

Shared Stories: African Americans in North Mecklenburg

Interview with James Raeford, January 2, 2001

Conducted by Jan Blodgett

Transcript created by Emily Hammock, June 2008, edited by Andrés Paz '21.

Summary: James Raeford, owner of “Raeford’s Barber Shop” on Main Street, gives an outline of his professional and personal experiences as an inhabitant of Davidson since 1957. He expresses much satisfaction with his life in Davidson, and comments on his participation in the community through committees and personal efforts. He also talks about the role of Black churches and faith practices in the area. Raeford’s words illustrate much about race relations in the community, pointing to events such as the picketing of Mr. Johnson’s Barber Shop around 1969, a KKK march incident, segregation in Main Street, and the experience of having his kids attend integrated schools. Moreover, he talks about entertainment in Davidson and Charlotte, mentioning social clubs and some of his favorite music.

Jan Blodgett: Interview with James Raeford, January 2, 2001. Interview by Jan Blodgett, Davidson College Archivist. We’ll turn this on, and I’ll ask you to just start by telling me a little bit about your family background; when they came to Davidson, when you got here.

James Raeford: Ok, I came to Davidson in 1957, October 15; came on my birthday and started working for Mr. [inaudible] Johnson as a barber.

Jan Blodgett: And you went to the same barber college that David Beatty went to? In Durham?

James Raeford: David Beatty, yes. In Durham, went to barber college in Durham. And came right after I got out of barber college. I wanted to get away from home and I heard about this man, Mr. Johnson, needed a barber. As a matter of fact, I barbered at home for about a year for this guy Roscoe Patterson, a friend of my dad. Barbered for him about a year, but then I kind of wanted to get away from home and I heard that Mr. Johnson had an opening, so I came here in '57 and started working for him. I didn’t particularly like Davidson when I first came, because Davidson is a lot smaller than my hometown—I’m from Fayetteville—and I just didn’t feel comfortable with it until I met ... started going out, dating different girls. And then I met Daisy maybe a year later; I met her before that but I started dating her a year later because of my brother-in-law, he was a co-worker here at Johnson’s Barber Shop. So I started dating Daisy and that sort of kept me right here and then I began to like it; the town began to grow on me.

There wasn’t a whole lot around Davidson during that time. We started off with 75 cents a clip at

the barbershop, and I thought, we thought, that was great. We were getting 50 cents at home. I called back home and told them what I was doing up here, [they said] ‘You’re doing great!’ And it began to grow on me, when I started dating Daisy.

Jan Blodgett: Now did you live in Davidson, or did you live in Charlotte or someplace else?

James Raeford: I lived in Davidson, with this lady, Ms. Rosa Jones. I roomed with her for maybe three or four years. And then I started living in an apartment Mr. Johnson had available. And lived there for maybe ten years or more. Then in ‘68, I bought a home. Well, before then I got married and we had a couple kids; lived in Mr. Johnson’s duplex for maybe five years. Near Mr. Johnson for ten years, lived with Ms. Rosa Jones for four or five years. Anyways, in ‘69, I built a home over where I’m living now. By then we had two boys, Pete and Ron. [inaudible] And then in ‘69, they started picketing the barbershop, that’s when the Civil Rights Movement was, and some Blacks and Whites, along with the college students, thought maybe it should be changed; integrated. And then they picketed the shop for a while and then they boycotted the shop, the barbershop. And the simple reason was Mr. Johnson didn’t want to change; people were kind of funny back then. Going back to when I first came, they were only doing Caucasians’ hair, White people’s hair. We didn’t do any Blacks at all. And I didn’t realize the shop was that way. It wasn’t my policy. And then we decided to change it; Mr. Johnson didn’t want to change it, ‘cause he figured it would hurt his business; he would lose his White clientele. And it was just us up here, back then. Well, what the college students were doing, they were making restitutions for us, you know, we’d go in and tell them how much we’d lost and they would make up for it. Now, Mr. Johnson, I could see why he didn’t want to change it, ‘cause he worked all his life doing this kind of work. And after us, no one’s barbershop was safe. And that’s the way it was, pretty much. I worked [there] a while, and then in ‘70, I got a job in Charlotte as a salesman, selling cars. Worked there for six and a half years. Ray Skidmore American Motors. Five and a half years and then a year in Gastonia, and that was in the middle seventies and the economy got bad, the gas prices. And I said, “Well, I’m going back into the barber shop.”

