

Shared Stories: African Americans in North Mecklenburg

Interview with Mattie Fletcher, December 29, 2016

Conducted by Jan Blodgett at Davidson, NC

Transcript edited by Andrés Paz '21

Summary: In this interview, Mattie Fletcher, born in 1937 in South Carolina, talks about different aspects of her life around the areas of Davidson, Huntersville, and Mooresville. She mentions attending the Rosenwald School in Huntersville, which later becomes the Torrence-Lytle center, as well as Morrow's Chapel in Iredell County. Ms. Fletcher recalls settling in Davidson after her dad began working at the college. She describes some of her experiences working as a Nursing Assistant at the Lawrence Hospital in Mooresville since she was around 16 years old. The interviewee also gives special attention to her encounter with Janie French, secretary to several college presidents and later manager of the alumni guest house. Mattie recalls her impressions of an interesting trip to Mississippi and describes her love of "Southern settings" and Southern literature. Moreover, Fletcher goes over some of the changes she has noticed as a longtime resident of the town of Davidson, offering her honest opinions.

Interviewer: Okay, so, this is Jan Blodgett talking to Mattie Fletcher on December 29, 2016 in her home in Davidson, North Carolina. So, I'd like to just start by having you talk a little bit about your parents, where you were born. Just tell me a little bit about who your parents were, who your grandparents were.

Mattie Fletcher: My parents were Alonso and Ilene Jackson. And my mother's maiden name was Hunter. I was born in Abbeville, South Carolina, where my parents resided at that time. And I was told that jobs got so the men couldn't find work and farming wouldn't sustain them, couldn't sustain families. Well, my uncle came to Charlotte, North Carolina. You know, I was very young at that time, I don't know why Uncle Dennis decided to come up here to North Carolina. I don't know why. I don't know whether there were relatives, but it had to be somebody that he, you know, had to stay with or something until he could get going. Anyway, he came to North Carolina first. And he coached Daddy to come up here also. So, Momma told me

that Daddy went off and left the family, left us there, told us he'd come back and get us, you know, when he got a job and got a place for us to live. How long it took, I don't know, but this did happen. I guess I was at the age of maybe three years old when he came and got us and brought us here.

Interviewer: So, what year were you born in?

Mattie Fletcher: 1937, December 21st.

Interviewer: Oh, happy belated birthday.

Mattie Fletcher: Yes, thank you. And then, we moved to a house out here off—it had to be at that time into the [00:02:59 Persalis']. There was a man named Jesse [00:03:03 Persal], we lived on his place. And Daddy worked in the mill down here in Cornelius, that big old—where it used to be the Ice House, that was a mill at one point and that's where Daddy worked. And we just started—you know, Daddy worked, Momma stayed at home with us. But we moved around to a lot of places. We lived in a house off of McCord Road—

Interviewer: Okay, in Huntersville, yeah.

Mattie Fletcher: —in Huntersville, on Lloyd McCord's place. And we lived in Huntersville at one time. By that time I was old enough to start to school. Never want to go back. Because, when I started to school we were living on the [00:04:18 Knox'] place. What that man name? He was a [00:04:22 Knox]. That's why I'm so familiar with a lot of people in the area, I've been exposed to a lot of them. And that's where I went to school.

Interviewer: Okay, so, did you go to one of the Rosenwald schools?

Mattie Fletcher: No, I went to—did you ever know the Stentsons?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mattie Fletcher: Okay, do you remember Ms. Johnson? She was married to—she was a Stinson, she was a school teacher. I remember I used to ride to school with her. I would walk up to the road and she would come down and pick me up and I'd go to school, she'd take me to school. I—

Interviewer: Was this Huntersville, Cornelius?

Mattie Fletcher: I'm trying to remember where it was. No, it would have been Huntersville. Oh, I remember, it was Huntersville. In the place where—in Huntersville they have that old school, it's a white building, that used to be a school.

Interviewer: Right, okay. That was the Rosenwald School. Yeah, it's now the Torrence-Lytle center, right?

