that owned the store that was () so all the funds were getting messed up from here to here. When I'm there now all the funds go where they're supposed to get and if I get enough money I can pay all the bills and that continued until I went on up to the place that I had, I could buy anything that I needed to buy from two or three sources. I had good credit. At that time the line of credit for all wholesale houses went in there for thirty to ninety days. Anything you bought most of it was sixty days. You had two months to pay for it in no matter what it cost. And if you sold ten thousand dollars worth of stuff in sixty days and could get your money for it when you get your profit you're alright. We had two or three grown people hired, druggists and people like that. Then I had a connection with the high school, the Diversified Occupational (). They asked a lot of stores, not just me, in Durham that were in business to take so many students from high school every year, one or two to train them in that thing that you were doing, whatever

you were doing. You would take the responsibility doing that and would train them and you would mark them on their attendance and everything and that was part of their course in the school in Hillside or in grammar school or whatnot. That helped students and all and what happened for me is now over the period of all those years people who now have grandchildren coming and going see me and say my mama was down here when she was a little girl.

(Laughter) I say what's your mama's name. Oh so-and-so. Yeah, I remember them. Only thing about it now is there are very few of them left. I'm better () all them folks is already dead.

I went to seven funerals in the last four weeks. People that I have known for years and I'm older than all of them. A man was buried day before yesterday and one was buried today that I knew when he was, a person who grew up around here. I still wasn't the only store but we were the only store that survived. Others as they got older and the people died or something they didn't have nobody to carry it on and wasn't lucky enough and those stores when they got to a certain period they closed and were disposed of. When I came () when I came there was a () drugstore, Bull City Drugstore, the Biltmore Drugstore, Community Drugstore and there were one or two people uptown over the bank that runs the () prescription shop, what I'm doing now. All here in business and they stayed in business until something happened or there was too much competition or too much traffic or whatever or they either died or closed up and left or something

like that. The only reason I'm still doing what I'm doing is because I don't have nothing else to do, nothing I like any better so I don't try anything else. I didn't know you had it down there about the back room but that's what it was, a meeting spot. Another thing they did, I can say this now because all the folks are dead, there's always a whole lot of politics in big business.

All those big meetings for the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company were held in Durham. They'd come from wherever their companies were when a meeting was going to be, the people would come here to meet to have their meetings. But there were factions in groups in all these things too. I was not involved. It didn't mean nothing. Nine times out of ten when a big vote was going to come up, something was going to happen, I knew what the answer was going to be before they had the meeting because the group that voted to do it would get together in the drugstore back there because won't nobody tell anything and say well I want him, I want him, etc. I'll tell you what if you'll do so-and-so I'll do so-and-so. I heard everything they said but they knew I won't going to tell it because it didn't mean nothing to me. I was just running the drugstore. I won't running no mutual. I wasn't running the bank. You understand what I mean. I wasn't teaching.

I won't principal of no school. I had children in school. I knew all of the teachers and things because a lot of them that liked things that we liked and were spending time in my drugstore too. I had a good close friend that finished Knoxville College

and came to North Carolina to teach. When he first got out of Knoxville College, he was a good fellow, nice fellow, fine fellow, and when he first got out of Knoxville College and came to North Carolina to practice, work and he was teaching school in Washington, North Carolina and he was a good athlete and all like that because he played on the Knoxville team and a little old high school coming up then he were helping them. I met him seven years before I ever came to Durham, didn't think I would ever see him anymore because Tarboro was in that area. We had a high school in Tarboro. Had one in Greenville and one in Washington and all like that. We call it down east. So when I came to Durham later that boy left down there and come to Durham to be principal of East End High School, () Marshall. He died about three years ago. He and I got to be real, real, real close friends. For thirty years it didn't a day pass if he was in town that we didn't see each other. He'd come down and spend his time at the store with me to talk. He liked bridge too. That kind of thing. We'd have a good time together. He, all them people, it was just a good social group. I mean the town was full of social people. There were three or four bridge clubs, women's clubs. There wasn't but one men's club, bridge club. There were three or four women's clubs that are still being operated of the different people in Durham that - you don't have but so many people in a bridge club because if you've got too many, you've got too many. A dozen or fourteen or sixteen is enough for any club. You follow what I'm trying to

