Behind the Veil: Documenting African American Life in the Jim Crow South

Interview with
Nathaniel White, Sr.

Durham, North Carolina
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Interviewed by
Paul Ortiz

Unedited Transcript by
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1. **Ortiz:** Mr. White, could you start by telling me where you were born and something about the area where you grew up in?

2. **White:** I was born in Hertford, North Carolina in September 14, 1914. I didn't remain in Hertford very long, about four years. My mother became ill during the influenza epidemic of 1918-19 and she died at the age of 29. And my father had secured some work in the Norfolk Navy Yard. That's during World War I. And when she passed, we moved to Norfolk, Virginia. I was in a family of four boys and a fifth son was, died during the same time that my mother died. As a matter of fact, both of them are buried in the same grave. So I don't have -- except for visits back to my home town, I didn't remain in Hertford very long. My mother's father was a blacksmith and I used to go to Hertford during the summer as I was growing up and he was a very skilled tradesman. As a matter of fact, I was able to see him working in his blacksmith shop and I viewed at that time, he was dealing in wagons and that type of thing. And I noticed that there was a blacksmith there that shoed horses and also he was a church leader. And the family, my mother's family, was engaged, in working and contributing to the First Baptist Church in Hertford. But having moved to Norfolk, I spent most of my time in Norfolk, Virginia. Finished high school there at Booker T. Washington High School. And then went to Hampton Institute at that time, now Hampton University, and studied printing. And graduated with a B.S. degree in printing education. And accepted a job in Raleigh, North Carolina where I spent two years working for the Carolina Tribune newspaper and after two years, I moved to Durham. And came to Durham in 1939, along with a partner, two partners -- Dave Reed and Walter G. Swan. We came here to manage the Service Printing Company. And after two years, we thought we would try to do something
more permanent. And we offered to purchase the business from the T.D. Parram family. The mother was working in the business when we came there. And so after some discussion with the mother and the father, who had opened this business -- it was for two of their children, Thomas David Parram and Ward Parram, who by that time had become -- they were interested in the ministries and they were ... That's why they, the parents sought to get us to come in and try to make a success of the business. So we purchased the business for $800.00. And they had lost one press and we paid $15.00 per month for the business. And that's how we started on our own ownership of the business.

3. Ortiz: Mr. White, going back to your father's experience in going ____ , I assume that you went with your father to Norfolk.

4. White: Yes, yes. I was four, with the four brothers.

5. Ortiz: How did he go about getting the job in Norfolk? Had he heard about jobs opening up? Or did he have a relative in Norfolk?

6. White: I don't know the precise answer to that. But I do know that in the Navy Yards there was a need -- during the war there was a need for a lot of airplanes. ... thought about that. There was always a lot of movement up and down the east coast, anyhow, and it was fairly easy probably to, during the war, to ... Of course, there were a lot of Naval installations in Norfolk. And my thought is that there was quite a need for a lot of help during the war. He later was transferred to ... He later got a job at the Norfolk Western Railroad at that pier, at Lampier's Point, in Norfolk, that loaded coal on ships going over seas. And this coal came to Norfolk from the west, from the mines in West Virginia by rail. And this pier was up in

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there where these ships, cars with elevators and then from that they'd load it down a shute. The coal went down a shute into the ship. So that was his major occupation for the years after the war, working on a coal pier.

7. **Ortiz:** And you mentioned that your grandfather has been active in the First Baptist Church in Hertford.

8. **White:** in Hertford.

9. **Ortiz:** in Hertford. Do you know the origins of that church? Did your grandfather ever talk about it?

10. **White:** I had some information on that. I can't recall it, precise information. But it was one of the leading black churches in the community. And I knew that ... and I have read since then, how active he was in the church. And you know, I think he held office in the church and was one of the leaders in the church. In fact, his whole family was strong, had strong membership in the church.

11. **Ortiz:** Was he a role model for you as a child?

12. **White:** Yes, he was. During the times I visited there, I was very impressed with him as a churchman and a person. He seemed to be highly respected by others in the community.

13. **Ortiz:** And was his wife still living when you were growing up?

14. **White:** Yes, yes.

15. **Ortiz:** Did you have much contact with your grandmother on your mother's side?
16. White: I made some visits there. I did have some contact with her. She seemed to have a strong personality and was well liked by the family members.

17. Ortiz: Would they ever tell you about their own childhood? About stories about when they were growing up and how it was? How things had changed?

18. White: Yes. I don't remember a lot about that because I was quite young. But there seems to be a strong family. There seems to be a ... have a lot of interest in doing well and staying in contact with the family members. My greatest influence came from my father's sister, Essie White Redd. She ... At the time when my mother passed, my mother -- when she was ill with influenza, seemed to want the family to stay together and I think that my Aunt Essie, Essie Redd, who was my father's sister, dedicated herself to the family. And I think she was highly responsible for all of us. She sent two of us to school, to college, and she had offered that opportunity to my other two brothers that did not go to college. One of them got married at a young age, working at A & P Store as a delivery boy and he advanced to a point where he was the manager of A & P and he's still living. And another brother that worked for the government in Washington, D.C., John Isaac White. And the other brother took printing at Hampton two years following me. In fact, it was three years I believe because he finished in 1940 and I finished in 1937. So the two of us -- he came down to Durham in the 1940 and joined us at the Service Printing Company along with the other people there.

19. Ortiz: Did your Aunt Essie move with your family to Norfolk?

20. White: She did for a short while. And then she moved to Atlantic City for awhile. And then she moved to New York for the most of her life, was spent in New York City. She was
searching opportunities. She got married and the marriage didn't last very long. But during
the course of her life, she stayed in close contact with us. She was a person of strong
personality, always looking for the best for herself and for us. And I think she had a
tremendous influence on my family, particularly in seeing to it that we would be staying
together and also that we would try to strive to do the best we could in life.

21. Ortiz: Mr. White, you talk about your family, particularly Aunt Essie, but other people in
your family wanting to stay together and that seems to be a very strong value. Had your
family originally ... Had they grown up in Hertford or had they come from another ....

22. White: I believe now that my father's family came in ... They were in the outlying areas of
Hertford. Sort of out in the county area. But they had ... Their family roots were near
Hertford.

23. Ortiz: Had they been involved in farming?

24. White: Some of the family members were farmers. I didn't have a lot of contact with them
until sort of later. I visited them and since that time, I have been in contact with where my
father's people lived. And they did lots of farming and this type of thing.

25. Ortiz: And so did your grandfather, did he also ...

26. White: This is my ... You're talking about ... You're going back to my grandfather that I
mentioned earlier. That's my mother's father. Yeah, uh-huh. What were you going to say?

27. Ortiz: Now did he, working as a blacksmith, did he also have land that he farmed?
28. **White:** No, that was his profession was a blacksmith. He didn't do any farming.

29. **Ortiz:** Would he ever talk about race relations in Hertford?

30. **White:** Well, I wasn't there a lot and I don't recall too much that he might have said at all. So, I couldn't say, you know, that I had talked with him about it on anything about the race relations. He may have but I don't recall. Because I'm sure he had a lot of ... by working in this blacksmith shop, he had a lot of contact with people in the community and all. It's just that I didn't do that much visiting and all. I guess as a child I was ... when I was a child, that type of discussion, I don't recall that I could say I could recall any type of discussion in that area. But he was a community leader.

31. **Ortiz:** Was he involved in politics as well?

32. **White:** Not to my knowledge. I don't know. I would think he but I can't recite any incidents about it. See, I didn't do a lot of visiting back and forth.

33. **Ortiz:** So, Mr. White, when you moved to Norfolk and you kind of settled down there, what was life like growing up in Norfolk, Virginia?

34. **White:** Well, it ... As a youngster, I had the opportunity to join church and this church had a very fine pastor. And in 1928, the first black troop in Norfolk, Virginia was organized in my church, Mt. Olive Baptist Church. I got an opportunity to become a Scout at 14. You could join at 12. As a matter of fact, all four of us joined this Scout troop. It was sixteen boys in the troop and we were twenty-five percent of the troop. My oldest brother joined shortly and then shortly after he joined, he went to New York to live with my aunt. My youngest brother
had lived with my aunt in Atlantic City for awhile. But he was back by 1928, he was back in Norfolk and he joined the troop also. So this was ... We lived in a very nice neighborhood. We had good schools. There's one thing that I remember specifically about the schools. They had nurses in the schools. And it seemed like my weight and my height didn't match so they sort of looked after me. And I went to a clinic and all to get that type of thing squared away, which I appreciated very much. I got health conscious and able to take care of my health. And then, there was a lot of care and good instructions, a lot of encouragement in the schools to do well. The idea that you could become anything that you wanted to was sort of instilled in you, which was not a natural fact. Because there was a lot of discrimination and all. But you didn't feel hopeless. You just felt that if you did well and worked hard and you could reach goals that you set for yourself.

35. **Ortiz:** Mr. White, when did you first encounter, or as a child first notice discrimination?

36. **White:** Well, I think the transportation facilities, the street cars and the buses and all, and the fact that you had seats for blacks and seats for whites, it was probably the first noticeable discrimination that you encountered. And of course, the schools were separate. But by that time, it was accepted as a matter of fact, you know, that they had schools for us and schools for others. But there were seemingly very strong teachers and very strong principals. I distinctively remember my elementary school principal. She was a very tall, handsome, stately lady that always had an encouraging word and making you feel like that you were somebody. So in your own separate world, you found encouragement and even though you noticed these obvious things that separated you from others, you still felt some self worth in your church and your school and all. And it helped to make you the kind of person that you
were satisfied you could accomplish what you set out to do if you worked hard and stayed out of trouble and this kind of thing. So the opportunity was there.

37. **Ortiz:** Where did the teachers come from that were in your elementary school?

38. **White:** They came from within the city itself, you know. And they ... Now, my understanding after the earlier years that teachers could teach without necessarily going way up at the higher level, you know, like top degrees and all. But this all changed. But I suspect that my teachers came out of the Norfolk system, went to the Normal School, Academy and this type of thing.

39. **Ortiz:** Were they black?

40. **White:** Yes, all black. All of the teachers and principals were all black.

41. **Ortiz:** What were your favorite subjects?

42. **White:** I liked math. I liked history. As a matter of fact, I took Latin but I wasn't too fond of that. The word was out that that was a dead language. [chuckles] But it helped a lot in formation of structure and this kind of thing. And so that was about, you know, in high school, that was my favorites.

43. **Ortiz:** Mr. White, you mentioned that you were one of the original members of the first black Boy Scout Troop

44. **White:** in Norfolk, Virginia. Troop 72, Mt. Olive Baptist Church.
45. **Ortiz:** What was that like and how did that come about? That there were no other black troops before that.