Jan Blodgett: People were getting their hair cut, again.

James Raeford: Yeah, people began to get their hair cut again. So, I said “I’m going back into the barbershop,” but my wife didn’t really want me to quit the car sales because I’d done so well. Back during that time, I was the only Black salesman there, out of twelve salesmen. I went there a rookie, not knowing anything about sales and Ray Skidmore took me on and taught me sales. And I did real well in sales, until the economy got bad. Out of the twelve salesmen that we had, I was salesman of the month many times. Many times, and I did real well. My wife didn’t want me

to get back into the barbering because she knew how well I'd done in sales, [inaudible] I didn't keep my license renewed, so I went back to renew the license and I started at Potts Barber Shop in Cornelius and worked there for a number of years; twenty-two years. And it was good for me, good to me there, too. I enjoyed working with Mr. Potts over there. Seven years ago, in '93, I decided to come over here and get my own shop here. That's when Norton went out of business. The way it got started was, Mr. Knox came over and said, "Raeford, I've got a place available, would you be interested?" I said, "Nah," I wasn't even going to think about it. And then he said, "Norton's going out of business," and I said, "It might be good for me." And I went by a few days later and we made a deal that same day to get this place.

Jan Blodgett: This was Mirnoff(??)?

James Raeford: Yeah, Mirnoff(??).

Jan Blodgett: Was it here, or further down on Main Street, Norton's shop?

James Raeford: No, it was down the street, his shop was down the street. This had never been a barbershop. This is the first barbershop here. There had been a meat market, no, prior to me coming here it was a shoe-store, and then prior to that it was a meat market and other stuff; I don't know what all was here. And, you know, I didn't have any money to have the place renovated. I went to the bank and told them, 'I need some money to fix this place up and go into the barbering business.' And they said, 'Well, Raeford, take out an application,' and I said, 'Well, I need to know very soon because I'm afraid the place will get away from me.' And he said, 'Raeford, I tell you, consider your loan approved.' And so I went from there.

See, what's so good about my business, is that Norton's closed up there and his business shifted over here. Then mine shifted from Cornelius. And then from day one we were just wide open. I talked to Ken about coming here for a few days and he said, 'I'll help you out for a while. I'm going to work full time for a while and then I'm going to taper off to maybe one or two days.' And so I said, 'Ok, Ken, I appreciate that.' And so Joe used to work with Ken and, as a matter of fact, Joe [inaudible] used to work with me, too, at Johnson's Barber Shop. So, he also worked with Ken, so he retired to Duke Power, and so I had Joe to come help me. So, Joe was helping me two days a week, just Friday and Saturday. And Ken, three days a week, Joe, two days a week and David, one or two days a week, on weekends, because Dave was still at Duke Power. And, so, we got five barber chairs. And I don't work Saturdays anymore, but it's a full staff on weekends. I have six barbers in all, with the part time [barbers], but there are four barbers here all the time, now. Ken, my son Ron, and Thomas. And Ron joined us pretty close to three years ago.

Jan Blodgett: Did you think he'd grow up to be a barber?

James Raeford: No, I did not. I thought Peter was [more likely] to be a barber than Ron, but Ron's made a decent barber, Ron's done good, he has done excellent. Thomas, of course, he's doing well. You know, he's the only guy I've seen come out of school. He came out of school and he's doing great work, he took a lot less time to learn than we did. These guys have taken off, I mean, they've got a good clientele. Thomas has been here for, what, five months? And he's [already] got a clientele. Now, I tell you what about customers, the young customers, they tend to go to young people.

