

## **Shared Stories: African Americans in North Mecklenburg**

Interview with Erving McClain, March 30, 2001

Conducted by Jan Blodgett

Transcript edited by Andrés Paz '21

**Summary:** Erving McClain, a Davidson-born and raised inhabitant, shares many details about her elementary and high school years in Ada Jenkins and Torrence-Lytle. She talks about her further studies, her work as a nurse, and her family. Moreover, McClain mentions her involvement with the community through different committees and her efforts to keep the Ada Jenkins Center open as a school. She also talks about the social environment on Main Street, its businesses, and people.

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**Jan Blodgett:** Let's just start with were you born in Davidson? Or did you move here? How long have you been in Davidson?

**Erving McClain:** I was born in Davidson. I was raised in a little house down on the corner of Knox Road and Knox Circle. It was a two-story house built out of logs. This, where we are now, was the cow pasture. We grew up around this neighborhood. There were a few houses up that street around Knox Circle and a few around Mark's Circle. In 1950, they built houses down on the lower end of Knox Circle and my family moved into one of the houses down on the left. And in 1951, I graduated from high school. I went to elementary school at Ada Jenkins and I went to high school at Torrence-Lytle in Huntersville. Graduated from there in '51. I wasn't quite old enough to get into nursing school, that's where I wanted to go, so my mother sent me to Johnsonville [inaudible] for a year until I got old enough to go to [nursing school]. Then I went to Good Samaritan Hospital School of Nursing.

**Jan Blodgett:** And that was in Charlotte?

**Erving McClain:** In Charlotte. During my stay there, I went to Kipipski, New York for the

psychiatric affiliation and I went to Otine, North Carolina -up near Nashville- for a Tuberculosis examination. That's how we got the education that we needed that they didn't offer at Good Samaritan.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, this was late '50s that you went to New York?

**Erving McClain:** Mm hm. I graduated from nursing school in 1956. Then after that, I worked at Good Samaritan school for 2 years, on the medical unit. After that, I changed jobs and went to the Physical Rehabilitation Institute in Charlotte and worked there.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you live in Charlotte then or did you commute?

**Erving McClain:** I was commuting back and forth from Davidson to Charlotte. I got married in 1956. I need to back up. I graduated in 1954 and worked for 2 years and then I got married in 1956. After I moved to rehab, the whole time I was working, I was still going to school to take extra courses. I went to New York University, up to Bellevue, for a year to get more into physical rehabilitation. It was quite an experience.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you stay in the hospital when you went up there or did you have to find a room?

**Erving McClain:** No, when I went up there when I was in nursing school, they provided housing for us at the hospitals where we were. After I graduated, I stayed at George Washington Hotel on 23rd Street and V1 Avenue.

**Jan Blodgett:** In New York City? Have you ever been back to look at that corner?

**Erving McClain:** Mm hm. Not recently. The last time I was there my aunt took me down there and they had changed it. In fact, I didn't know the hotel when I saw it. I don't know if it's still there. After Joe and I married, it was 10 years before I had a son and I continued to work. I worked at rehab for 36 years. I changed different positions there and my last 15 years at rehab I

was in nursing administration. And I did some family education during that time at rehab with families and physically handicapped patients. That was really rewarding. The whole time I was there I enjoyed it, you were always learning something different, something new from working with those people. And there were times we went off on workshops and to different states. I went to Orlando, Florida for a week, Texas for two weeks and Arizona for a week. While I was here in Davidson, I served on two different committees at the Town Hall. One was the Community Betterment Association and one was ... I can't think of it.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was it Human Relations Task Force or was it one of the housing groups?

**Erving McClain:** Human Relations Task Force, that's what it was.

**Jan Blodgett:** Were you on it when Daniel Rhodes was on it, or was he after you?

**Erving McClain:** He was after I was.

**Jan Blodgett:** How did you get on the Community Betterment Association?

**Erving McClain:** I was asked by a person that was already on it: John BrandacHe asked me if I could be a representative from this area on the committee, and I said yes. And also, for a while I was a member of the Women's League of Voters.

