

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

Interview with Vertie Torrence, March 25, 2016

Conducted by Jan Blodgett at Rumor Mill, Davidson, NC

**Summary:** Vertie Torrence is a longtime resident of Cornelius. Torrence begins their interview by recounting their childhood growing up in Cornelius and describing the local businesses that their family frequented in the downtown area, including the blacksmith shop that was owned by Torrence's grandfather. Torrence notes how much the lines have blurred between the black communities in the Davidson/Cornelius/Huntersville compared to their experience growing up. Torrence goes on to describe their experience attending various schools in Cornelius before becoming an educator themselves in 1957, just as North Carolina schools were becoming racially integrated. The interview concludes with Torrence commenting on becoming the first woman on the board of Trustees at Torrence Chapel and the ongoing importance of faith in their connection to the Cornelius community.

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**Interviewer:** There we go. This is Friday, March 25th. I'm Jan Blodgett interviewing Vertie Torrence. We're here in the Rumor Mill in Davidson, North Carolina. And just to start off with, can you tell me a little bit about yourself, who your parents were, where you grew up?

**Vertie Torrence:** I'm Vertie Torrence. My parents were James Torrence, and he was married to Taretha Knox Torrence. And I was the oldest—I am the oldest of three children. I had two sisters—well, I really had four sisters. One died at an early age, Elizabeth. Another sister died at the age of 58, Lily Rae Torrence Anderson. She has two sons that my sister and I helped raise. And I have sister that's living, that's Eva Torrence Reed, and she has one son and two grandchildren. And we were the only—my sisters and I were the only grandchildren. My dad was the only one that had children. And so, we were very fortunate. They have all these aunts and uncles that really cared for us, you know. I grew up here in—we all grew up in Cornelius, until I went off to school at Livingstone College in Salisbury.

**Interviewer:** Oh, you went to Livingstone.

**Vertie Torrence:** Mm-hmm. And then I worked 12 years in Maxton, North Carolina. Then, I came back and worked in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Then I retired from Charlotte- Mecklenburg.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, we know that your grandfather, Charlie Torrence, had a business in Davidson...

**Vertie Torrence:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** And that you were very young when he died.

**Vertie Torrence:** I was seven, but I remember him. When I learned to count, he bought me a Big Ben watch and taught me how to tell time. So, watches are my thing. I always have a watch on. I remember him teaching me how to count and how to tell time. And when I went to school and I already knew how to tell time, they go, "How do you know?" "My grandfather taught me how to tell time."

**Interviewer:** Did you ever visit his shop?

**Vertie Torrence:** We did.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, can you describe? It was on...

**Vertie Torrence:** It was back off Main Street, back in there.

**Interviewer:** I think it's behind where Toast is now. Where was it in relation to McKissic's] Shoe Shop?

**Vertie Torrence:** I can't remember McKissic's Shoe Shop.

**Interviewer:** That was behind Toast. So, where the Neal Craft Center is, where the old big power building is. Now it's the dance studio. It was back in that section.

**Vertie Torrence:** I'm not really familiar with...

**Interviewer:** With that part? Okay.

**Vertie Torrence:** I know how to find the bank and a few other things. It was an old building, and he had all this equipment in there. It seemed like it might have had a dirt floor, didn't have a cement floor in it.

**Interviewer:** He was a blacksmith, right? So, that would make sense.

**Vertie Torrence:** Right.

**Interviewer:** So, what did he do as a blacksmith in this area? Was it farm implements?

**Vertie Torrence:** Mostly, it was shoeing horses or farm animals for the farmers. They would bring them, and he'd put horseshoes on them.

**Interviewer:** So, this would have been a time where, somewhere off of Main Street in Davidson, there would have been a place for the horses to be, maybe not a barn, but an outbuilding.

**Vertie Torrence:** I think they would bring them and even do it that day, is my understanding, what my knowledge of it is.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember your grandmother?