46. **White:** Now, see, Scouting started in 1910, I believe, and this was 18 years later. I don't know. I guess the Council -- they had a Tidewater Council was responsible for that. And it must have been coming out of the understanding that now was the time to do something in that area. And that was a very interesting experience for my family and me. And out of that experience, I volunteered to become scoutmaster in this church in 1942 and remained scoutmaster for 26 years, and 26 of my boys became Eagle Scouts. I am very found of the ... and I am still active as the coordinator of scouting in this church. So I have about 56 years of continuous experience in scouting. Of course, at this point, we're trying to get some new leaders since we have a new pastor and we're going to try to strengthen the church. But most of the leaders in scouting have been serving in this church for a long time. So I was happy to be able to give something back because of somebody helping me as a youth. And my brother who worked here with me, he passed in 1965, he was also active in scouting. The other partner I had, Dave Reed, was active. So we have helped to strengthen the scouting program here in town.

47. **Ortiz:** Mr. White, how did your father react to scouting? Was he pushing you towards that direction as a child?

48. **White:** Well, he supported things that we tried to do and he ... I often wondered how'd he buy all those uniforms. [chuckles] But, naturally, since he was just one parent and anything like that he was interested in us doing. And my aunt was also supportive of us even though

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she lived in another city. But she stayed in contact with us and encouraged us to do that, to join the scouts and the boys club and groups like that, which were really a great benefit for us as we were growing up.

49. Ortiz: Mr. White, what was your family, your internal family life like during those years?

50. White: It was very happy. We learned, of course, early to look after each other and take care of each other and sort of working together. My father made ... was always interested in that we staying out of trouble and not getting into things that we shouldn't do. And there was ... The street that we lived on, there was an athletic field out in front of us and so we spent a number of hours participating in football and baseball and other sports and this kind of thing. I thought that was of benefit to us. And the fact that we joined the scouting program also was very helpful. So we stayed busy doing the right kinds of things I would think.

51. Ortiz: Were there parts of Norfolk that your father didn't want you going into?

52. White: I can't recall that kind of situation. Well, one of the things that we did. When my older brother got old enough to work, he was insisting that he would get a job. And he sort of set a pattern for us and we just naturally thought that when we got a certain age, we'd get a job. My youngest brother used to deliver the morning paper. I used to sell the Journal and Guide, a weekly paper. My oldest brother, the first job he got was shining shoes at a newstand that was downtown. Then my next brother, John Isaac, he got a job working at a drug store. Then the two of us younger brothers worked at a drug store too. So we were curious to get the work and help with our own expenses and also help each other.
53. **Ortiz:** Mr. White, where would you go during those days when you needed medical care?

54. **White:** I went to the clinic, the King Daughters Clinic. And then they had a St. Vincent's Hospital that you could go to. And I think that the nurse at the school made an outstanding contribution to me. Then we would go to the medical doctor.

55. **Ortiz:** Were there black doctors?

56. **White:** Oh yes. In Norfolk, yes.

57. **Ortiz:** And so did your family go to a black doctor?

58. **White:** Yes, we went to a black doctor.

59. **Ortiz:** Was that true with dentists also?

60. **White:** I think so, yes. I was trying to think about that. Yes, I believe so. Of course, let me see, now we also went to the hospital too but that was ... they had a black section in the hospital. In fact, one hospital we went to, over the garage had a ... I saw that years later. I couldn't believe what I was looking at. But it seemed to me like they had over above this they had a room, you know.

61. **Ortiz:** The black section was a

62. **White:** It seemed like to me it was over a garage. I'm almost sure of this. But that was just one place that we went to. There were others that was not like that. I know the St. Vincent's Hospital was a pretty big place. I'm not sure whether that was all black or not.
63. **Ortiz:** Was there a black business district that your family would patronize?

64. **White:** It was not a whole district but there was one black store in the community and then there was an A & P store, grocery store. No, not A & P, DP. David Pender Store. That was a chain in Norfolk, DP Store. And then there was ... I know there was a Jewish run store. An interesting thing. My father patronized that store and he had a book that we could go to the store and purchase things and charge them to him. So that meant that any time we needed anything we could go to the store and pick it up.

65. **Ortiz:** Do you remember your father making an attempt to patronize black stores?

66. **White:** I guess we did the store that was in the community. This other store that I mentioned that we had this book for was ... I guess it was about a mile or so away from where we were living.

67. **Ortiz:** So it was the only store that would offer that system of credit?

68. **White:** I don't know exactly whether it was the only store or not. But I just recall having gone to this store.

69. **Ortiz:** It seems like to me that there was another store on the corner from us but it didn't ... I couldn't say now why we were at this other, we were charging at this other store. But this was an arrangement that my father had made. But there was another store, later that was in the neighborhood along with this chain store.
70. Ortiz: Mr. White, by this time, did your father, did he decide to become active in the church and community affairs in Norfolk?

71. White: It seems like that he attended the church and all. But I can't recall that he was very active there.

72. Ortiz: Did he remarry?

73. White: He remarried for a short period but he didn't stay ... He was separated after a short period. Now how long, I don't have a good picture of how long did he stay married. But I know he did marry.

74. Ortiz: Mr. White, when you were growing up, did you have particular aspirations for a particular career? Did you have particular role models that you felt like you would follow in their footsteps for example?

75. White: Well, I had ... Now my aunt talked with me about the future in terms of what I would do when I finished school. And she ... We got very serious about this in my senior year. And she came down to talk with me about what I was going to do after I finished high school. And I was very ... By that time, I was very interested in that because I had not had any serious discussion with anybody about what I was going to do. And I started thinking about what would I be doing in September. The other kids would be going back. I would be graduating in June and so we talked about it. She was ... My aunt was interested in me studying medicine. And she wanted me to go to Howard University to study medicine. And somehow or another, I didn't want that. And I think I found out later on. I believe if I had to
tend to people that were ill exclusively all day that I would have solved they feelings and everything and not be a good person to deal in that type of thing. I didn't think all this when she was talking to me but I did ... When I was carrying this newspaper, we used to go down and pick up the Journal and Guide newspaper. And sometime it would be late. And we used to go all over the place around. And later on, I used to wonder why in the world would they let us do that. And since I got into printing and newspaper work and all, I found out that actually the newsboys were the back bone of the place. If they didn't sell the papers. So they would tolerate us! So I was in talking to the fellow who was the brother of the editor. He was H.C. Young and the editor and publisher was P.V. Young. They were brothers. And he said to me one day that I looked like I could be a good printer. And what he wanted me to do -- At that time, you could go to Hampton in high school. It had an academy. He wanted me to leave Booker T. and go to Hampton Institute to study printing. But at that time, the school was a wonderful school. I liked it. I was enjoying myself. I was doing well in studies and all and I figured nobody in their right mind would leave Booker T. I wanted to graduate. So when my aunt talked to me, I remembered this conversation. So, she wanted me to be a doctor; I wanted to be an architect. So I settled for printing. And I did graduate from Booker T. and I went to Hampton to study printing. And I guess that's a strange way to approach it but that's a fact of life. That's how it worked out. And of course, I had a very interesting and successful career in printing.

76. Ortiz: So you actually had the opportunity to talk to Mr. Young at the Journal and Guide?

77. White: Yes. [End of Tape 1, Side A]
White: I talked to him about a career in printing. And that was my motivation for going into it.

Ortiz: So what role did the Journal and Guide play, other than the fact -- I mean, obviously, as one way for you to make money? Did it begin to shape your outlook on life? Would you read it as you were delivering it at that time?

White: I don't ... See, I suppose that it was almost like a substitute kind of thing, you know. Trying to search for a career. I guess the other thing that it kind of actually worked out with me that that was doing something with your hands and all. And I seemed to enjoy doing things in that manner. I hate to put it like this but I guess it was getting away from going to be a doctor. [chuckles] That didn't appeal to me. And the architect part would have probably been a good occupation. But I guess printing was like a compromise.

Ortiz: What did your father have to say about it?

White: As he did in the case of my brothers, he sort of left it up to me. As a matter of fact, I think my aunt, who was the person that financed my education until I decided I would work and take care of myself -- After about two years I told her she could concentrate on my brother that I would ... [tape goes blank with a loud hum]

Ortiz: ... office have business with Reverend Fisher?
86. **White:** Yes. We did work for him and we enjoyed a long relationship with him.

87. **Ortiz:** And did Whiterock -- you mentioned earlier that the churches had some involvement in rallies. Was Whiterock one of those churches that was involved in voting?

88. **White:** Oh yes.

89. **Ortiz:** Would you ever have meetings or voter education?

90. **White:** At this church? Oh yeah.

91. **Ortiz:** Mr. White, how did World War II affect the black community in Durham?

92. **White:** Well, now take my business for example. We had four partners and two of them were drafted. So it left us personally short of management and short of, sort of stand still in growth and this kind of thing because two of your owners and all went into the Army, in the service. And so consequently, it slowed down our progress because our resources, our physical help, you know, and all was not there. But I guess we looked at it like everybody else, you know. It's a sacrifice you have to make during that time. But I was civilian necessity or something, the classification, because the draft board didn't want to close down businesses because, first of all, what are these fellows who are in the service going to do for work when they come back? So I think there were some allowances made for it. You couldn't just go into a business and draft all the men and all like that. So the classification that I had permitted me to stay and help take care of business so that they could provide a job for the people that were in the service. That was half of our management going in the service. So for us personally, that's about the size of it.
93. **Ortiz:** Did it seem like the war had an impact on race relations or politics?

94. **White:** Well, yeah, I would think so. There seems to have been some discussions about the African American citizens being allowed to do certain things. And I know the newspapers was pushing for those soldiers, you know, to be in actual combat. That there was some discussion about their full participation. I don't know how the people ... So there was some discussion about that kind of situation. And, you know, if you're going to have rights, you fight to protect your rights like everybody else. Now, so far as the economy and all, I think that Camp Butler was located near Oxford was ... They had lots of soldiers, black soldiers, out there. And then they had one or two racial incidents actually happen between the soldiers. They had one in the ABC Store, I know. I was trying to think of the exact details of it. But I know a lot of the soldiers came in town to protect their rights. But, in general, everything worked out fairly well, I think.

95. **Ortiz:** But they came in town ... Were there black soldiers coming in town to protect their rights?

96. **White:** It seemed like to me they had their gathering of the ... I was trying to think of the exact incident. I'm going to tell you it slips me. But anyway, they were near riots one time.

97. **Ortiz:** Was it something that one of the store owners said?

98. **White:** How's that?

99. **Ortiz:** Did it involve the store?
100. **White:** In a whiskey store. Did you hear somebody talk? It was ... I can't recall the exact incident. I can't. But some kind of discrimination between the white and the black soldiers. But you know, there was no physical thing that happened. I think it was trying to arrest a soldier. And somebody thought more about it. They mistreated him.

101. **Ortiz:** Mr. White, one of the things I learned from Mr. Bry was different parts of black community in Durham. If you had to say ... what were some of the different areas in terms of maybe class divisions in different neighborhoods in the black community? What were some of the major ...

