

Shared Stories: African Americans in North Mecklenburg

Interview with Susie Lowery, May 22, 2000

Conducted by Jan Blodgett

Transcript edited by Andrés Paz '21

Summary: In this interview, Susie Lowery provides insights into the experience of a Black woman growing up and working several jobs in and around Huntersville, Davidson, and Mooresville. Born in Huntersville, Ms. Lowery's family moved several times in the area to farm for different landowners, mentioning for instance, the farms of Dr. McConnell and Mr. Caldwell. After her marriage in 1931, Ms. Lowery moved to Davidson and worked for several White faculty families, such as the Cummings or the Wilsons. She also mentions cooking at a Davidson College fraternity house until her retirement.

Ms. Lowery talks about raising her own children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren, as well as many of the children from the families she worked for. After raising many children and see them leave, as well as dealing with her husband's passing, she explains she had to move out from Griffith Street at a difficult time. Nonetheless, she discusses the Reeve's Temple AME Zion and Gethsemane Baptist churches, and recalls fried fish picnics, baseball games, and other events that the church community would organize. Ms. Lowery expresses herself positively about Davidson and its people, characterizing it as quiet and kind place. She talks about businesses and entertainment in and around Davidson, and observes that at the time of the interview, many young people were leaving Davidson for a lack of jobs. Finally, she goes over some of her neighbors over time, mentioning Davidson residents such as Nancy Fairley, Brenda Tapia, Evelyn Carr, Hattie Thompson, Rosie Patterson, Dan Brown, and Mr. Graham.

Jan Blodgett: This is an oral history interview with Susie Lowery, resident of Davidson, North Carolina. The interview is made on Monday May 22, 2000. The interviewer is Jan Blodgett, Davidson College Archivist.

Jan Blodgett 00:15

What I wanted to do was just talk to you today about growing up in Davidson, what you

remember about the town, and all of your experience. I'd like to start with where were your parents born?

Susie Lowery 00:30

My mother was born in Lincolnton, my father in Greenville, S.C.

Jan Blodgett: And you were born in Huntersville, is that right?

Susie Lowery: Mm hm.

Jan Blodgett: How many brothers and sisters do you have?

Susie Lowery: I don't have any now. They're all dead. I'm the only one left.

Jan Blodgett: And when you were younger?

Susie Lowery: I had two brothers and three sisters.

Jan Blodgett: Did you all move up from Huntersville at the same time? Are you the youngest?

Susie Lowery: Yeah, we moved as a family.

Jan Blodgett: When you moved here, did you move to the McConnell farm?

Susie Lowery 01:17

No, ma'am. We moved to Mr. Brown's, he was a Brown. I can't think of his first name, he was old. He had a farm, and we moved in his house and I think we lived there for about two or three years farming for him, maybe longer. And then we moved to Dr. McConnell's farm, and farmed for him, I don't know how many years. And he knew Mr. Caldwell, who lived out there below the mansion, so we moved [inaudible] he had a house down back. We moved in and farmed for her. And we left there and moved uptown; what we called uptown.

Jan Blodgett: Uptown? What was considered uptown?

Susie Lowery: We quit farming then. Everybody had jobs and we went to the White folks, took care of their children, cleaned their houses, and cooked.

Jan Blodgett: What kind of farming did you do? Was it vegetables or cotton?

Susie Lowery: Cotton, corn, tea, molasses cane, and potatoes.

Jan Blodgett: When did you start? How old were you when you started helping in the field?

Susie Lowery: I was young, [inaudible]

Jan Blodgett: So you helped plant and helped pick?

Susie Lowery: Yes.

Jan Blodgett: Did you have to do the weeding?

Susie Lowery: Oh, yes, ma'am.

Jan Blodgett: How old were you when the family stopped farming?

Susie Lowery 03:39

I was married, then.

Jan Blodgett: Did you marry someone from Davidson?

Susie Lowery: Well, from out in the country. From Coddle Creek.

Jan Blodgett: How did you meet him?