**Vertie Torrence:** Yes. She preceded him—he preceded her in death.

**Interviewer:** Did she help out at the blacksmith shop at all?

**Vertie Torrence:** No. She had arthritis real bad, and she was sort of confined to home. I remember her as just being confined to home. She was my babysitter while my mother and father worked.

**Interviewer:** Did he have anybody else that worked with him in the blacksmith shop?

**Vertie Torrence:** Sometimes. I think my dad and uncle Bill would work with him sometimes, but both of them sort of pulled away. Uncle Bill went to plastering, and my dad went to bricklaying. So, I guess he did it by himself when they weren't around.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever hear any stories about how he got to Davidson?

**Vertie Torrence:** No. They came to here by way of Lexington, but I don't really know how they ended up in Davidson. I said, we let these people die. Bernice Houston might know a little more,

because her father and my grandfather were brothers, yeah, Bernice's grandfather —Bernice's father —no, Bernice's grandfather and my grandfather were brothers.

**Interviewer:** Okay.

**Vertie Torrence:** So, Bernice might know. I guess she's the oldest. Of those that I knew, she's the oldest one living.

**Interviewer:** So, you lived in Cornelius most of your childhood?

**Vertie Torrence:** Yes.

**Interviewer:** Where did you shop in Cornelius? And can you talk about any other businesses? You know, where your mom got her hair done? What was the community like?

**Vertie Torrence:** There were two beauticians there. At first, I remember my mother going to Charlotte to get her hair done, and then there were two ladies that went off to school and ended up coming back building shops, Essie Bryce Davidson, Willie or Bryce, that had shops there in Cornelius, in Smithville.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Were they a separate building or, like, in their homes?

**Vertie Torrence:** No, they both had separate buildings. Their fathers built themselves a building.

**Interviewer:** And where did you do your grocery shopping?

**Vertie Torrence:** Cashion's mostly. It was Cashion's, and seemed like there was a Mayhew Grocery in Cornelius.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And where were they?

**Vertie Torrence:** Cashion's is where —Cashion's building is still —well, both buildings, both were on the top. Cashion's is a building that sort of sits on this —it's a separate building.

**Interviewer:** It's not where the gas station is.

**Vertie Torrence:** No, it's back farther, and he had a funeral home also connected with that, that building. No, it wasn't that far down. That came afterwards.

**Interviewer:** And following that, who was your funeral home? Was there a black-owned funeral home?

**Vertie Torrence:** Not at that time. When my grandfather died, it was Cashion's.

**Interviewer:** Okay. But later there was —

**Vertie Torrence:** Later on, Harbro Bryant came in Morrisville. Mm-hmm. But then, he probably did his apprentice work through Cashion's, as far as I can think back. Might have been Cashion's. Maybe it was Cathy who came out of Cashion's.

**Interviewer:** Okay. One of those, okay.

**Vertie Torrence:** I never thought I'd —you know, you wish you're 15 or 16 or 21. You know, you never think about all these other years down the road.

**Interviewer:** Oh, yeah. And it's hard to get the memory going back again and walking down the street and thinking, "Where did we go for this?"

**Vertie Torrence:** Think about all that's going on now. Those really were good times, considering with all this stuff now.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, in some ways, I think we had stronger communities, when you knew everybody in Smithville.

**Vertie Torrence:** Well, I was telling someone that yesterday. You know, you knew all the cars. You knew all the people. They knew you. And now everybody's a stranger. I know there's a lady that passes on the street. We spoke. She didn't open her mouth.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. She wasn't familiar to me, either. And usually —

**Vertie Torrence:** No, she wasn't one that I know. And back then, you knew the people in Davidson, and they knew us in Cornelius. And I knew a lot of people from Huntersville.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. I've had the feeling that, particularly within the black community, the Davidson-Cornelius-Huntersville boundaries aren't as sharp as they are, and that there's family connections that everybody —there are cousins that you visited around and knew each other in ways that Davidson families didn't necessarily have any family members living in Cornelius. If

you were a faculty member at Davidson, you just lived in Davidson and didn't have —but there seems to be more interaction.