Mattie Fletcher: Oh, was that the Rosenwald School?

Interviewer: Yeah, same school that BJ Caldwell went to? Do you know BJ Caldwell? She grew up in Huntersville.

Mattie Fletcher: Mm-hmm. Bettie.

Interviewer: Bettie.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, yeah. Okay. And, you know, after we left Huntersville, we lived out—you know, I was so young, you were talking—let's see, I'm 79 now, you're really pushing my memory. I went to a school in Iredell County, Morrow's Chapel.

Interviewer: Morrow's Chapel? Morrow's.

Mattie Fletcher: Morrow's. Uh-huh, Morrow's Chapel out in Huntersville. So, we moved around quite a lot. I don't know why we moved around, I think it was just—one thing I will say, each place was better and better. Daddy and Momma had no education, but especially my daddy, he was always a man who likes to better himself, better himself. He just had that drive. That was the kind of drive he had.

Interviewer: And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

Mattie Fletcher: Okay, I have one half-sister living. Now, my momma was my daddy's second wife. His first wife died—at that time he had Ivey, Doris—he had three children, and when the baby girl was born, his first wife, she died in childbirth. So, he married Momma. So, he already had three kids, which we kept—and I can say he kept us all in touch with one another. We knew our half-sisters. There's only one living now, the other two of them are gone. But all the kids

from my mother, I have two brothers and one sister. So, there are four of us and all of us are still in tack, you know, yeah, even with our ages.

Interviewer: So, did your dad keep working at the same mill, or as he got—did he get better jobs as well?

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, he worked in Charlotte for Sears for years—Sears. And then, somehow or other he worked at the college, that's how he got on to moving here. That's the family right there, yeah, that I was raised in. And we just went from there and he became a minister, he even went to school. I used to go to school with him at night. And that was interesting, too. And as I grew I started working different places.

Interviewer: So, what kind of things? Were you babysitting? Or—

Mattie Fletcher: Well, at first I would babysit for people and I was working for people in their homes, and then somehow or other I got a job at Lawrence Hospital in Mooresville. And back in the day you had wherewithal, and the people figured you were teachable. They would take a chance on you. Because, when I worked in Mooresville we did—what do the girls do now? We didn't give—nurse's assistant, that's it. Now, we did not give medicine and medicine was never put in our hands to give to the patient. For instance, we would prep patients for surgery, we would take temps, we fed the preemies, we was taught how to put that tube in that baby's stomach and without getting it in the lungs. We also did, they would call suction machines. And this was Lawrence Hospital in Mooresville. And I don't know what they got now, but say for instance, if you had just say- what you call that now when—in your stomach—anything wrong with your stomach that had to be pumped. And I'm going to tell you what we used. We had great big gallon jugs, one would sit on the floor half full of water. You put that tube in the one on the floor, you would put that tube down the person's nose into their stomach—it's amazing, it is amazing what they risked us—but I'm going to tell you, we didn't lose people then like we lose them now. Now, that is the truth. And then we'd hang another jug up above with a tube in it and with that water in that tube up there, that made the suction, and that's how we would pump stomachs. I enjoyed doing that. Those are the kind of things that we did.

Interviewer: So, how long were you a nursing assistant?

Mattie Fletcher: Okay, I was a nursing assistant maybe about 10 years. Maybe about 10. And Daddy's working at the college at that time. And I had walked to the post office to get the mail and that was the first time I came to know [00:12:30 Janny French]. Because I had, you know, heard Daddy speak of her, but I didn't know—

Interviewer: And was she working at the guest house at that point?

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah-no, she wasn't working at the guest house, she was the—

Interviewer: She was the secretary?

Mattie Fletcher: —secretary to Dr. Martin.

Interviewer: Okay, the president's secretary. Or was he treasurer then?

Mattie Fletcher: Nuh-uh, this was the president.

Interviewer: Because Martin was treasurer then he was president, but I think she was his when he was president.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, I think she—then. But anyway, I was walking along, she asked me did I want—she stopped and told me she wanted to ask me if I wanted a job. And I said, I have a job. She said, but I can get you more money. I don't know, she just kept badgering me.