Susie Lowery: Going to school. He wasn't going to school, but I was going to school. He and his cousin were coming back; we were walking to school. And they'd point. They knew what time I was going to school, and everyday they'd come by and wave. And he'd get up on the top and [inaudible].

Jan Blodgett: Now, where did you go to school?

Susie Lowery 04:32

At first I went to school in Huntersville. Then when we moved up here, I went to - do you know the Joe Reed School?

Jan Blodgett: No.

Susie Lowery: You know where the farmer Hill lives? That was a schoolhouse. And that's where I went. There were two sisters who taught school there.

Jan Blodgett: Were they from Davidson, the two sisters who taught?

Susie Lowery: No, they were from over near Columbus.

Jan Blodgett: Now, how far did you have to go to the school?

Susie Lowery: About a mile.

Jan Blodgett: Did they come in to teach every day as well?

Susie Lowery: Yes, ma'am.

Jan Blodgett: Do you know if there was a school with Davidson Presbyterian Church before that school?

Susie Lowery: Before the Joe Reed School? I don't know.

Jan Blodgett: I've heard references to one, but I don't know how regular it was. Now, what grades did you go here?

Susie Lowery 05:49

I went through the eighth grade.

Jan Blodgett: And how old were you when you got married?

Susie Lowery: Seventeen.

Jan Blodgett: So, you'd been out of school a little while. Had you been working on the farm?

Susie Lowery: I was eighteen [*laughing*]. Yes, ma'am, I'd been working on the farm.

Jan Blodgett: And what did your husband do?

Susie Lowery: He farmed too. We got married 1931.

Jan Blodgett: And where was that farm [where he worked]; was it near where your family's farm was?

Susie Lowery: He was staying with my family.

Jan Blodgett: Oh. Well, in 1931 that happened a lot, people staying with families.

Susie Lowery: Yes, ma'am.

Jan Blodgett: Now, when did you move into Davidson?

Susie Lowery 06:43

Well, we all moved into Davidson. You remember? I do not know if you'll remember, but there used to be a building near the depot; we all lived in there. That was our home, the whole family. So, finally, me and my husband, we moved back to Ms. Nees' place, to a small farm. And then we moved from there way over in the country, close towards Chapel, to work in the cotton mill. And I was working for some White folks, cooking in the kitchen.

Jan Blodgett: Do you remember which family you worked for?

Susie Lowery 07:44

I worked for Ms. Songhill. I worked some for Miss Langdon, and Dr. Cummings. Do you know Bob Cummings? Their family.

Jan Blodgett: Yeah, I know Bob and Debra pretty well. Dr. Cummings was dead when I got here, and I saw Betty Cummings once but never really got to know her.

Susie Lowery: [inaudible] Is she dead?

Jan Blodgett: Yes.

Susie Lowery 08:42

That's right. And her son got killed, her older son. And I worked for Dr. Wilson. I don't know if you know them; they moved away to Charlotte. I worked for them and stayed two weeks for them, until they got settled with the children. His first wife died and he had three little children, and I had to raise those children, and cook and clean. Then finally he married again, the children had grown. She always said, 'Susie, you know these things better than I do so just do what you've been doing. I ain't going to tell you nothing.' You know, tell me something you want to eat sometime! I am tired of planning menus. But she never would.

Jan Blodgett: She never would?

Susie Lowery: I cooked on my own. Sometimes they'd go out and get something, you know, fresh. But 'cook this, cook that,' none of that.

Jan Blodgett: So, most of [your employers] were professors at the College?

Susie Lowery: Yes. And I worked for [*long pause*] Ms. Haneson.

Jan Blodgett: Did you help several families all at one time? Or just help one for a few years and when they moved, you would go to another family?

Susie Lowery: Yes.

Jan Blodgett: Now, how long did you husband work at the cotton mill?

Susie Lowery: Oh, he worked there for years, 'till the mills stopped milling [*Laughing*].

Susie Lowery: Then he went to the [*inaudible*] and worked there until they stopped.

Jan Blodgett: Were there many African Americans who worked at the mills?

Susie Lowery: Oh, yes. [*inaudible*] They ran things. They lived up there.