**Vertie Torrence:** But now —

**Interviewer:** No, then, that you went to the same schools and same church. I mean, churches were different.

**Vertie Torrence:** Back then, I went to the old school right there in Smithville through the fifth grade, then I came to Davidson and went to sixth through eighth. And then I had to leave Davidson. Well, there was not a high school, so I went to Huntersville for high school.

**Interviewer:** So, you went to Torrence Lytle?

**Vertie Torrence:** Torrence Lytle. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Tell me a little about your school in Cornelius. How many teachers were they?

**Vertie Torrence:** Must have been about four or five. The principal might have taught the fifth grade or taught something. And my main thing I remember is, the teacher —I'm left-handed, and so she was going to make me be —and she would come by and she said, "That's not the right hand," and she put it over here. Soon as she got on whichever way she was going, I put it back. Because my grandfather was left-handed, and my father was left-handed, and they didn't try to change me. So, to me, that's all I knew, being left-handed.

**Interviewer:** So, did your teachers live in the community?

**Vertie Torrence:** Not during my time. There was an elderly lady that had taught, but she taught like my parents did, but not during my time. Most of them were from Charlotte.

**Interviewer:** And you said your father and your uncle went into bricklaying and plastering. Did they work for other people? Did they ever own their own companies, do work on the side?

**Vertie Torrence:** My dad worked as a —he didn't really have a business, but he worked independently more than Uncle Bill did. Uncle Bill worked with some man from Huntersville.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember who that was?

**Vertie Torrence:** Alec Henderson.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Was he white?

**Vertie Torrence:** He was black, black man.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, he was part of a black-owned business.

**Vertie Torrence:** Right.

**Interviewer:** But they worked all around? They were based in Huntersville, but they...

**Vertie Torrence:** Mm-hmm.

**Interviewer:** You remember anything else about your dad's work?

**Vertie Torrence:** I just remember growing up with him being able to fix everything, and we didn't have to go out and get somebody to come in and fix stuff. And when he died, then, you know, you got to call somebody to... And that was the hardest thing to learn to do, because, I mean, he could fix anything. My nephew, the oldest one, would break up his toys. And my grandmother was his babysitter, so —my mother was his babysitter, so she would get on him about it. "Well, granddaddy can fix it." And granddaddy would fix it.

**Interviewer:** So, you went to college. So, your parents expected you to...

**Vertie Torrence:** That was an understood thing.

**Interviewer:** Me too.

**Vertie Torrence:** That was an understood thing.

**Interviewer:** What was that like? Had you been away from your family?

**Vertie Torrence:** No, that was the first time being away from home.

**Interviewer:** Salisbury probably seemed far away.

**Vertie Torrence:** It did. And I think about it now. I travel back over that highway. You know, that was the longest, dreariest road. And a classmate of mine from here, from Cornelius, also, her father would take us back, and he would take us early afternoon so that he could get back home before dark, and I thought that was the worst thing that could happen. But that was your ride back to school.

**Interviewer:** So, how big was the Livingstone back then?

**Vertie Torrence:** We must have had, it was about 300 students. It was small, but everybody knew everybody.

**Interviewer:** And what did you major in?

**Vertie Torrence:** Elementary education.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, you taught in Maxton, and then you taught in Charlotte?

**Vertie Torrence:** Yes, 12 years in Maxton, and then I came to Charlotte- Mecklenburg. I taught 14 years in Huntersville and eight years in Cornelius, and I retired from Cornelius.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, what year did you start teaching?

**Vertie Torrence:** 1957.

**Interviewer:** Okay. So, you were —when you started teaching, had the schools already integrated?

**Vertie Torrence:** No. In Maxton, schools were grades one through 12. We had all of it on campus. Separate buildings, but everything was on campus. And I came back to Charlotte-Mecklenburg in '69, and they were in the process, and I think they did the north end of the county first.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, Davidson in about 1965.