102. **White:** Well, I think that, you know, everybody, most people are trying to do the best that they can. And if somebody can build a better house or a bigger house, they might try to do that. And then those that in certain groups of people try to live together. And so you do have kind of divisions that I don't know ... I would suspect that there's more togetherness than separation. And even in the white community, that's more prevalent than it is in the black community. You know, if people making a certain amount of money living together, then when they get more money, they move again. That's a whole lot more movement in the white community than you have in the black community. If you've got five million, you live somewhere and if you get ten, you go move with the people with the ten million. [chuckles]

103. **Ortiz:** Did you have a lot of contact with black people who were working say in the tobacco industry during the forties?

104. **White:** The various groups, in particularly, the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People, and the Committee on Negro Affairs, those people who worked in the factories and
people who worked in the North Carolina Mutual were working together for the same thing. In fact, some of the people in the factories was putting their money on the table just like everybody else. And there was a good deal of working together in the churches and in the committees and civic groups. Helping to get out the vote and voting. They're working for the common good of all.

105. Ortiz: And Mr. White, with the Haight High Business District being such a thriving district in terms of black business, were you involved in trying to keep the district together during the urban renewal project?

106. White: Yeah. We were put in a position where that freeway was a big issue. You know, where are you going to put the freeway? They discussed all kinds of ways. Even one suggestion was to build it above the railroad. And they finally decided to put it where it is now. And what they did, they combined the urban renewal program along with the freeway because the urban renewal program, when they judged the area substandard and declared it substandard and with that permission you would have an area which was -- and I think the area that they used the major portion of the freeway was area three which gave them the privilege of demolishing the entire area -- whatever area that they laid out in the urban renewal. And that gave them the possibility of constructing the freeway through that area. Now, without that, they could stop it, change it or something like that. Now, that was for the reason of constructing the freeway. And so there were certain kinds of things that needed to be done. One of the things that I did personally, I went down to Atlanta and got the government to agree to allow me to ... the people representing the redevelopment commission, got them to agree to build some temporary buildings which they said they had
not done before. They hadn't build any. And this was a section that they called Tin City, that they built temporary steel buildings to house some people down on Pettigrew Street. And that's so that they could put the freeway through there. So they changed the whole area around to a point where they scattered the homes, churches, and businesses. And that actually destroyed the Haight High area from what it was in the beginning because Haight High area was a compact area that had, at one time, had movie theatres, three, a hotel, three drug stores and businesses, insurance, fire insurance, other -- Southern Fidelity Insurance. North Carolina Mutual had a district office down there. We had an office on Pettigrew Street which was recently ... Finally had a fire in 1985. But it was finally leveled a couple of months ago. Finally, even less time than that. So what it did was scattered some of the businesses and destroyed some of the others, and churches too. One business building, the Local Building, was brick, concrete and steel, which they leveled. I never have understood. It was not substandard. But like if the law says that, you know, you could take anything in that substandard area out. The buildings that were left and still there within a short distance from that building were a lot less standard than the Local Building which, as I said earlier, was brick, concrete and steel. And one of the things is that our business was in our there. And I noticed that they're printing shop in that same place that we were.

107.Ortiz: Who's putting in a print shop?

108.White: The Ferguson Print Company. It's going to be in that same general area that we were. And we were never given the option to stay there. We were always looking for other places to move. And one of the reasons why we didn't move, we were not shown something
equal to or better than what we had. But we sold our business to the employees in 1983. They had a fire in 1985. And they didn't have the muscle to recover from that fire.

109. Ortiz: So Service Printing Company stayed on Pettigrew?


111. Ortiz: You didn't move.

112. White: We didn't move. We were looking for some place to move but nobody ever suggested that we could fix up what we had.

113. Ortiz: You were supposed to be given an offer or basically assistance to move to a place outside or equal

114. White: equal to or better than what we had. And we were never shown anything like that.

115. Ortiz: But would they show you things, or show you an area ...

116. White: We talked with them about it. What actually happened was we sold the business to the Redevelopment Commission so they had the authority, with that sale, to do what they wanted to do with it. And as it turned out, when we were looking and we were discussing it, only one part of Pettigrew Street was actually taken out for the freeway itself. And that part, if you go down there now, where you see Fayetteville Street coming across over the freeway, you'll see where there were Spate's Auto, Scarborough's Funeral Home, Spate's Auto Service and two blocks of businesses that were taken out to facilitate the freeway. The rest of it,
where we were, on down to the Regal Theatre and the Cash Drug Store and all, everything, they were actually removed but the land is still in place where it was without any interference with the freeway. So it's kind of a mixture of what happened in that area.

117. Ortiz: What was the address of Service Printing?

118. White: 504 East Pettigrew Street.

119. Ortiz: And Mr. White, what were some of the things that you did politically to try to make urban renewal or to make this freeway situation, to make it not so onerous on black businesses?

120. White: Well, as I said earlier, one of the things we did was that area near the corner of Fayetteville Street and Pettigrew, where the Spate's Auto Service and that, we actually had the urban renewal, the redevelopment commission to construct some temporary buildings that housed some of those people. Actually Scarborough was down there. The Carolina Times and the EN Tube Electric Company and Elvira's Restaurant and Turner's Beauty Supply, those businesses were moved down on Fayetteville Street. The old Fayetteville Street. And another street that ran off of Fayetteville Street. So they built some temporary buildings to house those places. And at the same time, we were looking around to see where we could locate. But then we got in the process of selling the business to the workers. We sold Service Printing Company to the workers and they took over for a couple of years. Then at that time, in 1985, they had a fire down there. So that was, for all purposes, was the end of our participation in it.
121. **Ortiz:** Do you think that the redevelopment commission dealt fairly with black businesses?

122. **White:** Well, the process is not ... makes it not fair. In other words, I think we got something like $32,000 for our business. Now, if what you really need is what the ... when you're building a highway, either a freeway or something like that and you need property to build it, what you really need -- as I look back on it now -- is replacement. In other words, if you're going to drive a freeway right through my building, the only fair thing to do is to be able to replace that building. In other words, I ought to be able to move my equipment and everything into a building. If they do it like that, you will be able to stand the damage. Now, the Highway Department has a replacement clause in their building but the Urban Renewal has what they call "fair market value" and that won't replace it. And that's where the handicap comes. You're building a road and you put the burden on the property owner to replace his property rather than just say you give him $32,000. That probably wouldn't have maybe have bought the land or whatever, but it wouldn't put the building back and everything like that. So when they worked in the Cress Street area, they operated under the replacement value, for the extension of the freeway through the Cressview area. So that's the difference. That's what makes it, in my eye sight, unfair. It's too much of a handicap to overcome.

123. **Ortiz:** And those businesses in the Cress Street, they were also black owned?

124. **White:** The homes mostly were black. And some of them were rental and all. But they took a lesson from what happened to Haight High and they came out better than the people in

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Haight High. They didn't have as many businesses. Of course, they had some institutions, churches and the like and everything. So that's what made a big differene.

125. Ortiz: Mr. White, were you also involved in other politics? I think Mr. Bry mentioned the Black Solidarity Committee.

126. White: Yeah, that was a group fighting for rights and trying to protect the interests of the community. And that group, they were organizing to put fair treatment. And I think they conducted some boycotts and this type of thing.

127. Ortiz: Who were the main people involved in the Black Solidarity Committee?

128. White: Well, it was a whole community organization, that I don't have a list of people before me that I could call. But it was a community-wide organization.

129. Ortiz: I don't want to take up too much more of your time. A couple more questions. Did you keep contact with your family during your years here in Durham? Did you yourself marry?


131. Ortiz: And so your children went to school here?
132. **White**: They went to elementary school here and my oldest son went to Duke University. He was one of the first five students at Duke. My youngest son, Joseph Marvin White, went to Florida A & M University in Tallahassee, Florida. He studied printing, by the way.

133. **Ortiz**: Did you originally intend for your oldest son to be one of the first African American students at Duke? Was that part of a coordinated effort?

134. **White**: That's coincidental. What happened was we had thought about him going to Hampton University. And his guidance counselor approached him about the possibility of going to Duke University. And we talked about it. And together we decided that that was an opportunity that he probably should take advantage of. And it was different from what he had planned. And he mentioned that. But knowing him as a child and growing up and all, I felt that he had the kind of stability and maturity that he could .... First of all, he had the training and the accomplishments that would enable him to go to Duke. And so together, we made the decision for him to go.

135. **Ortiz**: Was that a difficult experience at first, in cracking the racial barrier there?

136. **White**: Well, I don't know whether we have actually evaluated to that extent. But Duke had made some preparations for that. And he went in a situation where there didn't seem to be a general organized resistance, like the student body and the people. It was something that they had decided that they wanted to do. So there wasn't any organized resistance. It was some, I think, opposition but it was not outright vocal in organized ... you know, let's stop this kind of thing. And he had very good training. He was qualified and had the stamina and the background to be able to resist any kind of feeling that might come up. And now, I think
he was successful in it. There's one thing about a situation like that, it's more like the real world than some other places that you might go and everything seems like it's alright but it's not training you for what you're going to meet when you get outside. It's a real struggle out there. The sooner you learn that, the better off you might be. I don't know, I have to ask him exactly why he went. [chuckles] In other words, every day he had what it's like to be an African American citizen in this country. So he didn't have to learn that after he graduated. He learned it every day at Duke.

137. Ortiz: Mr. White, what were some of the main things that kept you going in your struggle all the years? To keep your printing business going? And your family? What were some of the things that inspired you, gave you strength?

138. White: Well, I guess faith, religion, family, and really, whatever opposition you might have, either artificial or real, a lot of what's happening is a burden on the other people that you're facing. Sometimes it's difficult to understand but, you know, I'm beginning to wonder within myself how it is that we continue to have struggles. We continue to have insurrections. We continue to have people out there killing each other. Sometimes these are people that grow up together and all. And I've begun to wonder how long are we going to be doing this? How can a people just go .... We criticize people who do this on the street, and on Saturday night, somebody does it, but the next day we read that somebody shoots up and kills forty people, fifty people, a hundred people. I wonder for a long time, what in the world was that they were doing over in England and the Irish. And it's a bigger problem than we think. And it's kind of puzzling. It's really disturbing. I know we do that and maybe up on Main Street this weekend somebody will get shot. But it's something deeper than we as
human beings ... It's something we haven't learned yet. And sometimes I reflect on that. And now we know, we're celebrating fifty years the ending of the conflict with Japan and how we ended that. It's something we need to look into. And I think that we as a group, the things that I went through ... You know, Martin Luther King said that his mind and soul never sat on the back of the bus. Everything I had went on the back of the bus. Mind, body, soul and everything. But at the same time it did that, it did something for me. If I could do that and come out of it and not hate people because they're different from me, and maybe even love people that are different from me, maybe I have learned something that that other guy didn't learn. Because I see some violence in here, I see some things in here that I would never do! Kill people and eat them. All kinds of stuff. So maybe after all, maybe I came out on top. And he hasn't caught up yet. And I'm concerned about it. But what can I do about it? But I think about it sometime. So who's right and who's wrong? This world that we got ... I can still smile and be happy. And I try every day to unlock the doors of how to keep doing that. Maybe we, as human beings, still need to work on those kinds of things and make this a better world for all of us. Because we need to do that. My time is running out. But hopefully, somehow or another, I just ... Sometime you think the wars that we have been through and I've almost ... in four-fifths of this century. I think it would be a good idea if we could .... We've got a few more years left before we get to the twenty-first century. And if we could concentrate on how we can make things better for all of us and make the twenty-first century better than the twentieth century. Look at the wars we've had! Two world wars! Oooh! So, maybe you all can work it out. [chuckles] You can study this thing. That's a good project, working on it. Let's see if you all got the answers. [End of Tape 2, Side A]
141. **Ortiz:** ... if you will, by having you discuss business on Fayetteville Street in the Haight High section when you first took over Service Printing Company and if you could talk to us a little bit about some of the businesses. Looking at the City Directory, it's such a thriving center: barber shops, stores.