Jan Blodgett: The management end of it. Now, the people who lived in the houses around the mills, those were mill workers as well?

Susie Lowery: Mm hm.

Jan Blodgett: Did you have to work there for a while to be able to get a house?

Susie Lowery 12:17

I don't know how they did it. I worked for two homes over here; I worked for Ms. Foye and Ms. ... I can't think of her name.

Jan Blodgett: Where else have you lived in Davidson?

Susie Lowery: A house on Griffith Street.

Jan Blodgett: You moved into a town on Griffith Street? This was before the lake?

Susie Lowery: Yes, ma'am.

Jan Blodgett: Now did you move because of the lake?

Susie Lowery: No, just moved.

Jan Blodgett: When did you move here?

Susie Lowery 13:10

Oh, I haven't been here but two years. My house was going down, and they wouldn't give me a grant; they said they wouldn't give anybody grants on Griffith Street. My house was going down, and I couldn't get it fixed. My husband was sick at the time. He passed. And I had raised all the children; they're grown. And so that left nobody but me. And I got tired of being there freezing in the winter. So, I told them I was going to sell the place and get a house here. They didn't want me to; they said 'There's land, the land.' I said I can sell this land. I don't want to be sitting here on this land, I want a house.' They want to depend on the land. But what can I do with the land? I can't work it, I can't use it. And nobody had been building a house on it. So, I just sold it. Had to sell it.

Jan Blodgett: Well, this is a nice house. Does it keep you warm in the winter?

Susie Lowery: Yes.

Jan Blodgett: How many children do you have?

Susie Lowery 14:38

I just had one son, but we raised three of his daughters. My son grew up. We have one [granddaughter] married off and one went to Tennessee, [inaudible] She had a son; we raised him from a little baby. And he's now 18 years old. Edna the oldest, [inaudible] she got married, and she had 8 children. They moved close to where we were staying on Griffith Street; he was buying that house. So, he pays his wife \$700 a month, [inaudible] Some of his people, they wanted some of the children, wanted to divide them up. And I said no, I don't want these children to be divided. They call me Mama Suze, right? If one can't take them all, I don't want them divided up, because when they grow up, they won't know each other. And they might end up going with each other, having children or something. So, I said no, I want them all raised together in the same house so they'll know each other. 'Well, we can't do that,' they said, 'I'll take so and so,' and 'I'll take so and so.' So, I said, 'Well, then I'll keep them myself.' I said me, Rufus and God. God will help us raise these children. So, I kept them. Brought them all up together. Now they're all grown.

Jan Blodgett: Are any of them still in Davidson?

Susie Lowery 17:44

One lives in Huntersville, one in the Habitat House in Davidson, two in Mooresville, two in [inaudible], and one in the Navy.

Jan Blodgett: Well, at least a few of them are close at hand, they're not all scattered completely away.

Susie Lowery: But we keep in touch, yes, ma'am. All except Oscar; we don't hardly ever hear from him.

Jan Blodgett: He's the one in the Navy?

Susie Lowery: Mm hm.

Jan Blodgett: Where did these kids go to school?

Susie Lowery 18:31

They went to Ada Jenkins and then to North Meck., and Alexander. Graduated from North. And two of them went to college. One finished college in three years, and one quit college, just left just half a term. She just didn't go back and finish.

Jan Blodgett: Sometimes they do that. I had a sister that did something similar to that.

Susie Lowery: That's a sister, that's a baby sister [laughing] We've had people who have been so good to us. After I kept them all, [people] helped us out, went a long, long way.

Jan Blodgett: You go to Reeve's Temple, right? Tell me a little about it. When did you first start going there and who have some of the ministers been?

Susie Lowery 19:47

When I started going there it was a new minister Reverend Hurst. I've been going there about 7 years. And then Reverend Morton came. And after he left, Reverend Nuby, who we've got now. And there's been Reverend Hurst, and Reverend Meade, and I think there's been some more.

Jan Blodgett: Where did you go before you went Reeve's Temple?

Susie Lowery: Gethsemane. That's my church.