**Vertie Torrence:** It started. And —yeah, the school was integrated when I was in Huntersville.

**Interviewer:** So, just Huntersville Elementary?

**Vertie Torrence:** Huntersville Elementary.

**Interviewer:** And you still had lots of family and friends here? Or how had the community changed when you came back?

**Vertie Torrence:** Well, not so much then, but now it has. You know, people have died. Well, I have a few classmates that are still around, but none in Cornelius. None in Cornelius. I have two here in Davidson, one in Morrisville. I have one in Cornelius, and then one in Huntersville. We



get together, and there's about seven or eight of us. We get together just whenever we decide. They usually look for me to call, and I'll call, and we'll get together. And we choose someplace that doesn't mind you sitting as long as you want to sit and getting as loud as you want to get. And now a couple of them are getting to be handicap, so we try to choose somewhere that serves you rather than going through the line. But we enjoy each other. And sometimes we get together at one of our homes.

**Interviewer:** So, did any of them ever own their own business?

**Vertie Torrence:** No.

**Interviewer:** Mostly taught, or...

**Vertie Torrence:** None of them owned a business.

**Interviewer:** Did anybody else in your family after your dad? You said he mostly worked independently.

**Vertie Torrence:** No, because he had girls, three girls.

**Interviewer:** So, what did you all do? So, you taught school.

**Vertie Torrence:** My sister ended up working as a secretary at a church in Charlotte. She finished Johnson and Smith. And my young sister finished Livingstone, and she worked for the Department of Social Services. That's where she retired from when she died. She died at 48. She died early, 48, I guess, with kids.

**Interviewer:** I'm sorry to hear that. I have four sisters. They're all still alive. But we are getting older.

**Vertie Torrence:** Yes. And the one that died had left two sons back, and we embraced them, and they're both working.

**Interviewer:** So, when you came back to each in Huntersville, were you living in Huntersville? Did you live in Charlotte?

**Vertie Torrence:** I stayed in Cornelius.

**Interviewer:** Cornelius, okay. So, what businesses were in Cornelius? I mean, I know the barbershop was probably there.

**Vertie Torrence:** Yeah, it's been there.

**Interviewer:** The beauty salons have probably changed.

**Vertie Torrence:** Yeah. Neither one of those were open, but it's when I came back. There's no business within Smithville. And never was any black businesses in Cornelius, other than Pop's Barbershop.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And people sort of doing things on the side, that they might work for Dick Power, but they did lawns or they did repairs, did some small thing that you could go down the street and use a neighbor as opposed to going?

**Vertie Torrence:** Right.

**Interviewer:** What about taxi services?

**Vertie Torrence:** Car taxi services here in Davidson, all I knew was Junior Carr. It was called a taxi service. And I don't know the years, but he did a lucrative business for many years.

**Interviewer:** Is that related to Evaline Carr? Or is it spelled differently? Garfield? Is that—it's C-A-R-R?

**Vertie Torrence:** It's C-A-R-R, but I think that's a different set.

**Interviewer:** Okay. That's one to check out.

**Vertie Torrence:** Lilibel Miller, maybe they—they would have been that set of Carrs, so maybe they could tell you.

**Interviewer:** Somebody's pounding.

**Vertie Torrence:** Have you heard of Lilibel Miller? Lilibel Houston?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, okay.

**Vertie Torrence:** She or her daughter, maybe they could tell you, because it's that set of Carrs.

**Interviewer:** Okay. I'm just going to open it up. So, if you were talking to your —or leaving something for your great-great grandnephews and nieces —you know, there are grandkids out there somewhere —what would you like them to know about the contributions that people in Smithville and everywhere, Davidson, this area, how you helped shape Davidson and Cornelius?