142. **White:** Yeah. Now we were located on Fayetteville Street in the 600 block, 608 Fayetteville Street. And we were on the second floor of that building and beneath us was a pool room. That was where the Service Printing Company was started at that address. And now, Fayetteville Street at that time, right next door to us was the office of the North Carolina Mutual Durham District Office and then going down, proceeding down Fayetteville Street -- I guess that would be ... let's see, was that a north/south street? Where it's located now, it was going south on Fayetteville Street. There was a drug store next door to us operated by Dr. James and his sons were in the business. Dr. James was the leading pharmacist. And then there was another drug store right on the corner. That's 608. But right next to the drug store was a building supply, Home Modernization and Supply Company. That was next to the James ... I was trying to think of what that ...

143. **Ortiz:** Do you remember the address of any ... 

144. **White:** what Dr. James called his drug store. Well, this is Fayetteville Street here.

145. **Ortiz:** A Fine Drug Store? That was at 618.
White: 618. Oh, you have his address there. But that was in that same block; that was on the corner.

Ortiz: Okay and that's right before ....

White: And then I was trying to see 608 ... That's it. There you go right there. Bruce. Billiards. Yeah, we just called it Pool Room. And we were on the second floor, Service Printing Company. And then that's ... Oh, this is Richard L. McDougal. That was Home Modernization and Supply Company. They sold building supplies and I think they did some building. And that MacDougal, I suppose he must have ... No, this is 609. That was his home address across the street from our address. That's number 608; that's 609. He was a very prominent person in the community. He was an officer at the Mechanics and Farmers Bank. And the Mutual ... I started to say Building and Loan but Mutual Savings and Loan which is now Mutual Community Savings Bank. And he was also given credit for encouraging a lot of building and homeownership and this kind of thing because of his position, that he had in the bank and the savings and loan. And a lot of the development at that time was credited to him because he encouraged people to own their own homes and this type of thing. So he was a very active person. I said that was his residence across the street. Now, that Bull City Drug Store, let me see, was on the corner of that block. And then I see you have here, you have a Rite Way Laundry, that was a branch of the Rite Way Laundry.

Ortiz: Was that owned by a black business person?

White: I don't think it was, really. And then there's Amy's Fish and Poultry Market. There's the Shelley was a shoe company. And Lofton's Bakery, I believe that was a branch.
And then, let's see, Edward D. Green -- that's an office there, I believe. No, a grocery store. That's a grocery store.

151. Ortiz: Would you talk a lot with, and would you have a lot of interactions with these businesses that you're telling us about?

152. White: Yeah. There's another drug store there too. That's the interesting thing. That was the third drug store. We've come across two here but the Biltmore Drug Store was on Pettigrew Street, right next to the Regal Theatre. And interestingly enough, that was Dr. Garrett who came here from Rocky Mountain, I believe. Operated the Biltmore Drug Store on Pettigrew Street. And it was actually the larger of the two drug stores that we've mentioned so far. The one on Pettigrew Street was next to the Regal Theatre. And then the Biltmore Hotel was on the second floor above the drug store. And then you have another older theatre. We've skipped over something here. We're going on Pettigrew Street. But there's an older drug store, older theatre that was not operating at the time I was there that was on Pettigrew Street too.

153. Ortiz: Do you remember the name of that?

154. White: I was trying to think of it. Do you have Pettigrew Street on here?

155. Ortiz: I only have Fayetteville. It goes on to ... Yeah.

156. White: I know that that building was one of the first ... It actually was closed, that theatre that we're talking about and it was one of the first locations of the John Avery Boys Club. Maybe that'll come to me.
157. Ortiz: Was that theatre a black owned theatre?

158. White: Yes, it was a black owned theatre. I think it might ahve predated the Regal. Or either at about the same time. Then there was a Booker T. Theatre that was built in that same building that we were in. As I mentioned earlier, we talked about the layout on Pettigrew Street. In the building we were in, which we mentioned was an old hosiery mill, or either I think they manufactured cloth or manufactured things from cloth and all, that was built for black workers on Pettigrew Street. That was that building that we were in.

159. Ortiz: It was built for black workers?

160. White: Yeah. It was built and operated -- it was like a branch. I'm not absolutely sure but it was like a branch of the Durham Hosiery.

161. Ortiz: Oh, okay.

162. White: I said hosiery. I guess it was textiles, something in textiles. My understanding was, you know, I haven't read the exact precise history of it, that that was why this building was built. It was a block long building. You don't have any pictures of the outside of the building? Yeah, that's the corner. We were on the corner. But this building was a block long. And it was a building that

163. Ortiz: The whole building was black owned?

164. White: It was not black owned.
Ortiz: It wasn't black owned?

White: No, Durham Hosiery was there. They had several branches in the city, I believe.

Now that's my understanding of it. But this was not in place when we came there. It was vacant. And one of the fellows that was really interested in that area, that vacant building down there, was Judge ... I think Judge was not his real name. I think we called him Judge Watkins but he was called the Movie King because he owned ... Oh, that was the Wonderland Theatre! And he owned that building, that theatre.

Ortiz: Judge Watkins?

White: Judge Watkins. Now Judge, that wasn't his real name. I think Judge was a name he was called by. But he was a very interesting person. He somehow or another, I don't think he owned this building, he was acquainted with the owners of the building and he visualized what could happen in this building. In other words, he attracted us to move into this building from Fayetteville Street. We talked about earlier about being on Fayetteville Street. And he was very dramatic; he was the type of person that when they'd have a parade or something, he'd be like the marshall on the parade, riding a horse in the parade. He had a lot of flair and everything. He took interest in this building and sold us on the idea of moving from where we were into the building. He could describe what it could become and everything. And they divided the building into sections. Let's see. 18 feet sections. Now that first section where we were in, when you went 18 feet, but when you got the end of the building, it was a hundred feet. So it's like a triangle like type of building. This side would go straight back and this side was spread out. So we bought two sections in that building. I was trying to
think did we buy an eight or nine foot section. I think we might have bought an 18 foot section and a nine foot section. When we set it up for our use, we left the second section so it was separated in the front and we rented out the front for a shoe shop. One fellow, I think, who we rented to first was named Fred White -- no relationship. Then he sold it-- then he sold his business to a fellow named Monroe. Let me see, I was trying to think of his first name. But anyway, he had a shoe shop in that building. He bought the shoe shop from Fred White, Monroe did.

169. Ortiz: Okay. So Fred White actually owned that part of the

170. White: No, we rented to him. We bought two sections of the building. See, it was divided into ... It seemed like to me that first section was more than nine feet really. We could have bought three sections of it because this first section might have been -- We might have bought two sections for our use. No, we bought three. I was trying to think. But we rented one section. The way it was, it was like this one section that comes down straight like this, and then this part here, and then this other section came out like this. And when it got in the back, it was a hundred and some feet. And the front, now I'm thinking now that we had -- this was probably 27 feet. And this is ... What actually happened was every nine feet, there were posts in here supporting the wall, supporting the roof. And what we did was we rented the front part of this out but then on this side, we could go out and then go back of here for one-half of that part right there. Then this part was kind of like an open space part right in there. So that was what ... Now, we was going through this talking about what was on ....

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171. **Ortiz:** Mr. White, I was wondering, I have a couple of questions on you and your partners coming to this new location. How did you first meet or get acquainted with Judge Watkins?

172. **White:** Well, I think he came to us.

173. **Ortiz:** Okay.

174. **White:** And he was that type of fellow. He was an open minded fellow and what he was trying to do, I was trying ... I don't mean to jump off too much here. But he lived on Fayetteville Street and I was trying to get his real name. Here let me see. I lived at one time on -- Here's where I lived at 1217 and he lived across the street. Yeah, here it is. Now this is his real name. That looks like Frederick K. Watkins. Yeah. So he lived almost ... See, that's 1218. That house is still standing. And "Judge" was ....

175. **Ortiz:** So he was also kind of a black real estate agent?

176. **White:** I think he basically started out operating a theatre and he may have done a number of things. In terms of ... He was interested in the community. He had a lot of flair about him; had a lot of imagination about what could happen and what could do. And I really think he was like an agent for the people that were selling this property. And he went around talking. Now, I don't know what his exact connection was -- whether he had a commission or they hired him. But he came to us, for example. Young people knowing us and operating a print business. And we were up on the second floor. I think because of the kind of cosmopolitan type of guy he was, he was interested in the community and he also sees an opportunity. He
sold us on the idea -- he was trying to sell people on the idea of moving into this building. And he pictured how it would be very dramatically. And it was just what we needed really.

177. Ortiz: Who owned the actual building?

178. White: I wish I could tell you. I think the Hosiery Mill still owned it, Durham Hosiery Mill.

179. Ortiz: So he was kind of working as an agent for them.

180. White: I think he was acting as agent for them. And the nearest I can come to telling, I know we borrowed the money from the bank to buy it.

181. Ortiz: From Mechanics and Farmers?

182. White: Yeah, from Mechanics and Farmers Bank. Now, also other people came in there. Carolina Times, Elvira's Blue Tavern, she had a restaurant was in there.

183. Ortiz: Before you were?

184. White: I think pretty near the same time. No, we were in there; we were about one of the first to go in there. And then, also in that building on the right end of it -- it was a block long -- it was a second floor on it and Lawyer Gates and Lawyer Thompson -- about three attorneys moved in on the right end of the building on the second floor. It wasn't no elevator or anything; a walk up. Then also, a theatre was built in there. Some mentioned Booker T. Theatre.