**Jan Blodgett:** Here in Davidson?

**Erving McClain:** Mm hm. It started out in Charlotte because someone I worked with there had started going to the meetings. And then after that I didn't get too much involved with any community stuff. Joe was on the town board for a long time and then I just had a feeling that they didn't need both of us up there!

**Jan Blodgett:** I just ran across an article from when he was elected and I didn't know if it was the first time. I was looking for something else in the school newspaper, and I saw that he had

served. He never told me he had served! Was that in the mid-60s?

**Erving McClain:** He was on that board for ten years.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was he the first African American on the board?

**Erving McClain:** I don't think so.

**Jan Blodgett:** Tell me more about some of these associations. What did you guys do? What were the issues?

**Erving McClain:** We talked about streets and at one time there were no fire hydrants in this area.

**Jan Blodgett:** And lots of wooden houses.

**Erving McClain:** All of them were wooden houses then. And we got the town to install some fire hydrants in this area. This street, it's supposed to be a one-way street, but because they're working on it it's back to a two-way street. But I just called them a few days ago to talk to someone up there about going back to a one-way street because the little children play in the street and they don't need to have to watch both ways for traffic. And when I was on the committee, we had this changed to a one-way.

**Jan Blodgett:** Part of Knox?

**Erving McClain:** Yes. For safety reasons. Sometimes it was easy to get things done through the town board and sometimes it wasn't. It depended on town finances and where they had their focus at the particular time. If you live around here long enough and you see the people, really watch them, you can almost just look at them and be around them a little bit and tell what their focus is, what they're thinking about. There's still some of that around here, it's better, but it's not as open as it could be for a small town.

**Jan Blodgett:** When you were growing up and you went to Ada Jenkins School, where did you shop? Did your family have a vegetable garden? Did you go to the meat markets downtown?

**Erving McClain:** Yeah, my grandmother had a little house on the corner; she and my grandfather had a garden every year. We would have vegetables out of her garden. And yes, we would go what we called 'uptown.' There was a general store up there called Johnny Brown's and we would go there. And there was another store up on the first street, below Jasper. There was a grocery store up there, Anderson's food store, and we bought things that we needed from those two places. And I had an uncle that lived on a farm and he would often supplement [what we bought], you know, bring things from the farm that we didn't have. Everything was within walking distance, we'd just go up around here. Most of the time the kids didn't venture outside of the neighborhood unless they had an adult with them or they had an adult's permission. If we didn't, we mostly just stayed in this area.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you go to Davidson College for the football or basketball games?

**Erving McClain:** No, we did not. Some of the bigger boys would go to games at the College, but most of the times the girls didn't do that. There was a recreation teacher named Ms. Floe. She taught phys. ed. at the school, and she would spend a lot of time with us on Saturdays, riding bicycles, skating and other things like that. Our parents would let us go out of the neighborhood with her. We sort of made our own fun with stuff to do.

**Jan Blodgett:** When did you start going to the movies? And did you go here or in Cornelius?

**Erving McClain:** We went to Cornelius. I don't know what age I was; I wasn't a real teenager and I had to be more than 10 years old because we would walk down on Saturdays to the movies and I had to be back by 4 o'clock, so most of the rest of them came back, too. My mother worked out of town a lot; my grandma was the sweet, loving neighbor, I mean for the whole neighborhood. Everybody obeyed her, what she said, that's what we knew we had to do.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was she from this area? How many generations are you in Davidson?

**Erving McClain:** I'm the third. She came from up I guess you call it Mount Moore. Her church was Collette Chapel Church. She and my grandpa came from a farm around there and then they moved down here. We all continued to go to church at Collette Chapel until some of us joined Temple, when it was not where it is now, it was on the other street. And that's where we went to church and to Sunday school. I did, before I left to college. The preacher at Reed's Temple started off teaching me music lessons and then a lady that my mother used to work for—Dr. Everheart used to teach at the College and his wife taught music—so I continued the music with her.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was this singing or piano?

**Erving McClain:** Piano. I sang in the Glee Club the four years I was in high school. And we had a chorus at Good Samaritan, and I sang in that chorus when I was there. I played basketball, baseball - I was sort of a tomboy.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was that usual? Did you have trouble as a young woman being a tomboy in that age? Or were there lots of other people like you?