Interviewer: Recruiting, recruiting.

Mattie Fletcher: Well, yeah, you're right, recruiting. So, I probably said, okay, and that's how I came to work at the guest house.

Interviewer: So, how old were you when you started at the guest house? You must have been fairly young.

Mattie Fletcher: I was 16 years old when I started working, period. So, I don't know—I guess—but anyway, and I do know she asked me one day would I like to be a nurse, and because she knew that I—well, by me work—a bug, I had gotten bitten. And so, she said, we're going to get you down here in Huntersville, down at the Oaks in Huntersville. What's the—that was a hospital, and they—

Interviewer: Okay, they—

Mattie Fletcher: Yes, ma'am.

Interviewer: Before I was a [00:14:17 crosstalk] center.

Mattie Fletcher: Before—yes, ma'am. And I went down to Charlotte and I took a test. I made a B+ on that test. They still would not accept me. I did not have a high school diploma, and you know that enraged—I used to tease Ms. French and always tell her, I said, I don't know what part of you is Spanish, but I'm telling you—because she had that black hair and that brown—her coloring—and she had that temper. Well, they wanted me to come back and I made two points higher then. And she got it in her head that it was racism and that was a wrong thing for [00:15:18 Janny French] to get in her mind. Now, she was out of Mississippi. She was born and partially raised, I guess, in Mississippi because I used to drive her back to Mississippi. Sure did. You know, I look back and I can see where every footstep I've taken has been plan, unbeknownst to me, from above.

Interviewer: But what was it like going to Mississippi? Were you afraid to go there? Or were you interested—

Mattie Fletcher: No, I didn't have sense enough to be scared. I was driving. I mean, I was a driver, I could drive. The only place—because Ms. French was with me and, I don't know, we really had a good time. I tell you the reason I drove her there is I say she was raised in Mississippi, and she wanted to go back—that's when she had gotten sick and she was on that oxygen and all—and she just wanted to go back where home used to be.

Interviewer: So, this would have been 19—

Mattie Fletcher: I don't know, but you can check this, Russia used to, you know, when they started doing the eggs—Russia do those, what you call—

Interviewer: Like, Easter eggs? No, no. Eggs?

Mattie Fletcher: No. They are eggs that are made in Russia, the—

Interviewer: Oh, the Faberge.

Mattie Fletcher: Faberge, right.

Interviewer: When the exhibit came?

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mattie Fletcher: When they had the exhibit, that'll give you the year. They had that exhibit in Mississippi. So, we went down there and we also went to that. We had everything worked out. I had sense enough. At that time I was working for the college and I gained a little more sense. I had sense enough to work everything out through AAA.

Interviewer: Okay, so you got the directions and the—

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah. I got everything. I had them to set up where we would stay. And I don't know why Ms. French just left all that to me, I guess—I don't know, you know. She really trusted me because I could have ended up in a swamp with her somewhere. But anyway, I set that up. No, for some reason I wasn't concerned. But it was an awesome thing. The first night, we got into—because we left early, we stayed—in her aunt—in some place—and that was some place in Georgia, she had an aunt that lived there. And this was a big old house, but I loved it because it sat on the top of a hill, and the porch went all the way around that house. And I love southern settings anyway. That's why I love to read books with southern settings, Mississippi, Louisiana—because you have a different culture mixed up there together producing different thoughts, ideas, and living conditions. And I love southern literature. And we eat supper, and Ms. French aunt had her maid to take me and show me my room where I was to stay. And when I got in my room I could open that side door and go out on the porch. It's quite an awesome thing and it was quite—I don't know—it's something about it. But there is something about Mississippi that will tug at your heart. And she told her maid that—I don't know what time this lady came to work—but she told her that I liked my coffee early in the morning. The next morning she knocked on that door and she brought you the little tray with the coffee and she set it in. She wouldn't talk to me though, which was alright. So, I got my cup of coffee and I went out on the porch and the sun was just coming up. And I always loved to get up early and just be out that

time of morning, that stillness and you could hear a rooster crowing on that farm and hear a dog baying somewhere off in the distance.