186. White: Yeah, they went in there real strong because they built a wall from the ground up right on through the roof. And it was a real nice theatre. So that meant that there was a third theatre in numbers on Pettigrew Street but only two operating. The Wonderland was closed. Before we got to Durham, it was already closed. And it was also used, as I mentioned earlier, as one of the homes of the John Avery Boys Club. The John Avery Boys Club's first home, I believe, was on Fayetteville Street in the next block before you get to where we were in the six hundred. We were in the six hundred block. But there was a Ray Alley right next to the North Carolina Mutual District Office. And then there was White Rock Baptist Church next to that.

187. Ortiz: So the building now you're describing had the theatre and the office space, what address was that on?

188. White: On Pettigrew Street.


190. White: Our address was the first in there, it was 608. Let's see, now I don't know what it was the address when it was the hosiery mill.

191. Ortiz: Okay. And that was the building that you moved into.

192. White: We moved into that building. Then we had to remodel it to suit ourselves. All we bought was a portion of the building.
193. Ortiz: That was a big building!

194. White: Yeah, it was. It was a block a long. See, we said the Service Printing Company and then a shoe repair; then a restaurant and then a beauty supply -- Bekins Turner Beauty Supply. Then The Carolina Times. And the EN Toole Electrical Company. I don't know whether you'll get a chance to talk with him.

195. Ortiz: Oh, is he a good person to ...

196. White: I don't know how well he is but if you could get to talk with him, he might tell you some interesting things.

197. Ortiz: And his name is

198. White: Tool, T-o-o-l-e. E.N. I don't know what that E.N. stands for. He's a fascinating person. He's a real skillful mechanic. He did all our electrical work when we moved down there. And I'm glad he was still living as long as we worked because he knew where every wire was and he could fix things. He's the type of guy that if he was working on something and he needed a part, he could go down to his machine shop and make the part. And once he fixed it, whatever he was doing, it was fixed. The only problem you had with him was if something broke down you might have to go get him to come back and fix it. Because he knew where everything was and he could find out and where the repair was. He's still living, I think. He lives on Peco Street, I believe.

199. Ortiz: And his last name is Toole?
200. White: Toole, yeah. T-o-o-l-e.

201. Ortiz: Now he was a black electrician?


203. Ortiz: Mr. White, I wonder if you could

204. White: He was an electrical engineer.

205. Ortiz: Electrical engineer, okay. Is that a Jack of all trades?

206. White: [laughs] Yes, you had a question?

207. Ortiz: There are a couple of things I was wondering about. One, could you describe the relationship that you had with the other entrepreneurs in the building? Like were you in an organization together?

208. White: We never had a formal organization but we had a close relationship with one another. And the thing that we did that saved us from the first fire that came down there was we built a fire wall. I was the ... One of the teachers of to Hillside -- his name was H. Thomas Tucker, he taught brick masonry and I think that was his main subject. Of course, Hillside at that time had a machine shop, brick masonry, and they had a carpentry shop. I said machine shop. And automobile repair. And one of the things that they did as a project, when you go down Lawson Street and come into -- what is that? Is that Roscoe? Yeah, it is
Roscoe. If you go back past Hillside and you go down to ... I think that's Roscoe. There's some houses on the left before you get to Roscoe. They were built by students.

209. Ortiz: Oh, on Hillside.

210. White: Yeah, at Hillside. They're right opposite the field, the practice field would run into where those houses are. If you go by there sometime, you can see they were built by students. In other words, the students in carpentry and building construction and all actually built houses.

211. Ortiz: And that was during the time that you were... in the forties?

212. White: Oh yeah. That was during ... We came in '39 and I would say it might have been as much as five or ten, a few years after we got there that they actually built those houses. And this fellow that I mentioned, H. Thomas Tucker, that teaches brick laying, that was Sisnet who taught machine shop and he lived right next door to me when I moved to Austin Avenue. I lived at 1501. If you go by there sometime, the last house in the 14 hundred block, he bought that house. It had a well in the yard and it was old, like an old farm house. And he laid the bricks on that house himself, laid every brick that's in the house. Now, he's no longer living now. He lived right next door to me. But I thought it was very interesting that he was a machine shop instructor but he laid the bricks on his house. I guess that's that Hampton spirit in him. He finished Hampton Institute, the same school that I finished.

213. Ortiz: Were you both active in the alumni organization?
214. **White**: Oh yes. We were, yes. He was a very fine fellow. And a real artisan in the trades. Now, it was a close relationship. You mentioned an organization, I don't think we ever organized a formal group but we all knew each other and worked together in planning or anything that we might do. Each building, of course, is separate. You know where the Carolina Times is now, don't you? It's on Fayetteville Street.

215. **Ortiz**: On Fayetteville and

216. **White**: It's really still, it's on the old Fayetteville Street actually. They call it Old Fayetteville Street. I might have mentioned to you earlier that I was instrumental in helping them build that temporary structure. Because they got to a point in the freeway where they were rushing the people out and the lawyers said that they can't move anybody that they doesn't have somewhere to go. And they tell me this was the first time in urban renewal in the country -- Urban Renewal doesn't build anything for people. They only, you know, give you the orders to move. But we went down to Atlanta with -- I went down there with, I was trying to think of this fellow's name -- Henry Morris. He was head of the redevelopment ... not the Commission but I guess thes staff. He might have been an assistant. And we went down to Atlanta, the office that was over this district, and convinced them that ... What they were trying to do, the exit off of the Fayetteville Street crossing of the freeway, as you see it now --

217. **Ortiz**: Off of 147?
218. **White:** Yes. They wanted to complete that ... Started getting ready to do that exit. The interesting part about it though, after the first block, it didn't disturb Pettigrew Street. But they moved all the people out of the ... Spate who has this

219. **Ortiz:** The auto mechanic?

220. **White:** Yeah. He was right on the corner of Fayetteville and Pettigrew. That exit was in the way, the buildings down to where we were, Branch Place. That was the corner. Yeah, this building right here, right down to this building. They ordered all those people to move. But they didn't have anywhere to go. So what we did, we took the problem to the Redevelopment Commission and then we got together and they took me down to Atlanta to explain to the people in Atlanta. And they put up $100,000 to build those temporary buildings. And the **Carolina Times** is still in one of those temporary buildings. But what they did, before the **Carolina Times** moved down, they bricked it in. That's a metal building.

221. **Ortiz:** Oh, is that what they call Tin City?

222. **White:** Tin City, yeah. Now it was more than just where that is now. It was like an "L" shape.

223. **Ortiz:** What street was it on?

224. **White:** It was on Fowler Avenue really. It was Fowler Avenue on the other side of Fayetteville Street. Let's see, where's St. Joseph Church on here? Now which way is south here?
225. **Ortiz:** This is White Rock here.

226. **White:** Oh, let me see. That's north then. This must be south then. Anyway, what it was, right down Fowler Avenue, one building was built like this and then the Carolina Times building, I think it might have been up this way a little bit. That building that's down there now, that's where the Carolina Times is now. So the two buildings that they built to take care of those buildings on Pettigrew Street were built like that on Fowler Avenue. And they were made out of metal. They call it Tin City but that was a metal building there. The Carolina Times building has been bricked around and Toole went down there with the Carolina Times.

227. **Ortiz:** Did a lot of people patronize those business when they moved?

228. **White:** Oh yeah, oh yeah. See, the other thing is that Phoenix Square was the next step up from this metal building type thing. And it took in places like the Green Candle that are now in the Phoenix Square and the barber shop and several other. They took care of the smaller businesses in Haight High which did not go into the Heritage Square Shopping Center. That's how they were able to move off of Pettigrew Street.

229. **Ortiz:** Did they receive support from -- You mentioned going and getting the funding in Atlanta for redevelopment. Did they receive support from say Mechanics and Farmers or other lending institutions?

230. **White:** I suppose they did. I'm sure they did. Of course, they had to have their own -- The Redevelopment Commission, they built the building but I don't know whether they actually physically moved them or not. So, let's see, where do we go from here?
231. **Ortiz:** Mr. White, there was a couple of questions I wanted to ask you also, I guess, additional questions about your location on 608. You mentioned earlier some of the businesses and you mentioned, I think, a billiard hall.

232. **White:** Yeah, that was beneath us.

233. **Ortiz:** That was beneath you, okay. So did you know the owner?

234. **White:** Oh yeah. Where's that city directory? They had the name of the person there.

Bruce. Yeah, William V. Bruce. I had a discussion with somebody the other day about that.

235. **Ortiz:** What was in there? Was it just pool tables?

236. **White:** Just pool tables. Yeah, yeah.

237. **Ortiz:** Was there a bar?

238. **White:** No. I think they sold soft drinks in there.

239. **Ortiz:** Would you go down and play pool there?

240. **White:** Very seldom. No. Never. I can't think really that I ever went down there. That's Carter Moore. That's Dr. Moore's wife. One of the founders. She lives right ... There's Carter S. Moore. Her husband was, I believe, one of the founders of North Carolina Mutual.
241. Ortiz: I was wondering -- you know, I noticed this the other day that there was no ... I mean, they didn't put a "C" by her name. I guess that's just a mistake the directory made. You know how they would put ...

242. White: What is the "C" for? Colored?

243. Ortiz: During segregation, yeah. And designate it.

244. White: Oh yeah.

245. Ortiz: Now see, she doesn't have a "C" by her name.

246. White: What is that?

247. Ortiz: The "O" means owner, so he owned the place.

248. White: Oh, I see. No, she was Black.

249. Ortiz: I think it's just kind of odd that

250. White: that they didn't put it down. Well, I never noticed that. Yeah.

251. Ortiz: I guess the designations are kind of convenient for us now as historians when we're trying to figure ....


253. Ortiz: She had, in fact ... I think her ... This was her residence by White Rock, wasn't it?
254. **White:** Yeah, right. Right next door to White Rock.

255. **Ortiz:** Did you know her?

256. **White:** Oh yeah. She was a member of White Rock. See, Dr. A.M. Moore, who was the ... 
   My Sunday School class is named for him. Moore. And then they add Cannady when he passed.

257. **Ortiz:** What kind of position in the community did Mrs. Moore play?

258. **White:** Well, she was a very prominent member of White Rock and I hear a lot of talk 
   about who help people a lot, missionaries. They went out in the community when somebody 
   was ill, or somebody needed assistance. There was a lot of that type of thing being done. 
   And so she was very active in the church.

259. **Ortiz:** Was she ever active in business herself, in her own right?

260. **White:** So far as my knowledge, I don't think so. But I wouldn't be absolutely sure about it. 
   I can't think of any business type activity that she was connected with. I know that she was 
   active in the church and active in the community. And I hear a lot of discussion about ...

   [End of Tape 3, Side A]

261.[Begin Tape 3, Side B]

262. **White:** I tell you another interesting thing about Haight High, those buildings were built by 
   fraternal organizations and there were about four buildings down there, multiple story
buildings, that were built by fraternal organizations. Around this time that this book was published, they probably had been changed hands and I don't believe any large group owned the building at this time.