say? If there are more than that they start another club, call it by another name. The Queen Highs, the Grand Slam, etc. My wife was a member of three clubs. The Queen High Club and the Gourmet Club. Both of them were bridge clubs but one of them was famous for eating certain kinds of food they did and they got to be real well known for that. Then there's another one called the Saturday Night Club. She wasn't a member of that but she would be invited sometimes. There was another club called the Educational (). But that covered all the group of the what we considered, everybody is good, but what we considered the best women black in Durham were in different groups like that. They were just as competitive as they could be, members of different churches and all like that, but they all got together and had a ball.

KM: It was mostly professional people that were in the back room?

YG: Yeah, either teachers or bankers or Mutual people or something like that. Yeah, only those.

KM: Was it mostly professional people who like bought things from the drugstore?

YG: Yeah, all of them were customers of mine. They were my customers because when Billy Hill, the man I'm telling you about, told me one day most of those people were themselves good enough to be who they were and you could give them accounts and they would pay. You'd bill them and they'd pay you. On the other hand, some of them if you tried with them, those businesses I'm

talking about, if they want to run out on you they couldn't because when they found out they were going they could hold their check until they paid everybody they owed and that was it. But now I had a lot of working people too. But they were not in this group I'm talking about, this back room group. They were the people that worked at Liggett Myers, American Tobacco Company. See there were four tobacco companies here. They had common, I don't mean common labor but special labor people that were getting good salaries. At the time we weren't () at the time.

They were getting salaries. There were any number of those people. In fact Durham was a hub at that time. That's why I didn't expect to come here and do nothing because at that time they had four stores here operating. The only reason was the Biltmore had gotten in a bad rut opening up with all that expensive stuff and then the black dentists and physicians were not supported because of jealousy. They were saying why would they help him, he's up on top now. He wasn't () no higher up.

Go on over there and try to get somebody trying to struggle to make it. So they'd send that prescription thing to the other places and they continued to do that until he died because all of that (). But I was lucky enough to have a doctor down the street, two doctors over here that got to know me and liked me so they sent their work to me. Know me and I know them but I don't know who their names are now. But I was exposed to those people in another way. They were coming in and out buying funny

books and () and things like that. There was a theater right next door to the drugstore. They'd go to the theater and come back by the drugstore and pick up ice cream and a drink and everything on the way home. Children started this and as the children grew up the boys would say Doc, you don't remember me but that's the best ice cream in the world. Them cones and everything, sometimes you'd make that stuff and put some ice cream in it and that was some kind of good. I'd say when was that? He says I don't know. How old are you? He'd say I'm sixty-eight now. (Laughter) I mean didn't even know (). I said okay then, was it good? Yes some kind of good. I wish they had some like that now. I have to go uptown and do things for myself because there ain't nobody to do anything for me. So things that I never did, purchase I mean, my wife did it all for years. Then I had some help that would do it. Now I don't have any help because I don't need any help. So a lot of things I have to do myself that I never did before so I'm out in the street every now and then seeing people. Everywhere I go two people out of every three black people I see, hi Doc, hi Doc Garrett so-and-so. Some times they stop me and say do you remember me? I say yes and no. I might. I said when were you in the drugstore? Said I never worked in the drugstore but I was down there all the time. Things like that you know. I said well, what did I do wrong. Nothing, if you did something wrong I wouldn't be speaking to you now. (Laughter) Yes indeed, okay, anything else you want to ask me?

KM: A couple of more things, yes. Okay you said there were working class people who came to the store but they didn't come to the back room?

YG: No, no. Just like if you're in your private home. You know a lot of people, some people don't visit you but you know them.

KM: Did they even know that the back room existed?