Jan Blodgett: Oh. Well, tell me a little bit about the history of Gethsemane then.

Susie Lowery 20:50

When I started going to Gethsemane, it was down over here.

Jan Blodgett: Potts Street or Eden?

Susie Lowery: On Potts Street. Near the empty house sitting way down there. Right there. And it was a wood room.

Jan Blodgett: A wooden church. Now what happened to that building?

Susie Lowery: They tore it down.

Jan Blodgett: But did you go when it was on Potts Street? Who was the minister then?

Susie Lowery: Yes, ma'am. Reverend ... I can't think of his name. The one after him was Henry Morris. There were two preachers before.

Jan Blodgett: When Reverend Morris was there were you still on Potts Street or did you already move to Jetton? When did it move to Jetton?

Susie Lowery: We were still there. I don't know. Did you know his funeral was yesterday?

Jan Blodgett: Yes, I had company and couldn't go but my husband went to the funeral yesterday.

Susie Lowery: I saw him when I was there.

Jan Blodgett: Yeah, he came for Ada Jenkins. He's on the board there. But did the church on Potts Street get too small, is that why you moved?

Susie Lowery 22:36

Well, it was going down. It was in the wrong spot. It was rotting away.

Jan Blodgett: How did you raise the money for the new church?

Susie Lowery We just raised and raised.

Jan Blodgett: Did you do fish fries?

Susie Lowery 23:01

Yeah, we did that and we got a loan from the bank. The Lord has helped us. I wish you had heard the history; Jimmy talked about the history yesterday. I can't remember.

Jan Blodgett: Did you ever teach Sunday school or was there a women's group?

Susie Lowery: No, I never taught Sunday school but I went to Sunday school. I sang in the choir.

Jan Blodgett: Were you married at the Gethsemane church or were you married at home?

Susie Lowery 24:12

Where was I married? I was married at the preacher's house. The preacher who married us. No, I wasn't, I was married at another lady's house.

Jan Blodgett: Here in Davidson? Or towards Mooresville?

Susie Lowery: Up the road there by Sherytown.

Jan Blodgett: Where you here when they had the fire at Brady's Alley? It was 1949 I think, or 1950.

Susie Lowery: Brady's Alley?

Jan Blodgett: Over by the Soda Shop, where the old Duke Power Building is, by the Post Office. There were families living in houses between Main Street and what's now Jackson Street.

Susie Lowery: I guess I was here.

Jan Blodgett: It was a Sunday morning and several families got burned out and that's when they started building some of the houses up here. It was before Lakeside.

Susie Lowery: I can't remember. What's it called again?

Jan Blodgett: Brady's Alley. One of the things I don't know much about is when houses started getting built. I know about the businesses on Main Street, but not when Mock Circle started, or Eden Street, different parts of town. I know Kim Norton lived for a while on North Thompson Street.

Susie Lowery: I don't know exactly when they started anything.

Jan Blodgett: Have there always been houses around Ada Jenkins? Or when it was a school, were there many houses around it?

Susie Lowery 26:36

Yeah, there were houses all around there. And those houses were already built.

Jan Blodgett: So, they built the school near the houses?

Susie Lowery: Yes, ma'am.

Jan Blodgett: Was there a field there when they built the school or did they have to take down some houses?

Susie Lowery: I don't think they took any houses down.

Jan Blodgett: Were you ever on the PTA for the Ada Jenkins?

Susie Lowery: [inaudible]

Jan Blodgett: Do you remember anything about when they closed Ada Jenkins and started sending the students to Davidson Elementary?

Susie Lowery: I can remember, but I don't [inaudible].

Jan Blodgett: What was it like?

Susie Lowery: It was just going and getting shabby, [inaudible] There wasn't anybody keeping it up. They didn't have heat.

Jan Blodgett: Of the children you raised, were any of them still attending Ada Jenkins when it closed?

Susie Lowery: They'd left.

Jan Blodgett: Tell me what you like best about living in Davidson.

Susie Lowery: I like Davidson. I don't know what I like best.