**Vertie Torrence:** It was a lot —for the caring community —And, like I said, everybody knew everybody, and I don't know, everybody just looked out for everybody. And I remember asking my mother, why did she cook so much on Sundays? And she said, "Well, if anybody comes by, we'll have enough to share with them." And she was from a family of, I think, seven sisters, and one sister had, like, nine or ten children. But that's where we would end up on Sundays a lot of times. It was out in the country. And no matter who came, there was always enough food for everybody. You know, she'd go in and pull out another jar and open it up. And I remember them canning.

**Interviewer:** Did you have gardens and small farms in the Smithville area?

**Vertie Torrence:** Small garden. I remember my dad having a small garden, and my granddad. And my granddad, I remember them killing pigs, killing hogs, and I was scared of the blood.

**Interviewer:** Do you know where he lived? He didn't live at the shop.

**Vertie Torrence:** No. They were in Smithville.

**Interviewer:** Okay. He lived in Smithville, then he would just come in and work in Davidson.

**Vertie Torrence:** Yeah, he lived in Smithville. I do better with you asking me questions.

**Interviewer:** Where did you go to church?

**Vertie Torrence:** Torrence Chapel. It's still there.

**Interviewer:** Was the minister then full-time?

**Vertie Torrence:** As far as I know, we always had a full-time minister during my lifetime.

**Interviewer:** Because there's still some in Davidson where the minister does other things and then preaches on Sunday but has to have a full-time job, because the congregation isn't...

**Vertie Torrence:** As far as I know, I think it was full-time. I'm not really sure.

**Interviewer:** Who taught your Sunday school class?

**Vertie Torrence:** Miss Bertha Jones and Miss Henrietta Werk.

**Interviewer:** What did you have to do to be a Sunday school teacher? Did you ever get to be appointed? Assuming you wanted to be.

**Vertie Torrence:** No. I never did get to be a Sunday school teacher, and that was fine.

**Interviewer:** Did they have youth groups? Did they —did you guys go to Charlotte to meet with other youth groups when you were younger?

**Vertie Torrence:** We did. That's the district and the conference level, we would go and meet with other groups.

**Interviewer:** And what was the entertainment? You weren't dancing. You weren't playing cards. You were...

**Vertie Torrence:** You know, I can't remember what we did. I know we would have Bible study.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Probably some singing.

**Vertie Torrence:** And singing. And I can't sing, but we'd have singing. And I'm not sure what else we did, come to think of it. Can't remember.

**Interviewer:** It was enough at the time.

**Vertie Torrence:** Well, and I always looked forward to going to those things. And I remember my grandfather, if my dad or my uncle, they drove —they drove cars. If they weren't getting out on time to get him there, he'd get out and get his walking stick and start walking. You know, there was this thing that I remember about him. He was dedicated to his church. And I try to be.

**Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Where do you go now? Still there?

**Vertie Torrence:** I'm still at Torrence Chapel. Yeah, I'm a trustee. I was the first lady put on the trustee board.

**Interviewer:** Whoa, very impressive. When did that happen?

**Vertie Torrence:** I think in 1990. And we were just talking one day, and they said they didn't have any women on the board. And when I was running my mouth and talking, I wasn't thinking about me. You know, I'm a very good follower. I don't have to be the leader. And I was there. We was talking and just —and then, when the minister confronted me, and I let him know that I wasn't thinking about me being the first trustee. I was just saying they needed some women on there. But I've enjoyed it. And I hope I've contributed something to the board.

**Interviewer:** Torrence Chapel is one of the big —my sense is that it's one of the founding churches, that it's been here for a long time and other churches have come of it.