YG: Of course they did because they saw people coming and going all the time. But the back room was not public. That was private. But the ones who were used to using it knew it was public for them because it had a door, a special door, wasn't locked. Here's a counter and here's a counter, all the stuff in the middle here, through that door go into the prescription department and through this door go into the back. See what I mean? Swinging doors here and a lot of people I'd been knowing for thirty years or more never been in the back part of the drugstore. They had nothing to go back there for. They weren't playing no bridge or no cards or nothing like that. I never allowed any gambling. Never allowed gambling in the store. Anybody played just played for fun but no money involved because that's when you run into trouble. When people start to gambling and getting mad and start to fighting and pull out knives and start shooting and cutting and stuff and I knew what that was going to mean. It was plenty of clubs that did that (). You know what I mean.

KM: Alright, one last question. Why weren't women allowed back in the back room?

YG: Well they could go back if they had a friend with them.

KM: Business men?

YG: No, customers. A lot of those people were personal friends of mine and my wife's. My wife was coming from the store all the time and my daughter. Gloria worked in the store regularly when she was a kid up until the time she finished and was getting ready to go to Howard. It wasn't a cutoff place. But just like you, you could own your own home, some people would be invited in and some people would be invited to the door. The ones you invite in are your personal close friends. Those people in the back room were personal close friends of mine and people that I knew real well, mostly the officers and all of the Mutual, the bank and the building and loan and teachers and instructors, the Banker's Fire Insurance Company and so-and-so, all that stuff. All those people were personal friends of mine and they had access. A lot of people didn't want to go because they weren't interested in what we were doing. They wanted to be out somewhere drinking some liquor or getting drunk or playing poker. You understand what I'm trying to say.

KM: So people couldn't drink liquor in the back room?

YG: We served no alcoholic drinks and didn't allow any alcoholic drinks except maybe after eleven o'clock if there were three or four people there that I knew real well, because that was

the prohibition and they had their own liquor, they could serve you. You could go out front and get them a coca cola or something and ice and go back there and get a bottle and pour you a drink. I didn't object to it. I didn't never drink myself but I didn't object to anybody else drinking that wanted to drink. But you couldn't be around me drunk because I wasn't around anybody drunk.

I've never been drunk. That's just one of those things. I didn't go for that. And I wasn't against it. Everybody knew what I was for and wasn't for so they did what I would accept and what I could go along with. That was only the real close friends of mine. All these people I'm talking about were people that if you had a wedding or had something they would be to the wedding, or funeral or something they'd be to the funeral and wouldn't miss. Those were the people that I knew that close. Then there were thousands of people that would stop and wonder, I can't go in there, we don't visit him. We go to the business place and we see him on the street and he's a nice guy but we don't socialize with them. Each group has it's own social status and they like what they like and that's what they do and if you go along with them you can get along with them alright. That's the way that was.

KM: Okay, I just have some forms I need to fill out like your family information. I've already filled out like your current address. What's your zip code?

YG: 27702.

KM: If your name appears in print, if someone writes

something using this tape here, how would you like your name to appear?

YG: Appear like it is. I went to Howard University. When I decided to go to pharmacy the degree they were giving in pharmacy was a Pharm-D degree. They don't give that now. They give it now but not in four years. So when I graduated from Howard I got a Pharm-D degree so that's how I happen to be Dr. York David Garrett, Jr.

KM: So would you like your name to be Dr. York David Garrett, Jr.?

YG: That's the way it is in the book. If you look in the book that's the way you saw it, Dr. York D. Garrett. Not M.D., not D.D.S, but I'm Pharm-D and that's what my license says and that's what my certificate says.

KM: I know you told me you were born in 1894. What's the date?

YG: December 10.

KM: And you were born in Edgecombe?

YG: Edgecombe County. You can put Tarboro or Princeville either one. You can say Edgecombe County because Edgecombe County is a big county and is well known and there are only about three towns in the county. Pinetops is one. Rocky Mount is in half of the county, Edgecombe. Half of Rocky Mount is in Nash County and the other half of Rocky Mount is in Edgecombe. Rocky Mount is not a county seat. Tarboro is the county seat for Edgecombe and

Nashville is the county seat for Nash.

KM: And you are widowed?

YG: Yeah.

KM: What was your wife's name?

YG: Julia Williams Garrett.

KM: Do you know her birthdate?