Jan Blodgett: If someone were new and coming to Davidson, what would you want them to know about the town?

Susie Lowery: It's kind of a quiet town, people are friendly. I think it's a nice place to live.

Jan Blodgett: If you could change anything about it, what would you change?

Susie Lowery: I know one thing would be to have a grocery store in town. They used to have one close [inaudible].

Jan Blodgett: Where do you shop now?

Susie Lowery: I have to go to Cornelius.

End of recording Part 1

Start of recording Part 2

Jan Blodgett 00:01

Do you remember any of the mayors? Or where did you shop on Main Street?

Susie Lowery: When we moved up here there was a grocery store and a shoe shop.

Jan Blodgett: There would have been a couple barber stores and some restaurants.

Susie Lowery: The barbershops, yeah. The Post Office.

Jan Blodgett: Where was the Post Office?

Susie Lowery 00:34

It was on Main Street there where Raeford's was. Right down on the corner, I think, across the street from that First Bank. I think it was right up there. And they moved it two or three times.

Jan Blodgett: They have, it's a very mobile post office. Did you shop in Davidson or did you shop in Charlotte or Mooresville?

Susie Lowery 01:26

Well, you see, Davidson didn't have but one clothes store. We had to go to Charlotte to get what we needed. Even groceries.

Jan Blodgett: Where did you get your hair done? Did you do it at home or go to Charlotte?

Susie Lowery: I did it myself. Some ladies had some beauty parlors in Davidson.

Jan Blodgett: Did they have them in their homes rather than on Main Street?

Susie Lowery 02:03

No, they weren't on Main Street, they were in their homes. No, I think there was a beauty parlor on Main Street.

Jan Blodgett: And doctors and dentists?

Susie Lowery: Doctors, dentists.

Jan Blodgett: Where did you go to the dentist? Or did you go to the dentist?

Susie Lowery: Yeah, I went to a dentist up over the bank.

Jan Blodgett: What's First Union now?

Susie Lowery: No, up here on the corner. It wasn't right over the bank, it was in another building I think. That was a drug store. And the dentist's office was up there.

Jan Blodgett: So you had to go up the stairs to go to the dentist's office? Was that scary?

Susie Lowery: No, ma'am. I was young then. And there was a dentist on down near the elementary school.

Jan Blodgett: And your doctor? Did the doctor come to your house or did you go to the doctor?

Susie Lowery 03:58

Dr. Woods, he was our family doctor, we would go to him and he had come out here. And we had Dr. John Withers, Dr. Jim Withers. There were two doctors.

Jan Blodgett: What if you went to the hospital? Where did people have babies born?

Susie Lowery: Bom at home or we would go to Mooresville.

Jan Blodgett: Where was your son born?

Susie Lowery: At home. Dr. Woods [treated me].

Jan Blodgett: What did you do for fun? Go to the movies?

Susie Lowery 04:48

Well, there was a movie [theatre] in Cornelius we'd go to. There wasn't much fun, you made your fun yourself.

Jan Blodgett: Did the church have picnics or raffles? Tell me about a weekend in Davidson.

Susie Lowery: Oh, yes, ma'am. They used to have fried fish picnics, and picnics on May Day. Ball [baseball] games, and that was fun.

Jan Blodgett: Did they play at the church or at the McEver field?

Susie Lowery: [inaudible] They didn't ever play down there. They used to have a field up here. But they played there a long time.

Jan Blodgett: Down at Sadler Square?

Susie Lowery: Yeah. [And then] they played there across from the Exxon. So they started that, the ball games.

Jan Blodgett: Now, who owned the teams? Were they church teams or businesses? Did they just gather and not play on the same team every time?

Susie Lowery 06:28

They gathered, but they played on the same teams. Some teams would come from other places and play the team up here.

Jan Blodgett: So, it was like a Davidson team that everybody played on?

Susie Lowery: Yes, ma'am.

Jan Blodgett: I've seen reports, this is way back, in the College papers that sometimes they would have town teams and they would play the students. It sounds like sometimes the town teams were older than the students.