**Erving McClain:** There were others, a couple other girls who liked sports. We played with the boys and rode bicycles, things like that.

**Jan Blodgett:** What kind of jobs did people have? You said your mother worked out of town?

**Erving McClain:** My mother was a licensed practical nurse and she did private jobs in private homes. And then she started going out of town for jobs. Most of the people worked at the College or they did day work in homes when I was growing up.

**Jan Blodgett:** Now, Ralph Johnson would have had a barbershop, the Nortons would have had one, and the shoe shop? Wasn't there a shoe repair shop?

**Erving McClain:** There was a shoe repair shop down on that street. I can't think of the name of the man that had it first, Mr. Buff? Have you heard of that name before?

**Jan Blodgett:** No, and I saw the name of a person who had the shoe repair shop ...

**Erving McClain:** McKissick, he had the shop after Mr. Buff. I think when I was little, Mr. Buff had it and then Mr. McKissick had it after him.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did they live in the neighborhood?

**Erving McClain:** Mr. Buff? Mm hm. And Mr. McKissick lived in Charlotte. He commuted.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did your minister live here in Davidson and work somewhere else or was he just at the church?

**Erving McClain:** He was just at the church. Reverend Wills was, the first one I remember was just at the church. And he used to live in the house across from Ralph Johnson, that was the Methodist parsonage. And then after he died we got another minister, Reverend Revell, [who] came from Winston-Salem. He worked at the tobacco factory. There was another young minister who lived in the parsonage. Eventually Rev. Revell and his family moved into the parsonage; they started out commuting. There was a lady up there that lived where the Carolina Inn is now, I believe, Ms. Henson. Have you heard of her?

**Jan Blodgett:** Who ran the boarding house? Yeah.

**Erving McClain:** She used to have a Sunday school class for some of the kids, they would go to that but I wouldn't attend.

**Jan Blodgett:** What was the hardest thing—your son must have been born early 60s-

**Erving McClain:** 1966.

**Jan Blodgett:** Ok, so '66 through the 80s, that would have been a tough time to raise kids. What was the hardest thing about raising your son in Davidson?

**Erving McClain:** I think the hardest thing was trying to figure out what we could let him do without us sticking so closely to him. And we were fortunate; I guess we had started him out right. He kept really close to us and he would let us know what he was doing. We all have good relationships, but he would hang out with his father a lot. He went to private school but he graduated from North Mecklenburg in '84. He went to private school up to his 11th year.

**Jan Blodgett:** Why did you send him to private school?

**Erving McClain:** The Mecklenburg school system has been a problem with me forever and ever. And I know I went through the Mecklenburg school system, but when I took him over to the Davidson school, I just felt like he wasn't getting what he needed to know. And I have always felt like if you start training children and teaching them what they need to know to survive at a younger age, they'll be better prepared for life. And there were prejudices. Erving McClain 8

**Jan Blodgett:** The school would only have been integrated, what, five years before he started?

**Erving McClain:** Probably, if that long. There were still a lot of problems. I was sitting in work one day, and I would take the stuff that he brought home with him to work with me sometimes and look at it. And I started thinking this is not up to par as far as I'm concerned, he should be doing a bit better. When I first started thinking about getting him out of the system around here was when he was in day care. It was a play thing, and I still think daycares are supposed to be more than play. I know kids need to learn to get along together, but I think if the child is doing well, [just having him play] is holding him back. I know at that time they couldn't have had two different systems. But anyway, we took him to Our Lady of Constellation for kindergarten and he was there for about a year and a half and my husband missed him, so we brought him back to



Davidson school and he went there for 2 years and I was just not happy with it. And my husband and I sat and talked and we decided we had better let him go. So we took him to St. Patrick's Catholic School because I worked just about 2 blocks from there, so it was convenient. And he stayed there until he came up to North Mecklenburg in the 10th grade. And that's where he graduated. By then he was ready to come, he himself said he though he had a good background and he could make it. And he did. Things were fine. We had problems when he took the SAT test. He scored high, in the 90th percentile, and some of the people in Davidson didn't accept that. They wanted him to take another test and I said no. I wouldn't let him do it. I said there was no way he could have cheated so if he scored higher than your daughter did, that's just too bad. It was a prominent person [who accused him], and at that time I was very upset about it.