YG: Yes it's two days ago. She was born May 20, 1900. If she were living now last week she would have been ninety-three years old.

KM: When did she die?

YG: 1977. July 27, 1977.

KM: And where was she born?

YG: She was born in Tarboro, Edgecombe County. She and her parents, their whole family, they're a strong family.

KM: What was her occupation?

YG: Well she finished St. Aug's. She taught a couple of years. Then she went to New York. She had a brother and a sister that lived in New York. For a little while she was in New York before we got married. She stayed with one of her brother's girlfriends in New York. When we got married she came back to Tarboro. We got married in 1923. From then on that's what she was, my wife. After she got married she never had a job. She worked like hell but she worked, she helped run the drugstore. She was over all the help in the drugstore. Tell them how to key up and this, that and the other. Tell them when to come and when

to go and all like that. She did all my running around to the banks and things uptown, deposits and all that stuff. I was in charge but she was the one they would see. Anytime anything had to be done I would either talk to McDougale and when he stopped being at the bank then Wheeler (). She was the front for all my business affairs. She had rights to sign anything. Anytime they had something for me they could give it to her because they knew I was going to get it. (Laughter)

KM: What was your mother's name?

YG: Sarah Frances Garrett. That was my father's only wife. He was about nine months older than she was and they married and they only married once and then he died. I forget how many years they were married but anyhow he died in 1928 and she died in 1931.

KM: Do you know when she was born?

YG: I should know. I'd have to look it up to see. She was born, I used to know. I know she was born March 15 but I've forgotten what year. She was nine months younger than my father.

KM: Do you know when your father was born?

YG: He was born July 5 the year before she was born. (Laughter) But I'll tell you what, when he died - you can figure it out yourself - they were nine months apart in age and when he died he was fifty-nine years old. He wasn't sixty. I don't mean fifty-nine - yeah, he was fifty-nine years old because he didn't get to be sixty. Am I right now about that? Fifty-nine or sixty-nine? Anyhow, he died in 1928 on December 28. When he died he

hadn't, I get it mixed up now, I know he hadn't reached seventy. He was sixty-nine. That's right. He was sixty-nine. My mother she died two years after he did and she was seventy-one. He died at sixty-nine.

KM: Do you know your mother's maiden name?

YG: Yes and no. Her father, in slavery times most of the colored people took their master's name. She had a whole lot of cousins named Harrison but she was not a Harrison because her father grew up, he was married and had children, and he didn't like his master, Perry. So one day when he was a young man he hadn't married then, didn't have any children then, he was a young man, a circus came to town. John Robinson's circus. Just like this big old circus that's still around Barnum and Bailey. John Robinson came with a circus and he loved that circus so he changed his name from Harrison to Robinson. So he was known as Frank Robinson and all his sisters and brothers and cousins were Harrisons. They kept their master's name because they like their master. He didn't like his master worth a damn and he said he won't going to have it and he never kept his name. So he was the only one in the family who was a Robinson and he took the name himself. He named himself Robinson rather than to be named Harrison and he kept that name until he died. And because of that we don't have any cousins that are Robinsons except (End of Tape 2

- Side A

Tape 2 - Side B

YG: He married twice. He married my mother's mother and she died. Then he married again. His first wife, my mother's mother, was half Indian and she had one or two sisters that were half Indians. Then when her father married again he married a colored, well wasn't a colored, you know what I mean. His second wife was just a colored woman and he had two children by his second wife. But there were ten years difference in those children. He had two children by his first wife, my mother and her brother. She was ten years older than her brother. Long ways apart. I don't know why it was so long. Then he married again, my grandfather married again, and the woman he married that time, he had three children by that woman. But they were all Robinsons instead of being Harrison's because they took their father's name. Two or three of them lived until a few years ago. One of them that, about ten years ago the last one died. They died after my mother did.

KM: Did your mother work?

YG: With her husband.

KM: At the store?