Jan Blodgett: [People who] know their styles . . .

James Raeford: Yeah, know their styles, that too. And, I tell you what, I have helped these [neighborhood] guys out, when they get in trouble, helped them out. And even though, they come back and wait on these [young] guys [for their haircuts]. Young people are just attracted to them. So, we've been pretty successful. I try to not work as hard as I did; I don't work as much as I did.

Jan Blodgett: But you're opening another shop in Cornelius?

James Raeford: Yeah, I'm going to get it started but then I'm going to sit back. I've got a couple guys who want to get in. I got a young boy coming out of school who's going to join us. Once I get it started, I'm going to see if somebody else can go where I am.

Jan Blodgett: Have you ever had a White barber? Or a woman?

James Raeford: I had two White women apply here, but at the time I did not have an opening. Ok, I recommended Potts Barber Shop. One girl was out of school, and she went over and worked at Potts, for not long, maybe a year. And then she quit, and she went to Gary's, the place down on 73. And she left there! And she came back to me and asked me, 'Raeford, do you think they'd possibly have me back [at Potts]?' and I said, 'Try and see.' And he hired her back!

Jan Blodgett: I hope she stayed longer!

James Raeford: Well, she didn't. She stayed a while. I don't think she's barbering at all, now. And then he had another, older White lady working there for him. [inaudible] And she worked there for a while, but she was so tiny that she couldn't reach the flat tops; she was too tiny!

Laughing.

So, she just decided she'd quit. There was another girl Bill [inaudible] hired, and she could really do it, the younger girl. But this other girl had problems doing Black hair. I had another guy who applied here, a White fellow, but I just didn't have an opening at that time. But if I find somebody who I think could do it, I'd hire them no matter what. Like my granddaughter, she's taking college classes at Norman, and she said something about she might like to come [and work here]. She said she could do manicures and pedicures [inaudible] and I said 'I have a little cubicle here if you want.' She might.

Jan Blodgett: Wait and see.

James Raeford: Yeah. But, not talking about the barbershop, but Davidson has been pretty great for me. I've enjoyed it and I've done well. And to be in business, open the barber shop; it's been good. See, I did not realize, I've been here for forty-three years, and looking back, it seems like yesterday [when I arrived here]. It's scary, me being a sixty-six-year-old man! Somebody said, 'Raeford, when are you going to retire?' But as long as I enjoy what I'm doing, [I'll keep working]. I will not be satisfied unless I have some kind of challenge or project going.

Jan Blodgett: Yeah, you don't want to sit home and stare at the walls.

James Raeford: That's right. My wife's been a long time saying 'Gotta slow down.' But I don't want to if its not hurting me any.

Jan Blodgett: Probably keeping you alive.

James Raeford: That's right! And I'm enjoying what I'm doing.

Jan Blodgett '15:34: So besides the barbershop, what do you do at Davidson Presbyterian? Are you in the choir?

James Raeford: No, I attend the Methodist Church. Well, I wear so many hats at my church because we're small in numbers.

Jan Blodgett: Yeah, I've been to that church.

James Raeford '15:50: I'm a trustee, I'm a steward, I sing in the choir, I'm on the finance committee; there's so many committees I'm on, but you have to do it that way because there's

just a handful of us.

Jan Blodgett '16:06: Tell me a little bit about the history of the Black churches in Davidson, because when I first came here, Claire Hurst was here at Reeve's Temple and that seemed to be a stronger congregation and it seemed smaller. And of course, Davidson Presbyterian's has interim ministers and that's always hard on a church. But it seems to me there have been times when the churches have been a stronger presence in the community.

James Raeford: You're right. We can't keep a minister for more than two or three years. I think the maximum we kept a minister was five or six years.

Jan Blodgett: And is that because of the church itself, I mean, the bishops say or?