Susie Lowery: [inaudible]

Jan Blodgett: Now, did women ever play baseball, or was that only for the men?

Susie Lowery: Well, sometimes they did.

Jan Blodgett: Did you do many sports? Ride bikes? Roller-skate?

Susie Lowery: I had skates and bikes.

Jan Blodgett: Did you do much swimming? Did people go down to the river for picnic before the lake came in? Or was it far enough away that you didn't do that?

Susie Lowery: Some of the boys would slip away somewhere where there was water.

Jan Blodgett: But you never did?

Susie Lowery: No, ma'am.

Jan Blodgett: And you mentioned the picnics on the 31st, was that of every month?

Susie Lowery: 31st of May. And sometimes they would have picnics at different times.

Jan Blodgett: What about the 4th of July?

Susie Lowery: Oh, yes.

Jan Blodgett: Would the churches get together, or would each church do their own?

Susie Lowery 08:11

[inaudible] We'd have fish fries, used to have a big old fish fry. It would be the men frying the fish, and they had the tables spread. We called that a good time; it was good fun.

Jan Blodgett: Did you dress up for that? Hat and gloves? Or was it more casual?

Susie Lowery: Casual. We'd go like we wanted to go.

Jan Blodgett: What were Sundays like? Did you go to the church in the morning and stay all day or come and go?

Susie Lowery: We would go to church in the morning, come back, go in the afternoon, come back, and go at night.

Jan Blodgett: Same preacher at the services or would they bring in [inaudible]?

Susie Lowery: One preacher three times.

Jan Blodgett: Did you mind that or did you like doing that?

Susie Lowery: I liked doing that. My dad was a preacher.

Jan Blodgett: Oh, was he? Where did he preach?

Susie Lowery: Yes, ma'am. He preached up the road, up toward Chapel and Catawba.

Jan Blodgett: Did you go when he preached or did you mostly stay?

Susie Lowery: Yes, ma'am, I'd go.

Jan Blodgett: Did you go to many college games? Football games?

Susie Lowery 10:40

I went to one game and I nearly froze. One of the boys I raised was playing football.

Jan Blodgett: Did he play on the Davidson team?

Susie Lowery 10:57

Yes, ma'am. Played for the College. And it was too much for him; he quit, [inaudible] I had one boy named Oscar, he went over to Davidson for two years, and then he left and went to Cheshire. That's when he went on to the Navy.

Jan Blodgett: And you said he doesn't come back very often?

Susie Lowery: No, ma'am. He hasn't come back in about 20-some years.

Jan Blodgett: Is it hard for young people to stay in Davidson? I mean, he's in the Navy so he's obviously interested in that, but do you see a lot of people stay or a lot of people go? Were there enough jobs for people?

Susie Lowery 12:27

No jobs for people. They had to go somewhere else to get a job.

Jan Blodgett: Now, how about your brothers and sisters? Did they live in Davidson or did they move away?

Susie Lowery: They lived in Davidson. One of my sisters moved to New York, my baby sister, then she went on to Texas. She had two daughters. They were born, and they moved to Texas.

And one left Texas and went to California. And my sister went out to Texas, and she got sick out there with something and she died, but they had her body sent home.

Jan Blodgett: Was she buried in the Mimosa Cemetery?

Susie Lowery: [inaudible]

Jan Blodgett: When did that cemetery start? Has it been there a long time?

Susie Lowery: Yes, ma'am.

Jan Blodgett: Before you moved into town, it was there?

Susie Lowery: Yes, ma'am. All my people have been buried over there, my brothers and sisters.

Jan Blodgett: I'm always surprised that none of the churches here in town have their own cemetery. In a lot of towns, the churches have the cemeteries.

Susie Lowery: There used to just be that one cemetery. And then you had to be in the club or able to pay for a better spot.

Jan Blodgett: So there was an association or a club that you [had to be] a member of?

Susie Lowery: Mm hm.

Jan Blodgett: And if you weren't, did you go somewhere else then?

Susie Lowery: I worked at Mooresville Cotton Mill and Mooresville laundry a while and over at the fraternity boarding house.