YG: No, at home. She ran the house and took care of eight or nine children. She worked. (Laughter) Only thing about it, she was a good organizer. She knew what she was doing. She wanted to do all that work and she had those children coming along now. She had twins, Hattie and Mattie. One I told you didn't have any children and one had three children. When my sister was born, Mrs. Burnette, who happened to be the secretary of the North

Carolina NAACP for thirty-seven years, that's Mrs. Burnett, when she was born - she was of course Garrett, her name was Garrett - the oldest one of the twins, my mother turned her over to her. Said you take care of this baby. You nurse her and you train her and everything. Two years later, a little less than two years later when I was born she turned me over to the other one of the twins, the younger of the twins but they were twins. And so that twin raised me. My mother didn't have to touch either one of us because she was busy running that house and cooking and doing all that other stuff. (Laughter) I was the last child that was born that lived to get more than five years old. I was the baby but she had two children after me. One died at childbirth and the other one died at two years old.

KM: What was your father's name?

YG: York David Garrett.

KM: He was Sr.?

YG: Yeah. His father was York Garrett but not David. His mother had a brother named David and when this child was born she named him York and put David in for her brother, York David Garrett. So that's the reason my father was York David Garrett but his father was just York Garrett. Then when I came along and they looked at me after the eighth child they said well, might as well go on, had more boys so name this one after me. So they named me York David Garrett, Jr.

KM: Where was your father born?

YG: I guess he must have been born in Edgecombe County. That's where they were living when he was a little child and his mother was the cook for the family that owned them. That was Edgecombe County.

KM: Now I need all your brother's and sister's names and were they all born...?

YG: Yeah, all the children were born in the same town, I mean Edgecombe County.

KM: I need all their names and if you know their birthdates and death dates.

YG: I don't know that. I could find out but it's too much trouble. My sister was the oldest child, Mary Emma Garrett. She's the one that finished school in Raleigh. I told you the name of the school. It's still over there but they don't use that name now. It's Shaw. It wasn't Shaw. Like () in Virginia. () was the girl's school of Union. Spelman is the girl's school in Atlanta. () and the boy's school in Union is Union. The other one in Atlanta, what was the other one? You know what I'm talking about. But now in Shaw there was girl's school and a boy's school. It was all Shaw but they called the girl's school by it's name and the boy's school was Shaw. Understand what I'm talking about? I called it awhile ago to you but I've forgotten what it was. But that's the school she finished. The building is still there on Shaw campus that she went to school in. It was a part of Shaw University. But that's

where she went to school. Her name was Mary Emma Garrett. One child was born and died at about a year or something like that. I didn't know him because it was long before I was born. The next child that was born was Judson Garrett. He was the third child. He lived to finish college. The next children were the twins, Hattie and Mattie. Hattie Price and Mattie Garrett. The next was a daughter, a sister of mine, she's younger than the twins but she was by herself. Her name was Anna Lillian Gertrude Garrett. She lived to get seventeen years old.

KM: How old was your brother when he died?

YG: He was about twenty-two. He had just finished college and he finished early. Naw, when he died? He died in 1908. Yeah he was about twenty-two when he died. He died in 1908.

KM: The seventh child. You just said Anna Lillian Gertrude. Who was next?

YG: Next was Sarah Beatrice Garrett. That was the one that for thirty-seven years she was secretary of the NAACP for North Carolina. She was a very prominent person until now. She's still living. Twenty-fourth of January you know how old she was?

KM: How old?

YG: She's older than I am.

KM: Really? Oh yeah because you're the eighth child.

YG: She was one hundred years old the twenty-fourth of January. Her grandson came down for her birthday and he was McDougles' grandson that managed the bank, the daughter is this

boy's mother. So tie it into the family eventually. See what I mean? My sister's son married McDougle's daughter and they have three children. But you won't talking about them. They haven't got nothing to do with it. But I was just saying, they had three children and they are the children are still living and doing alright.

KM: And then it was you. Then there were two others that died?