James Raeford '16:49: See, in the Methodist Church, you have a one-year certificate, everybody in office, even the pastor. And you have elections every year. It's not really left up to the congregation, like, who we get for our pastor or should we change. But we do have elections and it's left up to the conference to settle it all as they see fit. Unfortunately, we haven't come out too good with some of the pastors. Like our church, I can't see it growing any. We've got so many [inaudible] churches in the area; we've got a couple in Mooresville, got one right up in Mount Mourne, got one in Cornelius, got two in Cornelius!

Jan Blodgett: Now Reeve's Temple, did it come out of Torrence Chapel, was that sort of the mother church and then this one came or was it just founded separately?

James Raeford: Separately. I don't think anything came out of Torrence Chapel. But this is our problem; I can't really see our church growing any. When you think about the Black families around here and the population of kids; we don't have a lot of kids, anymore. I just don't see our church growing anymore. If someone moved into a town like Davidson, they just wouldn't join a little church like this. You know, they'd join a church that's already established and pretty strong. And we haven't had anyone join our church in [a while]. Now, Hurst, we liked her; I liked Barbara Hurst. And we've had some good ministers, but overall, we've had some pretty bad ones, let me tell you.

Jan Blodgett: That happens sometimes to small churches, they don't have the clout at conference.

James Raeford: That's right. We can only support a pastor financially [at a certain level]. So they work other jobs, and they can't spend as much time with the flock as they could if they

worked full-time. But I've enjoyed this church; I joined when I got here because a lot of my friends were attending this church and I decided to join this church. That was in '58 that I joined the church, I think. And my wife, Daisy, she was a Presbyterian. And I didn't encourage her to come to my church, she said, 'I think I'll join your church,' and she did. And the boys, they were Presbyterians.

Jan Blodgett: How did you do that? Did you send them to the Presbyterian Church for Sunday School and stuff?

James Raeford: Yeah. That's the way it was. A lot of families were like that. See, I joined this church even before I started dating my wife. And she said, 'I was a member of that church' and then she was a member of the Presbyterian Church.

Jan Blodgett: Actually, we sort of joke about that. There's a Davidson Ministerial Association for all the ministers and other people in the [church community], and Gary Stevert from the Episcopal Church is married to Linda Stevert from the Davidson College Presbyterian Church, Rob Spock is the Presbyterian Chaplin for Davidson College and his wife goes to the Methodist Church, and Rachel Haines, the associate rector at St. Alban's, her husband is a Presbyterian Minister, so there are several mixed families in the clergy of this area.

Laughing.

James Raeford: That's it! Now, the reason I'm a Baptist, I came from . . .

Jan Blodgett: Now, there aren't many Baptist churches in this area.

James Raeford: No, you're right. There were Baptists over in Fayetteville. I'm from Fayetteville originally, in the East.

Jan Blodgett: Now, Ken was telling me that you were a Boy Scout leader.

James Raeford: Yeah, for a while.

Jan Blodgett: Are there still troops here? I mean, I know there's a White troop, but I don't know if it's mixed or not. Did you run out of kids?

James Raeford: They did integrate it, once, after I quit. We talked about getting it going again, but we never did. At one point in time, I tell you, I was on so many committees; it was just

unreal. I had two or three meetings a night; Boy Scouts, the Y, I was a member of the Y, and believe it or not, I was postmaster.

Jan Blodgett: I can believe it, but that's one I've always avoided.

James Raeford: So many committees I was on. Then I started getting on church committees. Now, I'm only on church committees.

Jan Blodgett: Do you do anything with the Downtown Davidson Organization? Is it even meeting anymore? There used to be a business group that did Town Day . . .

James Raeford: Well, yes, I guess they are. They come to see me about Town Day and stuff. I thought you were talking about the Community Committee. Used to be the Piedmont Development Association.

Jan Blodgett: Tell me a little more about that; were you involved?

James Raeford: Yeah, during that time I was. As a matter of fact, I was the president at one time. Yeah, and Mildred Lowry was president, at one time. It goes back. Really, that's where Town Day came from. Because, I'll never forget, we had done a clean-up week and it climaxed with the Town Day. Absolutely.