**Jan Blodgett:** It amazes me when I hear that. I read an article recently by a woman who is Asian American and she won a school contest and they didn't give her the award because they just couldn't give the award to an Asian child. What a thing to do!

**Erving McClain:** Terrible. If I had it to do over, I would have left him in private school until he graduated because that was probably the beginning of some things that went on that he didn't mention until later on. Things that you don't want to see, that you don't think kids should have to go through.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, what's he doing now?

**Erving McClain:** He is a supervisor for Gfemax; he has a fleet of trucks that he's in charge of. He always liked big equipment. First he said he wanted to be a Physical Education teacher. Then he changed his mind. He ran around behind his dad running tractors and one summer he earned \$15 an hour clearing off properties for a landowner who was building up on 21 and I think that did it, got in his blood; he wanted big trucks. He has been driving trucks ever since. He's doing well with it.

**Jan Blodgett:** Good. Sometimes it's hard now with gas prices and all that.

**Erving McClain:** He partly owned a truck with my first cousin before he went to Glumax on his own. After he got married, he said he needed a sure way of making money. You know, they went through some tight times, but they did ok. He has done well.

**Jan Blodgett:** What do you think I need to know about Davidson?

**Erving McClain:** Basically, Davidson is an all right place to live and to raise children if you don't set goals that are higher than you can attain in a small town. If you want to have extra things you almost have to have a connection with someone who isn't right in Davidson. Like our son had horses; he was able to house them at our uncle's house on the farm and he could go back and forth to ride. And it's things like that, you really have to think about what you want and what you want to be able to offer a child if you're going to raise a child in Davidson. And you have to be willing to go out of Davidson in order to expose them to the better things that are not offered here. Even though there are things at Davidson, the College makes a difference, but there is a limit to what they can actually be able to be exposed to. You have to be able to find things like that for children as well as adults. It's almost like living in two different places. You go out of Davidson for the big town shopping and the concerts and things you'd like to attend, and you live here and like, all the years I've worked, I worked in Charlotte. It's like I lived in Davidson and in Charlotte. And you have to be ready to either accept or try to change some of the areas in Davidson that are not quite what they should be. If you want to make a change, make it better, you have to be ready to make a change. If you want to just accept it, you have to be ready to just let it go and do whatever you want to do to tolerate it. I feel like the people in Davidson, most of the people, could have anything they really wanted in Davidson if they would put forth the effort to get it. I see now that the people are less dependent on the College, and that's good. At one time, people depended on the College for their livelihood and everything and that was not good.

**Jan Blodgett:** And the College admits it was not a very good payer.

**Erving McClain:** Right. That's good that they admit that.

**Jan Blodgett:** What about Main Street? I was reading in the student newspaper because the

alumni weekend is coming up and I was looking at things that happened 30 years ago, 20 years ago, stuff like that, and there was a series of articles, I was really sort of surprised, they were interviewing people on Main Street and it was during the mid '60s when the first Africans were coming to Davidson, the two Congolese students. And they were interviewing businesses downtown about whether they were going to serve them. And some said that they would do whatever they usually do. And some places, like the Coffee Cup, admitted that they had half of the room that was White and half was Black, and there were places where you could be served at the counter but you couldn't sit down. And then a few years later, they went back and interviewed people and there had been a fair amount of change. But since I've been in Davidson, I haven't seen many Blacks on Main Street. It seems a lot of the people who shop on Main Street are either from out of town or belong to a certain group that shops. But, is it not a welcoming place? Is it because there's always been a tradition of such limitation that it's easier to go [elsewhere]? Certainly for you, you went to downtown Charlotte and there were probably shops that had things you were more interested in, rather than Davidson's rather limited range of things catered to College men.