Interviewer: Almost like being in the novel.

Mattie Fletcher: Yes, it is. And it hit me, I said, here I am in Mississippi, done slept in this white woman bed, and this white woman got her black maid waiting on me. Shew. But anyway, we left. And when we did get to Mississippi it was another awesome thing to me. And I been trying to remember, this hotel—and it wasn't a hotel, nice place—that we stayed in was really nice. And we was there, I believe, two or three days. I forget now which. And we was up on the second floor and, you know, they had the pool on that end. And, oh, if I didn't hear Martin Luther King when I looked down there and saw those kids down there in that—

Interviewer: In the pool.

Mattie Fletcher: Because they had it set up so as if you were looking out over a beach. They had the beach on that end and then they had little pond—but all this was indoors. All that was indoors.

Interviewer: So, there were black children and white children swimming together?

Mattie Fletcher: Yes. Yes, ma'am. It was an awesome thing. And that—

Interviewer: Okay, so let's go back to the test that you took. Did you ever get to take nursing classes? Did [00:22:37 Janny]—

Mattie Fletcher: No, yeah, yeah, yeah, she told me—she said this to me, she said, now, you know if you want to get in you will get in. Okay, but I knew the pressure they would put on me, and my mind—because as I say, I was young. I mean, it didn't—because I saw what would happen to other children when they would try to break the—

Interviewer: Any barriers.

Mattie Fletcher: —the barriers, and what those kids had to go through. My daddy would have been in jail, and I knew that, because he was a kind person, he loved people, but you didn't want—my daddy was a man you didn't walk on, I don't care what color you were. That was the way he was.

Interviewer: So, the nursing bug hadn't hit so strong that you wanted to—

Mattie Fletcher: But after I got started working for the college I liked the idea of being able to meet people from all over the world. I don't know.

Interviewer: Yeah, all the international families—

Mattie Fletcher: And all that—this is what I'm saying, it was a much better deal.

Interviewer: So, how did you meet your husband?

Mattie Fletcher: We lived in Huntersville—you know, and they used to have—every Saturday they would have ball games on the school yard.

Interviewer: At Torrence-Lytle or—

Mattie Fletcher: At Torrence-Lytle. It wasn't a school yard, it was a ball field out in front of the school, and at that time we lived in Huntersville. And that's how I met him. That's how I met him.

Interviewer: You were just both at the game? Or—

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah. He was at the game and I was there with my friends. Because it wasn't a long way, it was in walking distance. I don't know—

Interviewer: Were you in high school at the time or had you already finished school?

Mattie Fletcher: No, I was in high school. I did not finish school because I had Frankie, my oldest son. I was in high school at that time.

Interviewer: Okay, so in high school, you met him at a football game.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, and we just, you know, dated from—

Interviewer: So, what was he doing?

Mattie Fletcher: He was working at a pipe down here at the [00:24:58 Charlotte], they call it the pipe boundary where they made pipes, you know, that go under the streets and that kind of thing.

Interviewer: So, when you got married did you live with your parents or live with his parents?
Or—

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, I lived with—you talking about after we got married?

Interviewer: That was a pretty traditional—yeah, after you got married—

Mattie Fletcher: No, no, no, no, we didn't live here with them. We rented a house in Huntersville off McCord Road, where that [00:25:30 Hanson] man, we lived in his house. I forget his name. But that was that.

Interviewer: Okay, so you got married and you had your son, Frankie. And so, when were you working at the hospital in Mooresville? After that or before that?

Mattie Fletcher: That was—okay, Frankie was born in '58, and I was working there in '58 because I went to work one day and had Frankie.

Interviewer: At work.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah. I didn't get home. But by the fact I worked all the time, I guess that made it so easy because I worked every day. And then Frankie was born in '58 because we used to call him our '58 baby. But that's when that was.