Jan Blodgett: Now, there used to be a group in town called the Civic League, it was a women's group, that did clean-ups and there was an African American one; they started a Civic League as well.

James Raeford: Yeah.

Jan Blodgett: They were concerned about flies and sanitation issues, but they kept doing the clean-up day. So the group, the Piedmont Association, was it just Davidson? Or was it Cornelius . . .

James Raeford: Davidson.

Jan Blodgett: You don't have any old files for that anymore, do you?

James Raeford: No, I don't think so. Let me check and see.

Jan Blodgett: I thought you might have, in the basement or attic.

James Raeford: Yeah. But it's something about things in Davidson, you know, a lot of Blacks say we can't do what they're doing over in Concord. And we had a meeting a couple of years ago and sometimes we're talking about what they do in Concord, you know, [inaudible] and all of them, on this side of the railroad tracks. I said, 'You know why we don't get it? Because we don't ask for it.' And I imagine a lot of the people over there, they ask for these things. You know, they're not going to give you a lot of stuff if you don't ask for it. So now that we're going and asking for some stuff, the tax bills like everybody else is. [inaudible]

Jan Blodgett: Were you here ... I have just some very small references, very little in the paper, there's a little in the student paper, about the KKK - there was a march here. There were a couple of incidents; one where a foreign student was eating an ice cream cone in a doctor's office with a local student here and then there was the march that led to Solidarity week, so tell me what you know.

James Raeford: Oh, absolutely. The only thing I can remember about that, I was at Potts Barber Shop during the time. And they came through, marching. I'll never forget, I was standing at the window, kind of laughing at them. I tell you something, boy, they looked low-class. According to a lot of white people involved, a lot of White people wanted to go there, and the Blacks would be afraid that the KKK would do something. But then again, in later years, now, [we've realized] they were just people, just ignorant people. You had to challenge them, anyway, that's all it took. And I used to be afraid of the KKK. But no more. No more than I'm afraid of anybody else. But most of them were kind of silly, unless they got a group together.

Jan Blodgett: Well, the fact that they're not showing their faces . . .

James Raeford: That's what I'm saying, you know. They were some of the trashiest people, I tell you, woo. But things are so much better today. I'll tell you something else that really makes me feel good about things; we can sit down and talk about these things now, these problems. That was the thing that needed to be done. We used to not say a thing about it, just kept it to ourselves. I know [there would have been] times when I wouldn't open up like this to you. It's like you and I are here tonight, and there was a time in my life - see I'm sixty-five years old - if there was a female, White woman, I was afraid to even talk to her in public. And there were a lot of ignorant people back then, they would really do something to you. It was crazy!

Jan Blodgett: It's amazing to me, but I understand that.

James Raeford: You understand what I'm talking about? Oh, boy.

Jan Blodgett: Yeah, that you didn't look people in the eye. I've talked to people [from that generation] who, even when they were raised, even though the parents worked at the college, they knew these people, at a certain age, you know, in elementary school you could play with people, but you hit an age where you couldn't do that anymore.

James Raeford: That's right. But you know, my boys came up in integrated schools, and they'd come home [after having] little problems or differences with their classmates over clothes and stuff. And the only way that I'd know if they were White or Black was that I would know them, the area that they lived in, or I would know the kids. They were never like, 'this White boy or this White girl hit me,' no. Never did. [inaudible] They turned out pretty decent. See, I've been through a time when there were colored restrooms.

Jan Blodgett: When you came, in the fifties, to Davidson, were the shops still [segregated]? I'm having some trouble getting the dates from places like M&M, who used to have White and Black sections, or restaurants where you went to the back, when those had shifted. I know those had shifted by the time the picketing happened at Ralph Johnson's, there weren't many places [still segregated] or were there?

James Raeford: Yes, there were. There was a restaurant around here called the Coffee Cup, and Blacks sat on one side.