YG: Yeah. One of them lived to get four years old but she died. She had measles. My sister Beatrice and I and this child had measles the same time and they lost her. B and I lived but they lost her. The last child after that was a boy but I think my mother said that boy could have lived, should have lived, but when she was pregnant with him she had a nephew, my father's nephew, that they had reared and was living with them and he was a little boy and crazy about his aunt, his aunt, my mother. He was a baby like thing and she picking him up and lifting him and carrying on with him when she was pregnant it made something happen to the baby and the baby didn't live. Nothing nobody did to him but she said, my mother told me said if she hadn't strained trying to take care of this baby, put him to bed, taking him everywhere, he was too big for her to be carrying but that's why she thinks she lost that last child. That was the last child they had. That was the tenth child. He was just born and they buried him.

KM: I need your children's names. I know Nathan.

YG: Don't start with Nathan. The first child was York David Garrett, III.

KM: When was York born?

YG: 1923.

KM: When did he die?

YG: 1977. He died two months and five days after his mother died. He was semi-retarded, not very retarded, but was semi-retarded. They figured when he was born he had a bad heart condition, () heart murmur. Also her water broke at eight months. Do you know what I'm talking about. They said they thought they were going to lose either him or her. She was in New York then. We were married but she was living in New York then with her brother's girlfriend. So they rushed her to the hospital and they found out she was having trouble so he was a forceps baby and they injured his head. But he lived. They thought he won't going to live but he lived. He had trouble, had a bad heart condition. He kept that condition until he died. They told us with his heart and head thing he was kind of semi-retarded. He could learn and could do real well but he wasn't up to all the other children. What would take him two years to learn somebody else would learn in one year. So they told us when we found he was having trouble we took him, I hadn't been too long out of Howard University, and I had close ties with () hospital. I knew all the doctors and nurses and everything and I sent him back up there to them to see what they could do for him. He

needed a tonsillectomy but then didn't want to take a chance on him because they I was very well known and they didn't want to work on my kid and he die. The doctor didn't want to take that chance, Dr. Plummer. Dr. Plummer down at (). But he was all just like this. So we finally sent him to Washington to () and they sent him to Children's Hospital and they gave him a tonsillectomy and that's when they found out he couldn't possibly live to get more than ten or twelve years old. () asked my wife, she was with him, how many more children you got? Two more, a girl and a boy. This girl. Go they said go back home and put all your time on him. Take good care of this boy and do the best you can by him because he won't get to be over ten or twelve years old. And she said I will. She took care of him the best she could. He died at fifty-three. She took care of him for fifty some years and two months and five days after she died he died. Two months and five days after we buried her we buried him. And he was in good shape then. I mean had a good mind and everything but he was slow in doing things. You know what I'm talking about. Go ahead with the next question.

KM: The next child, the second child?

YG: That was Gloria, the one that went to Geneva, Switzerland. She's my heart too. Yes indeed.

KM: When was she born? (Break in tape)

YG: November 17, 1929.

KM: Is he still alive?

YG: No he's the one that died with cancer. He has wife that teaches () girl. He has a grandson that's at A&T that's by a second wife. He had one child by his second wife. By his first wife he had two children, a boy and a girl. The girl is at Knoxville College working and the boy until about six months ago was in Paris. He is modeling, doing that kind of thing. Good work but he's doing something that I wouldn't want to do. But he's still living. Oliver had three children, two by his first wife and one by his second wife.

KM: And what year did he die?

YG: Must have been, I can't think of all that stuff. He hadn't been dead too long. When this boy () his son was born in 1975, no, born in 1970 and the boy now is twenty-two. He's the one at A&T. Oliver died about six years ago. He died here at Durham Hospital. Had cancer.

KM: The last child is Nathan?

YG: Yeah, Nathan Taylor Garrett.

KM: When was he born?

YG: August 8, 1931. How old is that? He'll be sixty-two in August.

KM: Do you have any grandchildren?

YG: Oh yes.

KM: How many?