**Vertie Torrence:** It is. Reese Temple came out of Torrence Chapel. Union Bethel came out of Torrence Chapel.

**Interviewer:** Do you guys have much in the way of records, either bulletins or a history?

**Vertie Torrence:** We have some books we've tried to compile. We have some books we've tried to compile.

**Interviewer:** Because that is something that we could arrange to scan and then give you copies of it. So, if that's a possibility or something you're interested in, because I would love to make sure that the churches do have —that we could do some days where we do all histories of the churches and people talk about —

**Vertie Torrence:** We had a minister one time that compiled, but we pulled from that, and I thought I had a little copy of that first one, but I can't find it. I'll see if Ron has a copy. But I have what's come along during my time, and I'll share that with you.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah. Because if you would like to, that way, if we make copies, we can always have multiple copies, so people can print them out.

**Vertie Torrence:** I'll share that with them.

**Interviewer:** Because, yeah, sadly, people think there's enough of those reunion booklets, and then they disappear, and you can't find them again.

**Vertie Torrence:** If it's the little one, I guess it was about that size, not very thick, but it had a lot of good information in it.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, we have a little one for Reese Temple.

**Vertie Torrence:** And I have so much junk in my house.

**Interviewer:** Oh, I love junk in houses. There might be a drawer or something that has some...

**Vertie Torrence:** And I was looking for something.

**Interviewer:** The trick is to look for something else.

**Vertie Torrence:** Then you'll find it. I'll see if Ron has a copy of that.

**Interviewer:** Okay. And who is Ron?

**Vertie Torrence:** Oh. Wilson Potts. He's one of Wilson Potts' sons. He's the youngest one. He gets to be the old ladies' chauffer at night when we need to go someplace that's away from the area.

**Interviewer:** I'm glad that you have a family member who's still willing to do that.

**Vertie Torrence:** I'm glad too.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, driving at night is no fun anymore.

**Vertie Torrence:** And I have cataracts going, and I get a glare. So, I don't feel comfortable. Now I'll stumble to Torrence Chapel, but I don't go anyplace else at night. I drive during the day, but not at night.

**Interviewer:** That's one more question for you, then we'll be wrapping this up. That reminds me. So, where did you go to the doctor as a child?

**Vertie Torrence:** Dr. Woods was the one I remember the most, but there was somebody before him that I can't remember that used to make house calls. But I remember going to Dr. Woods.

**Interviewer:** Okay, yeah, because the nearest hospital would have been...

**Vertie Torrence:** Charlotte.

**Interviewer:** Charlotte or Morrisville?

**Vertie Torrence:** Well, Morrisville, but Good Samaritan was there in Charlotte. And I can't think of who it was, and I should have remembered, because he would come to visit my grandfather and my grandmother. But anyway, there was someone before, but I can't remember.

**Interviewer:** Okay. Yeah. I don't have a list of all the doctors that have been in the area, so that's another thing I'm curious about.

**Vertie Torrence:** And I remember Dr. Needler and a Dr. Davis.

**Interviewer:** Did any of your classmates become nurses?

**Vertie Torrence:** High school classmates, no. Well, one did, and she moved to New York, though, and she's deceased, Clara Hazel. She did. And one of my classmates, Wilson Potts has a son that's a doctor, I believe, in Tennessee. He was my classmate.

**Interviewer:** Oh, was he? Okay. He's not any good to you, being out in Tennessee, though.

**Vertie Torrence:** That's right.

**Interviewer:** Do you go to the Torrence Lytle reunions at all?

**Vertie Torrence:** Sometimes, I do.

**Interviewer:** I hope they can save the school.

**Vertie Torrence:** Well, they think they are, that main building anyway. And it's older than the others. I don't understand.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, I don't know if it's the uses that they've been put to, which ones have been left empty longer, or, yeah. Maybe it was just built better, even though it was older than...

**Vertie Torrence:** Yeah, because I think older things were built better than that.

**Interviewer:** Yeah, if they had the materials.

**Vertie Torrence:** Mm-hmm. We went there. There was no cafeteria. And I think they built a gymnasium maybe my last year or something. I sort of lost...