Interviewer: Okay, so you were living in Huntersville still, then?

Mattie Fletcher: No, we had moved.

Interviewer: Moved up here?

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, had moved here. And I was married after Frankie was born. And we lived down there in—me and my husband—now, wait a minute now, because when I was working I bought my property before I was married. Yeah, I bought my—

Interviewer: That's impressive.

Mattie Fletcher: Huh?

Interviewer: That's impressive, you had saved up to buy property.

Mattie Fletcher: Well, yes and no. I had saved some money, but my daddy put that house up for this and that's how I got it. And Ms. Mebane gave me the down payment. She helped me saving on the down payment, and I worked, saved on the down payment, and with Daddy and Ms. Mebane I—

Interviewer: Bought this property.

Mattie Fletcher: —bought this property. Did you ever know Ms. Mebane?

Interviewer: I didn't. They weren't here when I got here [00:27:31 unintelligible] before.

Mattie Fletcher: Oh, they wasn't?

Interviewer: Or if they were I didn't get to meet them.

Mattie Fletcher: We've had some nice people. Is that the television or is that my—

Interviewer: No, there's a dog somewhere.

Mattie Fletcher: Oh, there's a dog in that back room in there.

Interviewer: No, I'm not hearing—I think it sounds like it's outside.

Mattie Fletcher: Oh, yeah, it sounds like he—but he's not outside, we don't let him go outside. And you just asked me because my mind's got to think about what is what because I really hadn't thought—

Interviewer: So, where did Frankie go to school?

Mattie Fletcher: Frankie went to school in Huntersville down here in Davidson and Huntersville. That's where Frankie went to school.

Interviewer: Okay, so Ada Jenkins or Davidson Elementary?

Mattie Fletcher: Well, we were living here when he was born, and Ada Jenkins—I'm trying to think—it was just about to go out. He didn't go to Ada Jenkins long, he didn't.

Interviewer: Okay, yeah, because they shut down [00:28:36 unintelligible].

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, they shut that—

Interviewer: So, yeah, so, he might have gone—

Mattie Fletcher: Okay, he was born in '58. They—I forget—

Interviewer: So, maybe 1st or 2nd grade there.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, yeah, he didn't go very long before they went to Huntersville. And that's where he graduated from.

Interviewer: So, he managed—wait a minute, where in Huntersville? Did he go to North Meck?

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, he went to North Meck.

Interviewer: And did you have other children?

Mattie Fletcher: Yes.

Interviewer: Okay, I thought you did.

Mattie Fletcher: I have—after Frankie I had Diane—which I was married then—I had Diane, which is my oldest daughter. She's bipolar. And I thought about Debbie and her daughter that died [00:29:32 Fisher]—what's her name?—and that kind of gave Debbie Reynolds a run for her money. That girl, when she—and I thought about Diane being bipolar, how she gives me a run for mine. But I'm still standing.

Interviewer: Good, you are.

Mattie Fletcher: I'm still standing. And then I have Sandra. Sandy went to school in Huntersville at North Meck. And then Bobby, I have another son, Bucky. You ever heard of Bucky? He works—

Interviewer: Where does he work?

Mattie Fletcher: Over at the [00:30:21 Pines].

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Mattie Fletcher: Ms. [00:30:23 Kelter's] darling. So, he works over there. So, I have two girls and two boys. And Sandy works for Carolina Medical in HR. Diane did work but she don't work—you know, she don't work, for one thing, so much—having her health just—and Bucky work over here at the Pines in the kitchen cooking.

Interviewer: That's nice that you still have them close around, that they haven't all moved too far away?

Mattie Fletcher: You know, I don't know, I would love to be in this old house by myself, I really would. I would. Kids don't need to be with the parents. And Bucky's the only one here with me now, but, honey—now, Frankie was born in that house and he ain't coming out. So, he stays with my brother. My older brother lives there, he's still there in the family house and Frankie stay down there with him. And my other brother, he just bought him another home in Bessemer City, over there in Bessemer City, somewhere over in there. So, it was—because it was two boys and two girls over there.