YG: Ain't got too many grandchildren but I've got a whole lot of great grandchildren. The only grandchildren I have, Gloria

never had any children, York never had any children. Oliver had two children, Oliver had three children. The last one Nathan, Nathan had two children. He says he's got three because he married a girl from Smith and they had one child and they separated. He married Wanda and she had one child before she got married. Her husband died in the Army. Then they got married. Then they got married and got real smart, got to know each other real well and they had another child (). So they have one child, one child and one child together. Little Nathan is Wanda's and Nathan's child. The girl in Detroit is just Nathan's child by his first wife. Is that right? Yeah. Her mother is still living and real lucky. She's the girlfriend of the mayor of Detroit. (Laughter) They had an agreement. They got pictures and everything made together but had the agreement not to get married. But she's accepted at all the social affairs in Detroit as his guest. All the cops and everything know her just as if he got married. But they decided they wouldn't get married. She's still known as Joyce Garrett. She didn't go back to her maiden name. After they separated she kept her maiden name. So she's still Joyce Garrett. She had one child and that child, daughter, and that child had four children. So that means I have great grandchildren there and my daughter in Knoxville, Tennessee has three children that are my great grandchildren. Four and three is seven, right? Nathan is here. Little Nathan I'm talking about, married and has one child and that's my great grandchild.

KM: You have eight.

YG: Eight great grandchildren.

KM: How long did you live in Tarboro?

YG: From 1901 until 1932.

KM: You've lived in Durham the rest of the time?

YG: Came in 1932.

KM: Before Tarboro, where did you live? You said 1901.
Where did you live when you were born?

YG: I told you Princeville, the only colored town in the
United States.

KM: That's right.

YG: I was born in Princeville.

KM: I need your schools.

YG: Just two.

KM: Princeville Graded School. Do you know what year you
started there?

YG: I started there when I was a baby, whenever that was. I
don't know when I started but I know when I graduated.

KM: When did you graduate?

YG: Must have been 1911. Yeah because I went to Howard in
1913 and I stayed out of school a year.

KM: You went to Elizabeth City?

YG: I finished Elizabeth City in 1912.

KM: Then you went to Howard.

YG: 1913. Finished Howard in 1920.

KM: That was the pharmacy school?

YG: Yeah.

KM: Your jobs, you owned your drugstore.

YG: I never had a job to work for anybody but my father until I opened my own place. Didn't have to. He had work for me to do.

KM: Have you ever received any awards or honors or held any offices?

YG: There's just too much mess.

KM: The most important ones.

YG: Well I mean when I finished pharmacy I took the board, passed it, opened up my first store, I told you all of this, and operated until I came to Durham which was 1932. Before I came to Durham I got active in professional societies, medical and dental and pharmaceutical societies in North Carolina and got to be secretary of the pharmaceutical department of the National Medical Association. I kept that job for twenty-five years.

KM: That was secretary of what now?

YG: I was the secretary of the National Medical Association, the pharmaceutical department. I was secretary of that organization. Not the whole thing, just the pharmacy part for twenty-five years.

KM: When did you start that?

YG: 1927. No, before 1927. 1926. I worked with them, kept going with them until later and going to their meetings and doing

the national meetings too because being the secretary of the National Pharmaceutical Association department I started attending the National Medical Association then and continued to go there until the three departments separated. Dentistry department went one way, pharmacy another way and medicine another way. I was with them when they split. Just before they split they started an organization, but during that time for twenty-five years I was the secretary for the pharmaceutical section. Also during that time in local, Old North State Medical Society we were all together. Understand what I'm saying? But then they never had a president of the Old North State Society that was a pharmacist. Generally a physician was president. A dentist was secretary and a pharmacist was the treasurer. But having attended about ten or twelve years they decided with my attendance they thought they wanted to give me the honor of being the president of Old North State Medical Society. I was the first black, first pharmacist ever to be president of the Old North State Medical Society. I served just one year. Then later on I continued with them until that was dissolved and they started the National Pharmaceutical Association. Coming from the state organization in the national organization I had more material and everything than anybody else did for twenty-five years. So I turned all that material over to the pharmaceutical department of the National Pharmaceutical Association to Dean Cooper at Howard. So he gets credit for being the founder of the National Pharmaceutical Association. But I was

there twenty-five years before he was. What I mean is he got all his stuff from what I brought him from when it was all together. So then I became president of the National Pharmaceutical Association in 1965, 1966. Not 1966, 1955. I was installed in that when we met in...