263. Ortiz: These were Black lodges?

264. White: Yeah. You don't have a picture of Fayetteville Street, do you? An old picture of Fayetteville Street. There are some pictures. I know the Arts Council has some pictures of Old Fayetteville Street. I know they had an exhibit down -- and maybe Haight High, the Urches Center may have some pictures. But I know that the Arts Council has pictures of Old Fayetteville Street. So those large buildings down there, the multiple story buildings, were built by fraternal organizations. And my thinking is that the fraternal organizations were the real basis for the establishment of the North Carolina Mutual. It's sort of an idea of taking care of your own, which was in 1898 that they were founded.

265. Ortiz: Speaking of taking care of your own, Mr. White, I was wondering were there things that Black business people did in 1938 to encourage Black residents to shop in Black establishments?

266. White: Oh yeah. We had the Durham Business and Professional Chain, an organization organized in 1938 by James Jackson Henderson. We called him J.J. Henderson. He's still living, by the way. He's not to well at this time. But he organized that. Now there's a little story behind that. They had the National Negro Business League. And Mr. Spaulding in '38 was the President of the National before they had a local chapter. And I've been intending to ask Mr. Henderson about this. My guess is that while he was President -- Mr. Spaulding's a
very prominent business person. I know you have things about him -- as President of the
National felt the need to have a local chapter. And I think ... I don't want to quote him
without knowing the facts. I say I was going to ask Mr. Henderson. My thinking is that he
came down, being Mr. Henderson's boss, he just made a suggestion to him that that might be
a good project for him to carry out.

267. Ortiz: What kind of projects would the League or the Chain do?

268. White: Well, they had what they called a Trade Week where they asked people to pay
special attention to the Black businesses and called attention to it. They had a parade which
was more or less cooperating with North Carolina College's homecoming. And they had
floats in the parade. And they also had ... Mrs. DeShasa was head of the Housewives League
and the Housewives League had one of its goals was sponsoring the patronage of Black
businesses. They asked you during that week to do all your buying from Black businesses.
And it was quite a real boost. They had what they called a Booster Dinner and that was all --
Mr. Henderson had the leadership role in that organization. And that was one of their
projects.

269. Ortiz: Mr. White, was there some concern that some Black residents of Durham were not
loyal or were not patronizing Black businesses? That they might have wanted to perhaps go
to A & P to try to save a dime here and there?

270. White: Well, they had an A & P store in Haight High. You know that, didn't you?

271. Ortiz: Yes.
272. **White**: So I think there was encouragement to buy but I don't think anybody with that store sitting right there would severely criticize the person for going in that store.

273. **Ortiz**: Oh, they wouldn't be?

274. **White**: I don't think that ... Well, I can't really say because I have to go back into a memory. But I don't think that it was that kind of a situation. Because if it was something that ... They would encourage you to buy from the Black grocery store that's there. I don't know. I can't answer. My mind doesn't go back to a situation where they would stand out in front of the A & P, telling people "Don't go in here; go across the street." But the idea was to do all the buying that you can from the Blacks during that time. Yeah, so it was a good project.

275. **Ortiz**: The Durham Business and Professional Chain, did they have a relationship with A & P or other white businesses?

276. **White**: I don't think so. I don't see what that relationship would be. I think they would know them and all but I don't even think there probably was any discussion between the owners of the A & P with the Durham Business and Professional Chain. We did a newspaper for them to. I don't know where you might find some copies of that. They ought to be somewhere around.

277. **Ortiz**: Do you remember the title?

278. **White**: I can't remember. I think it's something like *The Chain*. I can't remember what the title of it was.
Ortiz: But it was a periodical.

White: It was just done on special occasions. Because, see, that organization wouldn't do a competitive newspaper because they would look at the Carolina Times as the Black newspaper. This was more or less like what do you call it? House organ. You know, this is the official organ of the

Ortiz: A booster.

White: of the Chain.

Ortiz: Mr. White, you mentioned the Carolina Times and I was wondering, considering your earlier experience in journalism, what kind of relationship did Service have with the Times?

White: Oh, at one time, for a period of several years, we printed the Carolina Times for Mr. Austin. L.E. Austin was the Editor. And we had a lot of respect for him and his newspaper, his editorial writings. He was a terrific writer, campaigning for rights and he campaigned against injustices that are directed towards the Black community. And encouraging participating in politics and active in citizenship and helping to uplift the community. And he was a terrific writer. I mean he was outstanding. I mean, that would be a whole history in itself, if anybody preserved, or if the library had films or copies of that newspaper. He was a leading campaign for rights, against any wrong done to the community. Mishandling of the duties by the police or anybody like that, the Carolina Times was really a spokesman for equality. And I think Mr. Austin is an example, Lewis Austin, of what was a very valuable
resource in the Black community. I call him a natural. I don't think the records will show that he went to school to learn how to edit the newspaper. But that seems to be his natural talent, for him not only in publishing the newspaper and writing editorials, but also speaking and addressing the community on wrongs that were being perpetrated against Black citizens and all. I mean, he was really outspoken. He was a fireball writer and everything. The community seems to be blessed with people of that character. Mr. Spaulding, who was President of North Carolina Mutual, said the only time he went to college was to give a commencement address. An outstanding business person.

285. Ortiz: Who would you say were other people in that character? Who would you put in that class?

286. White: Well, I think later on, following these people, of course you had people that they themselves invited in to come and help. It was not the same as inviting a college trained person for a particular job as one that was doing a job without that kind of training. So they were also smart enough to invite people in to help them. Of course, Mr. Austin was difficult to help. But Mr. Spaulding was just the opposite. When it came to help, they had a whole -- just like I mentioned J.J. Henderson. He was a Hampton College graduate. And they had a following. These people like C.C. Spaulding, they had also the wisdom to bring in people who had specific training to make the business stronger and make sure it would survive.

287. Ortiz: Mr. White, I wanted to ask you about ... Actually the person who told us that we needed to interview you was Mr. Kelly Bryant. Could you tell me how you first met Mr. Bryant?
288. *White:* I met him while he was at Hampton Institute. I was probably about three years ahead of him at Hampton. And at that time, it was more just like meeting another student.

And I didn't have no idea that we would end up in the same town. He came here shortly after I did, but he also had relatives here. And his home is in Rocky Mountain. The Hampton Alumni has a regular organization in the city so we came together in the Hampton Alumni. I also recruited him to work with the Boy Scouts and he accepted the leadership, as Scoutmaster of one of the scout troops and remained Scoutmaster over thirty years really. And he outdistanced me in that. I think I got a few more Eagle Scouts than he did but I had a church to work with. And he had a school. He worked with Burton School. And my scout troop was at White Rock. So I had more ready help and more boys. But I did make a speech at his banquet and I told those boys if I was going to join a scout troop, I'd join his.

289. *Ortiz:* He was a person who was involved in, you mentioned earlier, fraternal organizations. And I think he was a person who was really involved in the fraternal ....

290. *White:* Absolutely. Now he's the Grand Secretary of the Masons in North Carolina. So, he actually now ... After he retired from North Carolina Mutual, he went to work for the Lodge.

291. *Ortiz:* Do you know his son?


293. *Ortiz:* Kelly Bryant, Jr.
294. **White:** Yeah. He adopted two children, a girl and a boy. I gave him a lot of credit for that. In fact, I encouraged him to do that. When you get old and you don't have any children, and you're looking at the end, it's tough. [chuckles] And he done it quite well. And his daughter went to Hampton University. And she's a speech therapist. She lives here now. She was working in Raleigh but she works for a firm that hires speech therapists. She's quite well trained and all. So she adopted a little girl too. She followed her parents that adopted her and her brother.

295. **Ortiz:** Mr. White, one of the things that I wanted to talk to you a little more about today was actually your experience scouting and being a part of the very early Black scouting groups.

296. **White:** Oh yeah. I joined scouting in Norfolk, Virginia, the town that I grew up in. And this is the story about my troop, that I was Scout. And there I am up there. If I had known I was going to be hidden, I probably would have stood a little taller. But there were 16 scouts in this troop. I have three brothers and four of us joined the troop. And my oldest brother -- we had a discussion on this. This is a picture that was made in 1928. And that's my brother next to me and this is our youngest brother right there.

297. **Ortiz:** And the brother next to you is named?

298. **White:** His name is John Isaac. And this one's name is George, after my father. George Daniel. And this picture was made in 1928 when my oldest brother's trying to figure out what happened that he wasn't on that picture. And we concluded that he had gone to New York by that time. That was probably late in the summer of 1928.
299. **Ortiz:** This gentleman over here --

300. **White:** He's the Scout Master.

301. **Ortiz:** His name was?

302. **White:** Maceo Johnson.

303. **Ortiz:** Maceo Johnson. Did your parents know him?

304. **White:** Yes. They knew him, yeah. Now, my mother was dead at this time. She died in 1919. She left four children under ten. She asked my aunt -- who's my father's sister -- to keep the family together. And she dedicated herself to that, and sent two of us to college. And this troop sort of influenced me. I decided in 1942 that I would give something back. And I volunteered to be Scout Master. I served 26 years as a Scout Master of Troop 55 at White Rock Baptist Church. 26 of my boys attained the Eagle rank and I'm still trying to give something back. So I have about, I think the last time I checked up on it, it was over 60 years experience in scouting. And I'm trying to find somebody to take my place now. If you interview anybody that's looking for a scouting job, let me know.

305. **Ortiz:** It'll be difficult to fill your shoes. Starting out as a Scout Master in 1942, what were the race relations like in the BSA and Boy Scouts of America?

306. **White:** Actually, it was separated in the racial. In other words, the Black troops had their own executive and they went to a different camp from the white. So we actually organized to make a point that -- we were Scouts and Scouts shouldn't have that kind of a division. So we
worked together. But at that time, we had our own executive and to some extent, in terms of numbers of boys, I don't think we have as many active scouts as we had when we had our own group. It's kind of hard to explain, really. I think the year before we organized and came together, we had over a hundred boys in camp. And I don't think we've had that -- and that was a long time ago. And I don't think we've had that many boys going to camp, Black youth going to camp, since then. It's kind of hard to explain. But I can't say why that happened and why it's still happening. At this time, we have more Black scout executives. In fact, we have top leaders in the scouts. I think the Field Director is an African American person. And then we have a couple of more in the Council. Okoneecha Council is our council. And I'm still wrestling with the fact that ... And even now, in our church unit, I guess a lot depends on the individual scout leaders. And I hate to say that but in our church, we lost our scout leader. He got a job in South Carolina, in Greenville. And then he moved to Atlanta. And it seems to be like on an individual basis, just like anything else in life, you know, some are good and some are not quite as good as others.

**307.Ortiz:** But in 1942, what would you say brought young Black children into the Scouts?

**308.White:** I think it was the executive. We had an executive; he was very good. By the name of Henry Gillis. He went to Washington as a Scout executive. And he retired in Washington. He was very unusual. He understood how to work the people and he understood what it would take to get the movement going. And he did a very excellent job. You know, those that held back or didn't do up to standard, he worked with them and made a top flight situation.
309. Ortiz: Was there a sense in the forties that being in a Black troop was part of -- you had a sense of race pride in a Black troop?