**Erving McClain:** Davidson is, you just said it, it really is a college town catering to what the College kids want and what their families want. But there really isn't much on Main Street that is for kids. My grandson, we're raising our grandson, he occasionally will go to the Soda Shop and sometimes, you know a group of boys can be boisterous and can get loud, and sometimes they get complaints. I have noticed sometimes when I have let him out at the Erving McClain 11 library and he says, 'Pick me up at the soda shop, I'm going to get some fries or something.' When I walk in the place, I don't feel like I'm welcome in there—and I'm just walking in to get him. So, I often wonder how they are greeted or how they are treated when they go in there. And I do understand it's mostly College kids that work there, is that right?

**Jan Blodgett:** Actually, I don't think it's College kids. It's like local students and community college students. I haven't been there too recently, but the last few times I've been there in the past 2 or 3 years, it hasn't been College kids. In fact, it's been people who sort of live out in the area.

**Erving McClain:** Well, they weren't very personable at all. They weren't people-people. And in fact, in the bookstore, I've gone there to look for books -I read a lot- she'll order what you want but it's not always there. And I used to go to Tom Clock Studios; I collect gnomes. So, I stopped going there and go to Belks to get them, in Mooresville or Southpark. There's really nothing else up there to offer. I thought one time when they had the needlepoint place, I thought I would get involved in that because I used to do needlepoint and I forgot how to do it.

**Jan Blodgett:** It comes back to you.

**Erving McClain:** Does it? Well, I thought about going over there and I dropped by one day, but I didn't go back anymore. I kind of thought that was just a certain group, but I don't know.

**Jan Blodgett:** That's interesting. It depends on what time you go and who's there. I had a friend who just came to town and she went once and had a good experience and then the next time she just felt like she was being ignored. I think it depends on who's there. Because I go all the time and sometimes I've felt like I wasn't really welcome and then other times I have a really good experience. Do you recognize anybody in the staff or people that might have been connected to the College? What I'm trying to do is collect pictures ...

**Erving McClain:** Lois Norton. Her daddy was—you know Kenneth Norton? Father Hood? Her daddy was Rutledge Norton, they had that dog shop together up there, that was two brothers. And Margaret Byers is her sister. Have you talked to Margaret or Betty?

**Jan Blodgett:** No, and I need to get names and contacts of people to talk to. I hate calling people cold. I want to have a face and have people know who I am, because it can kind of be a difficult thing for people to do, to talk about history. And I want people to know that Davidson is what it is because of all the communities. Like, if it wasn't for the African American community providing staff for the College, working in the shops, doing childcare, Davidson wouldn't be the same place. When you're talking about a history of Davidson, you need to be able to talk about all the churches, the economic situation that took everyone in here. I could write about the young ladies of faculty families who went to off to college and took all these long trips, but they could

do that because there was someone at home taking care of the house. So, I need the stories. Anyone, who you could give me their names or tell them to talk to me, I would appreciate it.

**Erving McClain:** Mm hm. Marmie Bye might talk to you. She's a member of Reed's Temple and she lives above Davidson, right as you go up around that curve above Davidson before you get to the Anchor Grill. She lives in that brick house right before that. I'll tell her I told you about her. And you probably know Esther Johnson.

**Jan Blodgett:** How is she doing?

**Erving McClain:** She was at church the other week.

**Jan Blodgett:** Pat Salistad had talked to her; I was talking to Pat and she said she wanted to talk to Ester first because they had been on some committees together and she thought that Esther had the files and the day she went Esther couldn't find them and I've not heard back from Pat yet. How did you get to and from, if you were in the choir at Torrence-Lytle for four years, [how did you get there]? Did you stay, did buses go, did people share cars?

**Erving McClain:** If we went off places, the buses would take us and we had rehearsals during school.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did many clubs meet after [school]? Like the basketball team?

**Erving McClain:** No. If you went off with the basketball team you still had your regular day at school and you stayed there and they would give us a hot dog and chips or something and then they brought us back home and dropped us off. And most of the times our parents would be out there waiting for us.

**Jan Blodgett:** What was your school year? Was it affected by farms at all? Or by then was it pretty much you went from September to May? They didn't give people time off to work?

**Erving McClain:** Yes, we did have [time off] at one time. Before I went to high school, in elementary school, we would have some time off so that farmers could get their cotton in. Of course, we would be off then and help them.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you pick cotton? My mom did. I never have.