Interviewer: So, for all the years that you worked for Davidson, what were some of the things that you saw change? I mean, you must have seen the African American students coming, international students coming, women coming to campus, faculty changing.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, so, the change, I more or less saw it—see, I was 59 when I left. What year was that? Okay, I'm 79 now, okay, that would have been—huh, yeah, I'm—

Interviewer: 1996 or 2000—

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, '96. I believe it would have been '96.

Interviewer: I thought we overlapped longer. Okay.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, it may overlap. So, but I really start seeing the actual physical changes in '96. I could tell they wanted the older people out and they wanted new blood.

Interviewer: What about the town of Davidson?

Mattie Fletcher: It has—oh God, Davidson is not the Davidson that I moved to, and Davidson is not the Davidson that I raised my kids in. And I can understand that because the population has grown so. But I look at our Mayor.

Interviewer: John Woods.

Mattie Fletcher: John Woods grew up with—he knew—I mean, I don't know, he acts like he—I don't know. I called him one day, I wanted to talk to him about—it was about something. I forget now what it was about. And he stayed down there where—well, I wanted to get him up here and we talk one on one. And I told him, I said, I could come to your office and talk, I said, but I want this to be a private talk. Because John Woods grew up with us, I mean, hey—well, what we going to talk about, what—I said, John, you act like I'm going to get you up here and kill you, I said, and I haven't killed you in all these years why do you think I want to make time now. You know, that's not kosher. And I got to remember all this is going on there. But that kind of got me, I couldn't get him up here. It's a lot of things that—Davidson has gotten to be so greedy now. The greed is astronomical.

Interviewer: I'm always intrigued when people are relatively new here—of course I've only been here since '94—but, you know, in the '60s and '70s, even 1980s this was a relatively poor town. Davidson wasn't a really rich school, there were a few big houses, but not—

Mattie Fletcher: But then too—

Interviewer: But it's really changed.

Mattie Fletcher: But let me tell you something, Jan, that has always been—don't you fool yourself. I practically grew up here, there has always been money in Davidson, they just didn't go f—what everybody had, it wasn't not big deal, everybody was on the same—yeah, the parts down here, it has always been big money in Davidson and don't—that's how come everybody latched on to it so fast. It has always been money in Davidson, that ain't been nothing new. And due to the fact that I grew up with people with money and there was never any difference, we all swung across the gutters down under the hill—all teenagers, and go down there and meet up with them there. College boys, and you talk about playing ball and playing foot—girls and boys. Wasn't nobody standing on the hill watching us, nobody driving through to see what we were doing. The only time we saw an adult, somebody come down there and get the chaps home for supper. Sometime a student would come home and eat with us, sometime they didn't. So, this has been the thing about Davidson that really gets to me, it's always been money in Davidson. Money ain't new to Davidson, but it is money new—but what's done happen, the people that's

coming in here, they got Momma, and Dad, and Grandma's money now and they just now—you know, there's always been money in Davidson.

Interviewer: I mean, well certainly the shops have changed in downtown.

Mattie Fletcher: Do what?

Interviewer: The shops, where you shop downtown and what you could get—

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: —and we've gotten more expensive and more—

Mattie Fletcher: Well, now I remember—do you remember the Co—you weren't here when the Copelands were here.

Interviewer: I've met Mr. Copeland, the dentist.

Mattie Fletcher: The dentist. Wait a minute, is Donald?

Interviewer: Donald.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, Donald.

Interviewer: And I met his daughter.

Mattie Fletcher: Now, I don't—you know, I had forgotten he has children. Okay, Donald is more—he's a dentist now?

Interviewer: Well, he's in his 80s now I think. I don't know he's still practicing. But I know the house, I know his mom used to [00:37:49 crosstalk].

Mattie Fletcher: Right there, right there.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Mattie Fletcher: Okay. Donald delivered Sandy, my baby girl. But anyway, because see, we close in age because I worked with them at one time. The Copelands, they had money. Old man—he was stingy with it but he had it. At that time we had a shoe—

Interviewer: Mr. McKissock, and I forget who had it before Mr. McKissock.