Jan Blodgett: How did that change? Just one day it wasn't there?

James Raeford: Well, you know Charlie Spry, Lipman recruited him; he would run in to eat. And Betty Sigman, they wouldn't serve her. And I think that's one of the reasons Charlie didn't come here. You know, I'm gonna get back to the barbershop. In a minute, I'm gonna get ready to go, but you know, now, my people worked for Mr. Johnson, but there's no reason why he cut the way he did. Our shop was the only one that got picketed.

Jan Blodgett: [inaudible]

James Raeford: It was Norton's Barber Shop, our Barber Shop, Johnson's Barber Shop, Potts Barber Shop, it was only Kinear's; they were doing the same kind of prices. And then we were the only ones they picketed.

Jan Blodgett: Did you know the students that picketed, or were they students who had been in

before or were they ones that sort of took this as a cause and didn't have any real connection?

James Raeford: Well, I don't know. They'd been around. It was time for a change. You know, that was when the Civil Rights Movement was on, and it was time to change. Ok, so some White and Black college students, they got together and they did this. I can see it needed to change; it should have been changed.

Jan Blodgett: But you have to admit, it's pretty odd to think of White students picketing a Black man, [Mr. Johnson].

James Raeford: Yeah. *Laughing.*

James Raeford: And then there were a lot of people saying, 'Keep your policy or we won't support you. Continue to segregate.' I believe they picketed our shop because we were the main attraction.

Jan Blodgett: You were the biggest, and they could make the biggest point with you.

James Raeford: The biggest, yeah. I think that, I think that's what it was. Of course, whenever we changed policies, they [the other barbers] changed.

Jan Blodgett: Norton's and Potts, did they change at the same time?

James Raeford: Yeah. They never did get that kind of business; they were all coming to us. And I'd get home in the evening and boy, I tell you, have people call us all kinds of names at our homes. And it wasn't my policy, our policy; we were just working for Mr. Johnson.

Jan Blodgett: Did you ever cut hair at night, like Joe did?

James Raeford: Yeah, I cut down in Cornelius, at a little shop down by the church.

Jan Blodgett: David Beatty's grandfather's shop?

James Raeford: Yeah. David worked there for a while. As a matter of fact, before that, I cut in a shop back in an area called Smithfield. In a little community center over there. I was cutting there when I worked at Mr. Johnson's and when I worked over at Potts too. Wore myself out. And I don't know how that thing got started - no one sees how things get started - Blacks serving Whites as a barber. I never heard anybody say how it got started.

Jan Blodgett: Yeah. Although, there were some White barbers in Davidson, early, early on. In the twenties, but not very many. We're going through the Davidson student newspaper from the 1920s, and they've got ads and I'm amazed by how many barbershop ads; Ralph has got an ad in, and Norton's got an ad in. But there are a number in Charlotte and a number in Mooresville. But I think, predominantly, it's been an African American business in Davidson.

James Raeford: Yeah.

Jan Blodgett: And cleaners, Toby Johnson had his cleaners and Ralph sort of started his barbershop there. And that's actually one of the things I want to find, I find hints every once in a while, but there have been a number of White businesses on Main Street.

James Raeford: You are absolutely right.

Jan Blodgett: And I can't document them. Do you know of any?

James Raeford: Warren McKissock, shoe store. See, I can't go back much further than that because I came in '57. I think there used to be a dry-cleaners.

Jan Blodgett: Well, Toby Johnson's was a cleaner and I think there might have been a dry cleaner after that because Toby was way early.

James Raeford: Wasn't there a blacksmith?

Jan Blodgett: There was a blacksmith that would have been on the back side, over where M&M's was, where that sign from the fire is. One of them was a stable [inaudible]. Was there ever a grocery store?

James Raeford: Yeah, well, Mr. Johnson had a grocery store. Across the hill over there, not on Main Street. Ms. Edna Falls had a store too, but not on Main Street.