Jan Blodgett: Whew, I didn't realize that! You were a cook there for a while?

Susie Lowery 15:29

Yes, ma'am. I cooked there until I retired.

Jan Blodgett: Wow, how long was that?

Susie Lowery: I don't know.

Jan Blodgett: Do you know which one it was?

Susie Lowery: Phi Kappa Ep. Tracy, she had started out on Concord Street, that's where she had the boys living in the boarding house. And then she had the other one built.

Jan Blodgett: On campus?

Susie Lowery: Yes.

Jan Blodgett: Did you get to visit with the other women who cooked at the fraternity houses?

Susie Lowery: Oh, yes, ma'am. We used to visit. The houses were so close. But we didn't have a lot of time to.

Jan Blodgett: Would you borrow stuff? Like if you needed a cup of sugar, could you run over to one of the other houses and get it?

Susie Lowery 16:36

You could, but we never did that because the men would come every day with the grocery trucks and bring stuff, and you put it in and get your order. So, you hardly ever ran out of anything.

Jan Blodgett: Did you design the menus?

Susie Lowery: No, they had a dietician.

Jan Blodgett: Oh. Did the meals change [over] the time you were there or were they mostly the same first year and last year?

Susie Lowery: About the same.

Jan Blodgett: What was the favorite thing for the guys to eat?

Susie Lowery: BLT; bacon, lettuce, and tomato sandwich.

Jan Blodgett: That's what they liked the best?

Susie Lowery 17:32

They loved it, oh my Lord. They would come in, 'Can I have a BLT?' We had to have it one day every week. But we had other foods, too; chicken.

Jan Blodgett: Did you ever cook for parties when they had dances or anything like that?

Susie Lowery: No, ma'am. They had a place for that. They had big old kitchens back there.

Jan Blodgett: Now, when you cooked, were women already on campus or was this before women were students?

Susie Lowery: These were men I was cooking for.

Jan Blodgett: Right, but were there women on campus as well? Was this already after women and men were on campus?

Susie Lowery 18:30

The women would come in the summertime. But the women would come visit sometimes, but they wouldn't stay on campus. They would come after the boys would leave. But I didn't cook for them. But all the boys were good.

Jan Blodgett: Do you hear from any of them still?

Susie Lowery 19: 36

No, ma'am. The last one I heard from was a preacher, and he's moved away. The preacher at the Presbyterian Church. Charlie.

Jan Blodgett: Charlie Raynal? Oh, ok.

Susie Lowery: He was one of my boys.

Jan Blodgett: I didn't know that! Now, when you retired from the College, were you really retired or did you go work somewhere else?

Susie Lowery: No, my mother was sick and my husband was sick, so I had my hands full.

Jan Blodgett: Sounds like it.

Susie Lowery: My mother was staying with us.

Jan Blodgett: What was it like growing up in Mooresville? You said you worked at a laundry up in Mooresville for a while?

Susie Lowery: It was all right. [We washed] sheets.

Jan Blodgett: Did it pay better than the College?

Susie Lowery: Mm. It came to a close.

Jan Blodgett: Who were some of your friends when you were growing up in Davidson?

Susie Lowery: Everyone, everyone I know.

Jan Blodgett: Can you remember some of the names? I'm trying to identify some of the names of the people and when they came into Davidson. Who were some of the people you went to school with?

Susie Lowery 21:54

Well, see, the people we knew the most of lived way out in the country. There were the Reeds, the Sheryls, and the Hendersons.

Jan Blodgett: And they didn't ever move into town? These aren't families that live in town now?

Susie Lowery: No.

Jan Blodgett: What about families that live here in town? Are most of these new, people that have moved in since 1960 or had their families been here a long time?

Susie Lowery: Their families have been here. The Houstons, you know them. Cecilia Conner.

Jan Blodgett: Now, did their families own businesses? Were some of the people who owned barbershops and shoe shops in Davidson? Or did they work at the College?

Susie Lowery: Yeah, they were in Davidson. Now, the Norton's ran the barbershop, [inaudible] He married a Brandon.