Mattie Fletcher: No, you saying a shoe shop. I'm talking we had at one point that was a shoe store in Davidson. We had Wether's, which are appliances.

Interviewer: Electrics, mm-hmm.

Mattie Fletcher: And these were things that people needed and used. And we patronized them. I had a grocery store—I would take my brother—he could come up with names up here. He can come up with names.

Interviewer: There was an Anderson's, I know.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, yeah. So, and we had Brian and them that did coffee cup. So, there's always been money in Davidson, it just wasn't no [00:39:05 who-lop] about it. But I tell you another thing, you better get out of Davidson before you start drinking. Now, that was one thing, there was no alcohol sold in Davidson. Davidson was model for the college and these kids. No, nuh-uh.

Interviewer: So, when you were young and married, had kids, you were working, but did you go down to Charlotte for parties and football games? What did you do for entertainment?

Mattie Fletcher: Okay, before I got married we'd all—honey, everywhere the basketball team went that we could go, we would go. And that was mostly to the colosseum. And we'd go down there and yell and yell and couldn't go back to work Davidson College, couldn't nobody talk from yelling. We enjoyed—Davidson was enjoyable.

Interviewer: Okay, so this was when [00:40:02 Lector Dyzel] was coaching and Mike Malloy was playing and going down to the colosseum in Charlotte?

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah. And Coach [00:40:08 Dyzel], I tell you, that man was something other. You could just fall in love with him, with his personality. And Mike—what—Mike—

Interviewer: Malloy.

Mattie Fletcher: —Malloy. What was—Mike Malloy.

Interviewer: He was the basketball player.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah.

Interviewer: And then—

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah. I got a little lamp that Mike gave me when he was—a little china doll lamp he gave me when he was—I have a lot of things that people gave me when I was working down—I have a set of pearls that Don Davidson's mother gave me. You remember him?

Interviewer: No.

Mattie Fletcher: He played on the basketball. And Dick Snyder.

Interviewer: I'm met Dick Snyder.

Mattie Fletcher: And, yeah, so that there—oh, I could go back. There are just lots of people that I learned and met. That's why I said that was more fun down here than it was up there. I enjoyed it.

Interviewer: You relaxed a little bit in Charlotte.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, I guess so. Charlotte has never been a big deal for me. I remember I used to catch the bus out there. Me and Edith White that used to live over there in this big house over there, we used to catch the bus and go to Charlotte and shop. But it really wasn't a lot of shopping places. We'd go downtown to the—not Ivey's—what was that?

Interviewer: Before it was Belk?

Mattie Fletcher: Maybe. I'm trying to think. It wasn't Ivey's. But anyway, what would we go—Roses? We'd catch a bus out there and go down and shop. But as far as going to the movies, nuh-uh. You remember when—well, no, you don't. They had the movies up here in Mooresville, that's where we went to the movies. We never—we had no connection with—we didn't even have any relatives in Charlotte. So, we wouldn't—you know, we didn't go to Charlotte very often. No. I went out of town on the bus more than I did to Charlotte to see my half-sisters and things. But I never did go to Charlotte very much.

Interviewer: You said your daddy was a minister. Where did you go to church?

Mattie Fletcher: He was AME Zion Methodist. That's why I guess I'm still in the AME Zion Methodist.

Interviewer: Okay. Reeve's Temple now?

Mattie Fletcher: No, now I'm going to Union Bethel out in Cornelius.

Interviewer: That's right. Okay.

Mattie Fletcher: Reeves Temple, they have a strong pastor. I like him. But I don't know, I just got into Union Bethel. One thing, I don't know, I guess I got pulled away because they had a choir.

Interviewer: Now, music can be important.

Mattie Fletcher: It can be important; it can be important.

Interviewer: Did you sing in choirs growing up?

Mattie Fletcher: Mm-hmm.

Interviewer: Because you liked it or because your father expected you to?