Jan Blodgett: And I know that there were a number of women who were cooks at the boarding houses on Main Street. There would have been White women at Mrs. Henderson's boarding house.

James Raeford: There was this woman, my wife said, who used to go up and teach Sunday school and bible study. Ms. Copeland.

Jan Blodgett: Ms. Copeland, yeah.

James Raeford: That was before my time, too.

Jan Blodgett: I was just speaking to Margaret Potts today, and her family had the boarding house and sold it to Mrs. Kirk, I think.

James Raeford: Yeah.

Jan Blodgett: What would you say, from your vantage point now of being here since '58, are the things that have changed Davidson the most? You're a little late to answer World War II, but I've had some people tell me that. Some people say the lake, but it seems to me the lake has taken a long time, that 77 is probably ...

James Raeford: Well, I'll tell you. I look back over the years, and I can't visualize the way things were. It's changed so much. The interstate wasn't there, and the lake. And I'll tell you another thing, in the summertime, we used to sit on our buns, day after day, doing nothing. Back then, ROTC department was [inaudible] and we had business during the school year, and it was twelve barbers in the town.

Jan Blodgett: It just amazes me that Davidson at that time [could support twelve barbers]. But it does make sense, with ROTC, that you would have to cut hair every couple of weeks.

James Raeford: That's it. And summertime, a lot of guys would go away to work. I've gone a half a day and not even scratched at Mr. Johnson's. It was whitewashed, couldn't do anything. I'll tell you what, I could show you some of my paystubs, it's unreal. In the eighties, I was bringing homes \$120 or so, but in the seventies, I'd bring home \$60. I showed Ron my pay stubs, and he just didn't believe it.

Jan Blodgett: Well, when you paid 75 cents for a haircut!

James Raeford: Yeah, that's right. At 75 cents a cut. [inaudible] The funny thing is, back in '68, I bought my house, a three-bedroom house, bought a new car in '69.

Jan Blodgett: You got a good deal; you were selling them then, weren't you? No, you weren't yet.

James Raeford: No. And then, I had a savings account. Really. You know, we had a couple of kids. It was decent, [inaudible] I always said, 'it ain't what you make, it's what you do with it.'

Jan Blodgett: I feel sorry for parents now, because there's so many more demands. Everybody wants their own T.V.; everybody wants their own phone. [Before] kids didn't know what to ask for.

James Raeford: You get up in the morning, now, 'John, what do you want for breakfast?' 'I want some cereal. I want eggs and biscuits.' When I grew up, Mama got to pick what was for breakfast.

Jan Blodgett: And you ate what was there.

James Raeford: Absolutely. But, you know living in a decent home [wasn't something I expected]. Growing up in Eastern Carolina on a farm, I never thought I would really advance as much as I have, without a formal education. But that goes to show you, you gotta do what you gotta do. I knew I had to get out there and stretch. It worked for me. I wish I had gone to school, but I've done good. These guys working for me, you know, Ron, he's doing great.

Jan Blodgett: Now, does he live in Davidson?

James Raeford: Yeah, he lives in Davidson. Pete, my other son, is doing well, [too].

Jan Blodgett: What does he do?

James Raeford: He coaches up in Greensboro. He played USFL and then he started coaching. He's been into sports [forever]. It's been hard to get him out of it. He's kinda waiting for a break; he's assistant coach. He's had some experience with professional teams. He says he just needs to get a break. He may. But you know, he's forty-one years old. But he's enjoying what he does. That's basically it, though. It's like retiring; I'm going to hang in there, doing what I'm doing, for as long as I can. I don't even think about retiring. But I want to be able to make my choices about when I'm going to be off, when I want to go somewhere and stuff like that.

Jan Blodgett: Yeah, there must be days that you look at the guys who only work two days a week, like Ken or Joe, and say 'I'm ready for that!'