**Erving McClain:** Oh, yeah. In fact, when they would let us out -I had another cousin who grew up in the house with us—he and I would go up to my uncle’s farm and help him get the cotton in. He had kids that were in school, too.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you get paid? Did you get to keep any money for doing this?

**Erving McClain:** Yeah.

**Jan Blodgett:** Well, what would you do? What would you spend it on? Did you go to the five and dime and buy a doll? Well, probably not if you were a tomboy, you probably bought a tennis racket.

**Erving McClain:** I kept balls around all the time, softballs and bats. But I saved my money. I would, even during those hard times. I can remember when my mother wasn’t going to be at home, she would leave me a dollar, for spending money, and that was my movie money. I could spend part of that money at the movie and buy something, a candy bar or something. But most of the times I would go to the movies and buy something to drink and then save the rest of my money. I remember having a little jar that I kept my money in.

**Jan Blodgett:** I remember one time I saved a lot of money, I worked and worked. I don’t know what I thought I was going to do with it. But that summer, I grew two inches and I had to spend everything I had to get clothes to wear to the first day of school. I had nothing that would fit me that fall.

**Erving McClain:** I used to work after school in high school.

**Jan Blodgett:** Where'd you work?

**Erving McClain:** The lady that taught me music, she had three little boys and I used to go to her house at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. I would ride the school bus out there, and go to her house and they would bring me home at seven. I would help with supper and help her get the little boys bathed. If we had plenty of time, I could get some extra practice on my music with her. And her husband would bring me home after. There used to be a little cafe [where] my aunt worked; they fed some students. I used to go there and work with her in the afternoon from 4 o'clock to 6 and then I'd have to go home and do my homework and practice my music. I had to do that an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon.

**Jan Blodgett:** [At school] what was the percentage of people from Davidson or from Cornelius? Did you get a sense of that?

**Erving McClain:** I didn't really get a sense of that. I know there were a lot of buses and there were two buses from Davidson, and one bus would go down through Cornelius.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, it didn't really affect who you made friends with in classes?

**Erving McClain:** No. One of my long-term friends was from Huntersville, in a real rural area.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did any of the clubs exist? They had student officers, honor society, and the band. Who were the Juniorettes? Were they a choir? I look at this picture and I can't figure it out.

**Erving McClain:** Looks like a little dance group. I believe that's Alexander Davis right there and he plays gospel, that's all he plays, so that must have been a singing group. But I do know they had a little theatre dance group because my cousin was in it.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did they just perform at the school?

**Erving McClain:** Mm hm.

**Jan Blodgett:** That must have been pretty progressive for its time.

**Erving McClain:** We had some teachers that came out of Charlotte, and they were progressive. Like Lorraine Floe, the woman I told you about who used to come out with us on Saturdays sometimes. On May Day we used to have a program at Ada Jenkins. She had kids and students and people from other schools come up. We would do the May pole and dance, just a whole big day. And the parents could come if they wanted to . And she would keep us involved in a lot of competitive sports things. There used to be the Nathan Heights Community Center in Charlotte, and she knew the people who were running that, and he and his wife would bring kids up here and we would have skating races or bicycle races or relay races with them at Ada Jenkins. She would keep us doing things like that and socializing with kids from other schools.

**Jan Blodgett:** That reminds me; do you remember when there was an art school that they tried to put in there [at Ada Jenkins]? I'm amazed when I look through things and find all the things that the building has been. It's had several evolutions.

**Erving McClain:** I don't think I remember that.

**Jan Blodgett:** At one point, they were trying to make it into a drug rehabilitation center for people in Charlotte.

**Erving McClain:** I fought against that. I was on the committee. We just did not need that; Davidson wasn't ready for that.

**Jan Blodgett:** How were you treated when you fought against it? Did people listen to you? I mean, it didn't happen—

**Erving McClain:** I remember we had a meeting up at the school and the people that were trying to bring it here were not from this area. So, the people who were from this area told them how it



was around this area and how free the kids were around here. They were planning it to be not a nightly thing; the people would be staying there. And we didn't want that in Davidson. Now this guy, have you talked with Ronald Johnson? He works over at the natural foods place over there, The Home Economist.