**Interviewer:** So, what clubs were you? I've seen a later Torrence Lytle yearbook from the '60s, and they still had a farm club, but they had business clubs and some choirs and —

**Vertie Torrence:** Back then, you only had Home Economics Club. That's the only one I can remember having back then. You know, we had the Home Economics. The guys had FHA or something. And like you said, and the glee club, they had the glee club and the basketball teams.

**Interviewer:** Did you play sports?

**Vertie Torrence:** No.

**Interviewer:** Me neither.

**Vertie Torrence:** No, I didn't.

**Interviewer:** And most of you got bused in from around.

**Vertie Torrence:** Right.

**Interviewer:** So, there really wasn't a lot of hanging out after school.

**Vertie Torrence:** No.

**Interviewer:** Did you have to go home and do chores?

**Vertie Torrence:** Mm-hmm. You came back home on the bus. I was bused from sixth grade through 12th grade. We weren't getting to Davidson by bus, but we went to Huntersville by bus.

**Interviewer:** Was it one of your classmates who drove?

**Vertie Torrence:** High school, yes, but elementary school, it was not. It was some older guys, high school guys. I think they were from Huntersville. I remember one guy from Huntersville, I guess, was my first bus driver.

**Interviewer:** Okay. I talked to David Beatty, and he drove a bus while he was a student. He would pick up kids and take them to Ada Jenkins and then pick up and go to Torrence Lytle. That was in the '60s.

**Vertie Torrence:** See, I graduated '53. I guess, in high school, a young man from my community drove.

**Interviewer:** I assume they got paid for that.

**Vertie Torrence:** They did. I don't think it was a whole lot.



**Interviewer:** Yeah. Enough to cover lunch or something.

**Vertie Torrence:** Like a dollar a day. But I think they enjoyed doing it. I know Carl did. He was a nice young man, and he was a classmate of mine, and he enjoyed doing it.

**Interviewer:** Did it give them a certain status in the community? I would think the little kids might look up to them.

**Vertie Torrence:** Probably so, probably did, probably did. And I guess, the first time having a job other than something on the farm would make you feel better about yourself.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. What was your first job?

**Vertie Torrence:** Babysitting. There wasn't much for you to do back then. Babysitting.

**Interviewer:** I worked in a little soda shop kind of place between my junior and senior years in high school.

**Vertie Torrence:** My sister who died, her youngest son worked at Carolina Cones, and the other one worked at Harris Teeter when they came along. See, but those things weren't available to me when I came along. Carolina Cones wasn't even there.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. And women working outside of the home, women working in a grocery store.

**Vertie Torrence:** Mm-mm. And there was even fewer things for blacks back then. Now I think about—they talk about the cost of college, and my mother was making \$12 a week, you know, doing domestic work, not doing very much, but somehow we made it. We made it.

**Interviewer:** Did you work while you were in college at all? Summer jobs?

**Vertie Torrence:** One year, I went to New Jersey and worked.

**Interviewer:** Wow, what was New Jersey like?

**Vertie Torrence:** Working in a hotel, doing maid work.

**Interviewer:** Ugh, that's how I got through college.

**Vertie Torrence:** Doing maid work.

**Interviewer:** It was better than waiting tables.

**Vertie Torrence:** Changing beds and... Yeah, I couldn't be a waitress, because I couldn't remember all that stuff. I would have messed up somebody's order and the man would have fired me.

**Interviewer:** I worked for my family. They couldn't fire me.

**Vertie Torrence:** I guess that's the only jobs I had. Babysitting was the most.

**Interviewer:** Well, that set you up for schoolteaching later.

**Vertie Torrence:** Yeah, I guess so. Female Voice: Hello.

**Vertie Torrence:** Hello.

**Interviewer:** Well, I thank you. I know this is hard. When people ask me to remember stuff...

**Vertie Torrence:** It's kind of amusing, though, to think back, you know.

**Interviewer:** Yeah. So, I'm going to shut this off.

*End of recording.*