James Raeford: Yeah, but see I don't work on Saturdays. And Joe only works two days a week. But me being the owner, I have to pretty much stay up on it. Keep things in line. The trouble

with my latest shop is trying to find someone decent to work for you. The last person I had working there kind of ripped me off. What I'm doing now, my latest business, I'm making a vending thing. I'm fixing a truck up and the boys and I are going to take that and use it to go different places. I got supplies; I get good deals wholesale.

Jan Blodgett: To like fairs and different kinds of things?

James Raeford: Yeah, different galleries, different places to set up. That's how my brother made his living. He made a good living, too. You know, my theory on being successful, I mean financially, and I'm not, but some of the most successful people are people who try a lot of things and see what works. I know a lot of people who've been in so many different kinds of things, and a lot of them didn't work, but finally something caught on.

Jan Blodgett: Sometimes it's just timing, being the right thing. Like whom would have thought that coffee shops would now be selling, instead of a quarter a cup, selling \$3.25 a cup?

James Raeford: Yep, you're right. And if somebody told me we'd be getting \$10 [a cut], and I think we're a little behind a lot of other barbers, if somebody had told me that back when I was getting 75 cents a clip, shew. I guess it's all relative, though.

Jan Blodgett: Yeah, think how much you were paying for rooms.

James Raeford: But I tell you, I can buy a tank of gas a lot easier now than I could back then. And we used to get gas, during the gas wars, for 15 cents a gallon.

Jan Blodgett: That's been a while.

James Raeford: It's been a while.

Jan Blodgett: Did you used to go to Charlotte a lot?

James Raeford: Oh, yeah. I used to go to Charlotte all the time, I wasn't afraid. I'd go anytime at night.

Jan Blodgett: Were there clubs?

James Raeford: Yeah.

Jan Blodgett: I mean, Davidson just does not strike me as the kind of place to have a lot of clubs or a lot of hanging o u t . . .

James Raeford: Yeah, you didn't have anywhere to go around Davidson. We used to hang around at a place called High Five Country Club or some other clubs around there. Social clubs.

Jan Blodgett: And where would you buy music? I'm assuming that as a young man you had a stereo and would want to listen to music, and it seems like Davidson wouldn't have much.

James Raeford: Then only thing we had were these 45s, small records. We didn't have anything like CDs or tapes or anything. There were a lot of places around Charlotte you could buy stuff like that. I had a real good selection of tapes. And they had these big 33 s; I have a bunch of them at home now. I used to like Johnnie Mathis, Nat King Cole, [inaudible].

Jan Blodgett: I was just thinking that if there were anyplace that would sell records in Davidson, it would have been the college student kinds of stuff.

James Raeford: During that time, I didn't really like the kind of stuff they had around here, that Country- Western. But I tell you, there's more Blacks getting into Country-Western now than ever. I like Country-Western, I'm a Country-Western man.

Jan Blodgett: Never would have thought it in '75.

James Raeford: No, absolutely not. My boy, Pete, he's a Country-Western man. I like Rock 'n' Roll ok. But Rap, I just hate it. My radio here, you probably haven't heard it because I keep it low and I keep it on 92.7, which is kinda variety. But WDAV, [the Classical station] . . .

Jan Blodgett: It's a little too mellow for you.

James Raeford: Yeah. *Laughing.*

James Raeford: I had it on one day during Christmas, playing some Christmas carols.

Jan Blodgett: They play some of the weirdest Christmas carols, don't they?

James Raeford: Yeah. And one of the little boys said 'Hey, that music makes you sleepy, doesn't it?' I won't ever forget that. I guess my age has something to do with it, but I don't like loud music, like young people do; my boys like loud music. And a lot of older people, but I don't

like loud music. And the kind of clientele I have ...

Jan Blodgett: Yeah, I don't want anything startling somebody if they've got scissors in my hair!

James Raeford: Yeah, that's good. I have a lot of friends who've got shops and they've got kind of wild music. I guess it's the age difference.

Jan Blodgett: Well, it's your shop; you ought to be able to pick the radio.

James Raeford: You see? Absolutely. Yeah, the guys get on me sometimes.

End of Recording.