Jan Blodgett: Was there a lot of interaction between Charlotte and Davidson? Did you have friends in Charlotte that you would visit?

Susie Lowery 23:49

Sometimes. I had some people in Charlotte. I had an aunt there, in Charlotte. I would go spend weekends with her.

Jan Blodgett: What did you do in Charlotte on the weekends? Was it a bit more fun than Davidson?

Susie Lowery: No.

Jan Blodgett: No? More church?

Susie Lowery: I hated Charlotte. I ain't never liked Charlotte.

Jan Blodgett: Why did you hate Charlotte?

Susie Lowery 24:24

It's too busy for me. I went to Charlotte more when I started singing in the choir, at different churches. We'd go down there and shop [inaudible]. It wouldn't be much.

Jan Blodgett: So you mostly go up to Mooresville to shop now; you don't go all the way to Charlotte?

Susie Lowery: Yes.

Jan Blodgett: Well, just tell me who lives on your street.

Susie Lowery 25:15

Over in the big house there, that's Nancy Fairley.

Jan Blodgett: And she teaches at the College. She's not here right now.

Susie Lowery Mm hm. I'm here. In that house is Anne Moore, she works at the College.

Jan Blodgett: And her husband's Robert?

Susie Lowery: Robert.

Jan Blodgett: And how long have they lived here? They weren't born in Davidson, were they?

Susie Lowery: I think Anne was, I don't know about Robert. And next door is Linda Thornton; her husband's from Mooresville.

Jan Blodgett: Does she work at the College? Her name is familiar.

Susie Lowery: Do you know Gladys Bass? She's from Ada Jenkins. And the next house, I don't know who lives in the next house.

Jan Blodgett: No. Is that the one Brenda Tapia just bought?

Susie Lowery: Oh, yeah, Brenda. Brenda lives there. And then the next house, is—do you know Betty Torrence?—some of her grandchildren. And this one right here is Lois Conner's son. And that's David [inaudible] across the street, he's my nephew. He's my oldest sister's grandson.

Jan Blodgett: So, you do have some family still in the area.

Susie Lowery: Yes, ma'am,

Jan Blodgett: Was David born here?

Susie Lowery: David was born in the country. No, David was born in Mooresville.

Jan Blodgett: But his family was living in Davidson?

Susie Lowery: No, they were living in the country. The church on 73, out past that church.

Jan Blodgett: Is his wife from Davidson?

Susie Lowery: She's from out there, too.

Jan Blodgett: So, they moved in here after they got married?

Susie Lowery: They got married in the country before they came here.

Jan Blodgett: And who were your neighbors when you lived on Griffith Street?

Susie Lowery 28:22

Hattie [Thompson], Dan Brown, Mr. Graham, Evelyn [Carr].

Jan Blodgett: And she is still in the same house there.

Susie Lowery: And then on the other side there were Frank Grim, and Rosie Patterson.
[discussion of directions to the house]

Jan Blodgett: I am fairly confused when I try to get here, they got the road so torn up, I finally just ended up having to go all the way to Jetton.

Susie Lowery: Going through there, making that turn, that's a mistake.

Jan Blodgett: And I kept running into giant road equipment and guys in the street, so I said 'I'll go that way.'

Susie Lowery: You can down and come from Lakeside, come that way.

Jan Blodgett: I started to do that, and I turned on Sloan first, thinking that I could get across, and everywhere I went there were guys in the road.

Jan Blodgett: You know Maggie Smith? You could come that way to come up here.

Jan Blodgett: Now was Maggie Smith living on Griffith when you were there?

Susie Lowery: No. She used to live in some apartments.

Jan Blodgett: Owned by Ralph Johnson, is that right?

Susie Lowery 30:46

No, there was someone on the other side of them, [inaudible] Marbie Brown used to live over there on Griffith Street.

Jan Blodgett: What's the biggest change you've seen? Is it Griffith Street, people moving out of there? What are some of the changes you've seen in Davidson, good and bad? [*End of recording Part 2, more of this interview may be available on the original cassette tapes*]