310. White: Well, you know, those troops are most of the institutions -- and the institutions themselves, just like churches, even now today, you have some churches that come together but ... So that's a part of reality. But now the coming together at a council district level is ... we don't have the separation. But it's just one of those things. It's difficult to explain why you would actually more boys in '42 than you have in '95.

311. Ortiz: Do you think part of it could be ... you were saying the institution could have been White Rock and the supportive culture in White Rock for scouting at the time?

312. White: I think the support that you have -- it's sort of like based on the individual that you have. Now when I started as a Scout Master in '42, we had three troops. We had White Rock, St. Mark and St. Joseph. I think they have more in numbers than they had then now. I don't know whether Scouting has the draw for our units. Scouting is absolutely a very good program. There's no question about it. In fact, Scouting is a program that will take a young boy at 11, just when he's beginning to think in terms of outside of the home, and it gives him a sort of an entry way into a unit and with people and all that really can have a very definite precise influence on his life. I mean a healthy influence. And in fact, if you want to look at it like that time is coming when he's going to be leaving home anyhow, and it's like preparing him for that time, and it's also helping the parent to help them develop the child to the extent that he can get ready for what's on the outside of the home. And it's a mechanism that's used a lot. I have thought about it that maybe some groups understand that more than others. And
it's a helping hand. I had a situation: a fine home, the father worked at North Carolina Mutual. And the mother was a school teacher. And when the winter time came -- there was two boys in the troop. When the winter time came, they stopped coming to the meetings.

And I had a system when I was a Scout Master. If I had a problem, if I wanted to get a boy to go to camp, if I wanted to go on a Jamboree or something, then if necessary I would go right to their home and talk with the mother and father about it. I had one scout who had three -- was three brothers. And when a boy gets a certain age, like 14 or 15, he's sort of looking at the girls then, you know. And you can talk all you want to about how this is good for you; you're going to need this later on in life. It won't mean a thing to him if his head is turned around the wrong way. So I went to the home and talked to them. Well, the father said, "Well, I know what's out there. I've been out there and everything. It's not all like it should be." The mother said, "Well, you know, I'm working. I'm tired and all and everything. I've got other things to think about." I said, "Well, let me tell you something.

We can teach him how to go now. And I can't guarantee you that he won't be playing up and down the street, plucking each other on the head, stopping by the store and buying candy and buying sodas and this kind of thing." I said, "I can't even guarantee he won't get hurt. I'm not going to tell you he might not get hurt. But I can tell you one thing. We can teach him how to come and go now but when he gets 16, he's going whether he knows how to go or not." And they bought it. And one of the young men -- if anybody had told me that the one that was a nice, tender little boy, looked like he wouldn't hurt a flea -- If anybody had told me he was going to be a commissioned officer -- his rank went way up. He went into the Army. You know, they were drafting people then. I would have bet anything that that boy would never be an officer in the Army. Then the other young man joined the State Department and

Nathaniel White, 57
went to Hawaii. He married a Hawaiian girl and both of them are doing real fine. Both of the parents are gone now. But they got it made. It's just sort of a understanding what it's all about. And I'm not sure that maybe the fact it stayed segregated so long that we lost all those years trying to learn about it. Now this troop was the first troop in Norfolk, Virginia, in 1928. And they got a ... I don't know what the scouting program is like up there now. But they got a whole history of it. And maybe the fact that it was segregated so long -- because Scouting started in 1910 in America -- that it stayed segregated so long that we just haven't taken on to it. And I understand that to some extent, boys kid boys who join the scouts. Other boys and what they say to them and all, I'm not acquainted with. But that might have some effect on it. But you do have some division there.

313. **Ortiz:** Now the discussion you had with the parents of the children you were talking about sounded really vivid. Were there other interactions like that you had with parents where you would try to intervene?

314. **White:** Oh yeah. I had one boy, now his brother teaches at Central. We were talking about going on a trip, out on a Jamboree trip. And he didn't want to go. I said, "Well, you know, your brother ... Maybe you should go." So I talked him into going, just somehow or another convinced him to go. Of course, I talked with his parents. His father was a scout leader himself. You know, that person there that was a school principal, he was a scout leader. And that boy went to that trip and he liked it so much that there was a trip they were looking for a young man to go to Paris for a conference. Some older boys. Some kind of conference for world wide conference. So he went to that trip. Now I can't think about the number of years. See, this is '42. No, this is ...
315. **Ortiz:** Oh, that's a program?

316. **White:** It's a dedication to this boy's father that I'm talking about now. So he's a missionary now. This young man that I had to talk him into going on a trip and didn't want to go. He's a missionary and a teacher over in Italy. And he got his Ph.D. degree. I guess he's going to retire in that job.

317. **Ortiz:** This is a picture of the 1960 scout.

318. **White:** Yeah. That's White Rock before we ... That was the church before we moved from ... We were on Fayetteville Street at that time.

319. **Ortiz:** What were the Jamborees like?

320. **White:** They were very fascinating because you can get more on a trip like that than you can in a year in the program, going to meetings and all. You meet boys from all over the country. And they're talking to you and checking you out to see if you've got a badge on you. They're going to start talking to you about it to see if you really earned that badge, and how much you know. And I say a Jamboree is worth a year of going to scout meetings. My theory was you can't be any more than you can see. If you go see it, then you have a better chance of trying to be what you see.

321. **Ortiz:** Were the Jamborees back then, was it an all Black Jamboree?

322. **White:** That was the thing that ... Oh, I've got a picture of a Jamboree troop. They were mixed. And we had a problem with a Jamboree in '60. We went in '60 in the summer, the
White boys didn't want ... We were supposed to sleep in the gymnasium. And some of the white boys didn't want to do that. And they read the riot act on them. They told them, "Either you sleep in this gym or you go back home on the bus." And they slept on the ... They didn't have no problem after that.

323. Ortiz: Who is "they"?

324. White: See, what happened was we had ... It was five troops. They actually had a Black troop but it wasn't all just Durham. It was the Okoneecha Council. Okoneecha Council troop. But when we traveled, we had a separate bus, but when we'd come to the area that was the camping area, it broke down and we were together. So this night that we stopped in this town, we stayed in a gymnasium. So that meant that we all came together in this gymnasium. So there were some objections raised to us coming together. And they just told them that they would either have to stay there or they were going to put them on the bus and send them back home.

325. Ortiz: Was it the executive council that said that?

326. White: That's right. It was five different units under the Okoneecha Council. But they go to camp now in the summer time. All that stuff is over now. You know, if you're in a unit, you go with your unit. But certain things they do, they do together. I got that picture in here somewhere. I can give you one of these

327. Ortiz: Oh, that would be wonderful.
328. White: to show you the history of it. I think it's the fortieth year that ... We had the advantage of by me being a printer, I could print this stuff for free. And we had a chance to get some good records.

329. Ortiz: Aha. Some familiar names. Mr. and Mrs. W.A. Clement.

330. White: Oh yeah. Oh, I see, yeah. I was saying something about his son. He's got three sons. I didn't get to tell you the whole story. But I had a way of, when the boys get ready to get their Eagle badge, they get different ideas in their head. And his son was kind of sipping a little bit. So I went and talked to Bill about it. I said, "You all are going to get this Eagle badge." Well, you know, if it get down to a point where they had two or three little things that they have to do and you know, they start looking at the girls and all, then his head is turned the wrong way. So I just told him, "You all are going to get ..." I said, "I think if we can get him to get the Eagle badge, you won't have to worry about the other two." And he had three boys and three Eagle Scouts in his home. And they did real well. [Looking at pictures] That one they had dedicated to me. I want to find that Jamboree troop. I've got it in here somewhere.

331. Ortiz: A lot of history in these.

332. White: Yes. That fortieth year has the history up until that time. It's got all the names. This one. Thirty-five and forty are about the same but that one had all the names, all the Eagle Scouts, the ones that made the trips. But I had an advantage. I could get printing free. That program probably cost over a hundred dollars.
333. **Ortiz:** [tape sound is too fast-- like Minnie Mouse] ____ Girl Scout troops?

334. **White:** Boy Scouts.

335. **Ortiz:** For the Girl Scouts. ______

336. **White:** They have generally _____ in my church or what are you talking about? _______ _______ _ organization of Girl Scouts?

337. **Ortiz:** No, in your church.

338. **White:** Yeah. See the Girl Scouts on the bottom there? That gives you the date. Yeah, I just really wanted you to see that Jamboree in '60. I thought I had it. I don't see any of those pictures any where. But we had a picture of that too in 1960. And I guess, when you're talking about the difference in the Black troops and the others. It's kind of like a personal kind of thing with the church and organization. If you don't have the people in there to do the job, that's just one of the things you're not going to come up to par with.

339. **Ortiz:** So you took over for Joseph A. Christmas?

340. **White:** Yes. He went to Hawaii. I think he's still living. But one of the advantages of this church is they had a minister who was really interested in youth. In fact, he had some programs in the church that they didn't have in the city for boys. Rev. Miles Fisher.

341. **Ortiz:** What kind of programs did he have?
342. **White:** He had a community center and a soft ball team and a ping pong team, basketball team. Organized league. Some people say before the city had organized league. So he was very progressive. He came out of Atlanta but he went to school in Chicago. Got his Ph.D. in Chicago.

343. **Ortiz:** Mr. White, I'm going to have to run out to my car and get a tape.

344. **White:** Okay.

345. **Ortiz:** _______ back door?

346. **White:** It's probably open. Let me see. That door right there is open. Yeah, it's open. Leave the door open so we can hear you knock. I don't think you have to knock though. [Mr. Ortiz leaves the room.] So what is your deal here? Are you in school too?

347. ?: Actually, I just graduated a couple of weeks ago.

348. **White:** Oh, is that right? So what are you going to do now?

349. ?: I'm thinking of taking a year off and later going to law school.

350. **White:** Don't take too much time off now, your mind will get lazy on you.

351. ?: _______

352. **White:** Oh, I see. Where will you be working?
353.?: As things are now, I'm going to be working with the _________ D.C., working on urban issues, in particular housing and job opportunities.

354.White: Oh yeah. Write your name down here for me so I can at least remember it. So where did you finish school?

355.?: At Duke.

356.White: At Duke. My son was in the first group of Blacks at Duke.

357.?: Oh really?

358.White: Yes. '63.

359.?:

360.White: Oh, you know about the date. Yeah, he's a junior. Have you seen that story on him? You heard about it? He was all set to go to Hampton. And at that time, he looked like he was kind of disappointed that he wasn't going. But I told him that I thought that would be an opportunity .... First of all, I knew he would take it, you know, he could take it -- anything that came up. He's just the type of person. And he came back in and later Durham, that shopping center -- Heritage Square. So you're going to be working in Washington?