Mattie Fletcher: I liked it. You know, I don't—Daddy's the kind of man like this—now, Momma was a kind of meek, humble lady, bless her heart. But the only thing—and this was done throughout the South—you had to go to church when you were a kid. You had to go to church. If you lived under these folks roof and you eat, and they fed you, and they clothed you, you were going to do what they say do. Now, you can go out here and stay out all night long, when you come through the door, come on, let's go to church. And then, you know, and another thing, church was also an outlet for us. It was a social outlet for us because there wasn't any clubs we could go to. And a whole lot of places you could go to—you really couldn't go anywhere really too far. You couldn't go to Greensboro and go to a movie where—you know, this what I'm—

Interviewer: There wasn't a whole lot around.

Mattie Fletcher: Yeah, right.

Interviewer: Pretty rural. So, yeah.

Mattie Fletcher: Right, right. But, other than that. But I love people. I got that thing from Daddy. My daddy loved people, he loved people until they ruffled his feathers. He would ruffle them.

Interviewer: Well, I think I've asked all my questions. So, unless there's something else that you want to say or [00:45:14 crosstalk]—

Mattie Fletcher: No, no.

Interviewer:—we can wrap this up and—

Mattie Fletcher: But, you got me looking back now. And I'm thankful that—to be 79 years of age. And I forgot to tell you, I have a grandson now. And I'm so proud of him. He has another year and a half and he'll have his degree.

Interviewer: He's in college now? Where's he going?

Mattie Fletcher: Mm-hmm. Down over here in Charlotte. He went to Carolina, what, now—anyway, he couldn't stand it up there. He just was so—but now, he made the Dean's list, but he couldn't stand it up there. He just didn't like it up there.

Interviewer: So, he transferred to Charlotte?

Mattie Fletcher: Well, we had a time getting him settled down. When school started up again, we really—because his daddy wanted him to go back up there and I told Bucky, I said, don't you send him back up there to waste money, I said, because he don't like it, he's not going to do good up there. He finally went over here in the mountains to—and I didn't like over there in the mountains.

Interviewer: App State or Western?

Mattie Fletcher: What? Say it again?

Interviewer: Appalachian State or Western Carolina?

Mattie Fletcher: I think it must have been over here—I don't know, I have to ask him. He likes it pretty good over there. He did. But we couldn't afford it. I said, nuh-uh, I said, you'll be in debt the rest of your life. So, I told him, I said, [00:46:58 Lante], I'm going to tell you what you

do—because he would just—and parents have to learn when your kids get out of high school, that's not the time to turn them loose. No, that's not the time, oh, I done got him through school, he can make it. They can't make it on their own, it's too much to grasp. They out there in the world and don't know what—so, I said, get you a job and go to work. But, get you a job and you go to work and then we'll think about where you want to go to college. Yeah, I said, get you a job, go to work, and I'll buy you a car. And he did. But you think—I waited about four months before I bought that car.

Interviewer: Good planning.

Mattie Fletcher: He wasn't going to get no car and take off on me. So, I did. He went and he down here at Central Piedmont and did something there, and then now he transferred over here to the big school up there. And he's got a year and a half, and he'll have his degree. In the meantime, he works for Carolina Medical.

Interviewer: Oh, very good.

Mattie Fletcher: Plus going to school. And I'm really proud of little boy.

Interviewer: Sounds a lot like his grandmother.

Mattie Fletcher: Well, you can't turn them loose, you can't turn them loose. And I think this is what's happening to a lot of our kids. Just because they get through high school, well, I've done my part. No, you haven't, that's the time you really got to fight because it's too many hands out there. And I had to control him [00:49:01 unintelligible] because after he got that job I didn't go run nowhere. I think it was about five months before I got that car. I was going to make sure you ain't going to take off on me. Because I could have got you back because the car would have been in my name and, you know, and him. But, you know, but I'm right proud of the little old fellow.

Interviewer: Well, thank you so much.

Mattie Fletcher: You're quite welcome, Jan.

Interviewer: This has been fun. I love hearing your stories.

End of recording.