**Jan Blodgett:** No, I'm trying to think if I've seen him over there.

**Erving McClain:** He lives on the second house down the street on the right. I'll tell him because I go over there sometimes. I'll tell him that I gave you his name. You know, as far as the Black kids are concerned, Davidson sort of shut us out. When I first came out of nursing school, I actually went to an infirmary to apply for a job and they told me they didn't hire Black R.N.s. And the same thing at [inaudible] in Mooresville. In fact, they told me I could come out there and work but not as an R.N.

**Jan Blodgett:** What, they wanted you as a janitor?

**Erving McClain:** I guess that's what they wanted me to do. Clean. [inaudible]

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you guys have theatre [in high school]?

**Erving McClain:** Yeah, we had drama club at Torrence-Lytle. In fact, I was in that.

**Jan Blodgett:** Do you remember any of the plays you were in?

**Erving McClain:** I don't remember the names. I was in two.

**Jan Blodgett:** Do you know anybody who has pictures of this? Someone with a scrapbook? I know people didn't take a lot of pictures.

**Erving McClain:** You don't have a [yearbook]?

**Jan Blodgett:** I have this one and I have a '65 and I called the school board and they have no collections of annuals for any of the schools. So, [not] unless you know of anybody who would have an annual. You could put that in the church bulletin. I want to find as many Torrence-Lytle yearbooks as I can possibly find!

**Erving McClain:** The Glee Club used to travel a lot with the music teacher, Ms. E.E. Adams. She would let me play sometimes while she directed the choir. We used to travel a lot to competitions.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you go out of state?

**Erving McClain:** Just in North Carolina.

**Jan Blodgett:** [inaudible] Did you have a good [basketball] team?

**Erving McClain:** We did.

**Jan Blodgett:** Now this wasn't when you were a student? You came back to the place? Tell me, how did you do this?

**Erving McClain:** What?

**Jan Blodgett:** Have an alumni team. Was it just for one game? Did you play the regular team?

**Erving McClain:** We played alumni from teams in Charlotte as a fundraiser for the school.

**Jan Blodgett:** How many years after you'd graduated was this picture [taken]? Let me rephrase that, how many years were you on the team? When did you join the alumni team?

**Erving McClain:** Any time I was [available]. If they had something going they would call me. This is my friend right there, she and I played together all the time. She would call me and say

we're getting the alumni team to practice and she would ask me if I was going to play that year. And would say, 'Yeah, I might come.' And I'd always be there. And we played against the high school students, the varsity team at the school.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you beat them?

**Erving McClain:** Sometimes we did. The girls used to whine; they always said we were rough.

**Jan Blodgett:** Now, how did you meet Joe? You were both on the alumni team, did you meet in high school?

**Erving McClain:** Joe moved to Davidson, I'm trying to think what grade I was in when he came. Anyway he moved here then ...

**Jan Blodgett:** He never went to Ada Jenkins, right? Wasn't he old enough to go to Torrence-Lytle when he got here?

**Erving McClain:** He was old enough to go to Torrence-Lytle, I believe.

**Jan Blodgett:** In the eighth grade, or something like that?

**Erving McClain:** He might have gone to 8th grade at Ada Jenkins with Mr. Harris, I don't know.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you go to the prom together?

**Erving McClain:** No.

**Jan Blodgett:** Who did you go to the prom with?

**Erving McClain:** My first prom I went with a guy from the neighborhood named Don Weeds.

He's no longer around. And my junior year prom I went with one of my classmates. My senior prom I went with Joe.

**Jan Blodgett:** Tell me about the prom. What was the prom at Torrence-Lytle like? Was it a big deal or was it just a dance that everybody went to? Did they plan for months? When I went to school, they made a big deal of the decorations.

**Erving McClain:** They had a lot of decorations. Some of the parents that were on the PTA board were asked to help as chaperones or with refreshments along with the teachers.

**Jan Blodgett:** Who did the music? Was it just records or did people in the school play?

**Erving McClain:** Who did the music for our prom? I know the senior prom we had someone do the music. And at the little prom that I had earlier there were records.

**Jan Blodgett:** I didn't go to my prom so I don't know what they did. I think they hired a band. Just a small, local [one].

*End of Recording.*