361.?: Yes.

363. [Begin Tape 4, Side A]

364. **White:** ... I've got it somewhere. Well, if you need any one of those

365. **Ortiz:** ____

366. **White:** No. Any one of these that you see that you might want a copy of, I think I've got extra copies.

367. **Ortiz:** Oh really? I'd love to have these copies, a couple of these.

368. **White:** Those are different.

369. **Ortiz:** This is the 35th anniversary. This is the 40th. And this is the ...

370. **White:** Yeah, okay. I think I've got plenty of it. If you need an extra, whatever you all need. Okay. All right.

371. **Ortiz:** That's terrific. Mr. White, going back to the business district, I just have a couple of real basic questions. Where would you go to get your hair cut in the forties?

372. **White:** Oh, we've got plenty of places, plenty of barbershops. In fact, you know, in the south, you know, you had a few Black barber shops for White people. So we cut our hair and others hair too. And they weren't mixed though. The White barbers didn't cut Black people's hair. I think later on they did. But they were Black barbershops that cut White people's hair. And they were generally downtown, the ones that did that. But in our neighborhood, we had plenty of barbershops.
373. **Ortiz:** Would you patronize one in particular?

374. **White:** Yes. Just pick out one that ... In fact, you have your own barber. You know that you'll probably stick with that barbershop.

375. **Ortiz:** Who was your barber?

376. **White:** My barber was a fellow named Sterling Hope and he's still cutting hair. So he got too slow for me. I got another one that was a little faster. In fact, my brother was the one that discovered this guy down the street that was cheap and fast and good. [chuckles]

377. **Ortiz:** Does Mr. Hope still talk to you?

378. **White:** Oh yeah. In fact, it's an interesting thing about him. He was in Raleigh. I think he was in barber school. And then when I moved here, he was here and so I just stayed with him for a long time. So that's the way it goes.

379. **Ortiz:** How about eating establishments.

380. **White:** We had different restaurants and all. Yeah.

381. **Ortiz:** Where would you eat?

382. **White:** Now the Green Candle, which is still operating, was operating back then. I used to go eat with them. Then, of course, when I got married, you know, I didn't eat out as often as I did before when I was single. And so that's the way it is. We had plenty of services, you
know, beauty shops. In fact, as you mentioned earlier, beauty schools. So the women were pretty well covered. And the men too for that matter.

383. Ortiz: Mr. White, I've heard other African American businessmen talk about what roles that women, particularly their wives, would play in their businesses. Did you see that? Did your wife have a role in your ...

384. White: Oh yeah. She worked there some time. But my wife was a nurse and most of the time, she was taking care of the children when they were small and then when the children got older, she worked at nursing. And so that more or less took care of that. And then, at one point, we didn't have a large folding machine. We did a lot of folding by hand. Then she helped with that too. But when we got the equipment -- because you know, folding by machine is much faster than folding by hand, we had less of that type of work to do.

385. Ortiz: Your other partners, would their wives also help?

386. White: Some of them did help some but not too many because some of them had jobs. In fact, one of the partners married the secretary so that took care of that. She was already there.

387. Woman: Actually I did. I was just very curious about the community from all the men who went to the Hampton Institute. You talked about it a little bit earlier. But what that comaraderie between you all. You stated that your son was ____ to go to Hampton himself. Were there a lot of students from this area, because of you all's influence, that went to Hampton as well?
388. White: My son ___

389. Woman: I was just saying that earlier you said your son

390. White: was supposed to go. Oh yeah.

391. Woman: And I was just wondering if like the young men in your Scout troops, a lot of them were encouraged to go on and then they also went to Hampton?

392. White: Right, right. Well, Hampton seemed to be that type of school. We had professors and then we had a minister at Sunday School and this kind of thing. We had talk about what you do when you go into a town, for example. And we would talk, you know, that ... That's like when I went to Raleigh and start looking for friends. That's the first group you associate with. And so there's comaraderie with the Hampton group, it kind of continued. And then, I found it very interesting when I went to Raleigh how dearly these earlier graduates before we went to Hampton, how they really cared for Hampton. And it's like they made good friends, you know. When I came to Durham, the same way. I mentioned Mr. Henderson. Mr. Henderson, he finished the year before ... He finished in '32 and I went to Hampton in '33. But when we came here, we were immediate friends. And we got together in the business organization. Then there's the other Hamptonians there. So we didn't have frats when I was at Hampton. But Hampton alumni was just as good as having a fraternity, you know. And we were encouraged to do that. ____ They start talking to you about getting adjusted when you get in a new place. So we just followed through on that. And even today, some of our best friends are Hampton friends. All right.
Woman: Do you have any ____

Ortiz: Well, we could go on and actually, we could talk quite awhile but I don't want to ruin our relationship, taking your time today. Oh, I know actually one more question. This summer we're actually doing some oral history work in Norfolk.

White: In Norfolk?

Ortiz: Yes, sir.

White: Is that right?

Ortiz: We're going to be in Norfolk from the second half of July to August. I think. So I was wondering if you knew of some people that we should be getting in contact with in Norfolk to do interviews?

White: M-hm. Well,

Ortiz: Or like, you know, maybe you could think about it. I could get back with you.

White: Probably so. I'm a little bit dim on Norfolk right now. But I'd like for you to look this church up.

Ortiz: Okay. It's Mount Olive Baptist Church.

White: Yeah. You'll have a copy. Do you have a copy of this? If you don't ...

Ortiz: That's one that you gave ...
405. **White:** If you don't have one, you know, you can take another one if you need it. I would be interested personally in the results of your interview.

406. **Ortiz:** If we can interview people from Mt. Olive?

407. **White:** Yeah. I think that would be one connecting link so, you know, having met me as sort of like a graduate of this what not. I consider that one of the outstanding -- being a member of this church and a member of this troop -- a very valuable asset in my life. And what I did in Scouting definitely comes from the fact that my being a Scout in this troop and my desire to give back what they had done for me. See, as I mentioned earlier, I grew up as a single parent, my father and the four boys. And the church had definitely had a very good influence on my life. And since you're going to be there, you can check on me there. [laughs] Or you can let them know that I appreciate it and I tried to do what I could. You'll have some of my troop there. I regret that I haven't been able to go back and do, you know, and visit. Then, what has happened -- I used to travel all the time and I used to go home once in awhile. But I didn't know I was going to get up. Here I am 80 now. I'll be 81 in September. And you don't have the desire to jump out on that road as much as you did then. But I, certainly, since you are going to Norfolk, suggest to you that since we have talked and you see for yourself what it is I have tried to do. And I would like for them to know that. So I give you an assignment, both of you. [laughs]

408. **Ortiz:** Actually, if we could, you know, use with your permission, use your name as a reference ...

409. **White:** Oh yes.
410. **Ortiz:** Do you know is Troop 72 still existing? Or would it be a different ....

411. **White:** Frankly, I don't really know. I doubt it. I hope that they're in existence. That would be a good connecting link if, you know, they are. It's good to find out what the situation is any how. And I'll be interesting in knowing how it comes out. Yeah. I really will. And I say, you know, if I can help you in any way, I'll be glad to do that. But I don't have ... Let's see. I have one young lady up there that might ... So you won't have to go cold turkey ... that I could call you and give you her name and telephone and all. And you're going to be there when?

412. **Ortiz:** Let me see. We're going to be there in mid-July. That's right because we're in Carolina 16th of ...

413. **White:** Where will you be, do you know?

414. **Ortiz:** No. And actually, we have two different teams. And I'm going to be on the team that's going to Memphis and the other team that's actually going to Norfolk is composed of three other people.

415. **White:** So you won't personally be going.

416. **Ortiz:** I won't be there but I'll certainly ... I will brief people on this and I'll actually make a copy of the article and talk to them.

417. **White:** Well, I can give you an extra copy if I have it. Yeah. So rather than have to make a copy, you can just give them a copy. Now I'm going to give you this person's name and I
think that might, she might be able to facilitate a connection without you having to fish for it yourself, see.

418. Ortiz: That would really be helpful.

419. White: Yeah, I'm going to give you her name and telephone number and all.

420. Ortiz: Okay.

421. White: So that you know she might get on the telephone and call and tell you, well you go see so-and-so or something like that. I'm going to call her too. I'll call her too. See, that'll keep you from having to go through the misery of trying to find out who to talk to and this kind of thing.

422. Ortiz: That'll be helpful. Let me give you my office number. That's my home number.

But I'll give you my voice mail thing just in case.

423. White: Okay. Yeah. I would appreciate that because I'm interesting in that. And I know they would be interesting in knowing, you know, how this is ... how I have been benefitted by this experience and all. So all of my Scouting experience comes from this church.

424. Ortiz: Do you know anybody that might be still connected at some level to the Journal and Guide?

425. White: Oh, you know, they have sold that paper. It has a different ownership. So I don't know those persons there now. But that's also a point. That was my first job, selling
newspapers and all. I think some religious group purchased, or either some minister or something. I don't know how many times it's been sold but I know it's not the ... The original owners are not there. In fact, that had the influence on me studying printing based on my connection.

426.**Ortiz:** I wish I could remember ... did you talk about P.B. Young?

427.**White:** Yeah, that was the Editor and his brother, H.C. Young. He was the actual printer. He was in charge of the printing of the newspaper. And he was the one. He tried to suggest to me that I would ... At that time, Hampton had the academy, you know, high school really. And he wanted me to leave Booker T. and go to Hampton. But I don't know anybody with the head on right would leave Booker T. and go to Hampton when they ... You know, you want to finish Booker T. That was one of the finest schools, I thought. I must have been. I don't know whether it was just me going to Booker T. but I think it was one of the finest schools in the south. It's still Booker T. I believe. Booker T. Washington High School. And it was really great. We had great teachers and everything. So when that fellow told me that I could go to Hampton right then, I said, "Not til I graduate." [laughs]

428.**Ortiz:** Does Booker T. have an alumni organization?

429.**White:** Yeah. Well, we had our class had a meeting. I tried to get them ... this town is really, have fine alumni and they almost all the classes have a reunion. And I tried to copy from this town. And I went there after our 25th reunion, I tried to get somebody to call us together. We finally met at the 48 and 50. But that's the last time we met.
430. Ortiz: In 1948?

431. White: Well, it was the 48th reunion from '32. Whatever that is. And then they met two years later for the 50th. That was the last one. I did the print for the reunion. But so I don't think they have the same drive like this city has. Most of the classes meet. Now I don't know, that might change when they go to the new school, Hillside School, down the street down there.

432. Ortiz: Do you know people locally from Norfolk that we might get in touch with that are active with the alumni?

433. White: I did know let's see ... I'll try to do that along with this other person that I was talking about.

434. Ortiz: I'd sure appreciate it.

435. White: My close friend has passed. I know that. But I might be able, I'll try to see what I can do. So what will you be doing in Norfolk? Similar to what you're doing here?

436. [Interview on tape ends.]