

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

Interview with Evelyn Carr, September 4, 2002

Conducted by Jan Blodgett

Transcript edited by Andrés Paz '21

**Summary:** Evelyn Carr is a lifetime Davidson resident and a pillar of the community. Born in 1931, Ms. Carr and her family originally lived in Brady's Alley—an area that was formerly located behind Main Street Davidson. In 1946 Ms. Carr married Orlando Carr, and after a brief stint in Charlotte, the couple moved back to Davidson and built a house on Griffith Street where they raised nine children. Ms. Carr has always been an active member of the Davidson community and has been an advocate for affordable housing, education, and community engagement. Specifically, she was integral in the creation of the Lakeside Park housing development and the construction of the Lakeside Apartments. She also helped organize the Neighborhood Youth Corporation, a summer recreation program for African American youth. In 2006 Ms. Carr was awarded the G. Jackson Burney Community Service Award for her contributions to the Davidson Community. You can read Evelyn Carr's award citation on the Town of Davidson's website.

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**Jan Blodgett:** You were born here in Davidson?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes, I was.

**Jan Blodgett:** And your parents are?

**Evelyn Carr:** Johnnie Mayhew and Minnie Mayhew.

**Jan Blodgett:** And Minnie Mayhew's parents were?

**Evelyn Carr:** Robert Tine and Henrietta Tine.

**Jan Blodgett:** And Robert's the son of Lee Torrence.

**Evelyn Carr:** And my father is the son of Sammie Mayhew.

**Jan Blodgett:** Now, Lee Torrence came into the area as a slave on the Torrence Plantation?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes.

**Jan Blodgett:** And then he went to work for Gail Withers after the Civil War and stayed there.  
[But did he] live in town or did he stay on the Withers farm?

**Evelyn Carr:** He stayed on the Withers farm until he died and then after he died grandma moved in with Maggie, his daughter—I think she was the baby girl, until she died.

**Jan Blodgett:** And [where] was Maggie living?

**Evelyn Carr:** Maggie was living in Davidson, across the railroad tracks, over there in Brady Alley.

**Jan Blodgett:** Ok. And where were the other children?

**Evelyn Carr:** Aunt Janey lived over there in Brady Alley, Uncle Fred lived in Statesville, Liza and Aunt Lou lived in Baltimore, and Grandpa lived in Davidson. Hugh and John lived in Davidson.

**Jan Blodgett:** And where did they work?

**Evelyn Carr:** My granddaddy, as I can remember, he worked at the Davidson cotton mill. After he left the Davidson Cotton Mill, he worked at the Ada Jenkins School up until he died. Grandma, she worked here in Davidson, but I can't remember the people she worked for. She worked at the big house right up town; I think they've moved it now.

**Jan Blodgett:** Oh, the Blake-Abbott house?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes. She worked there for years and years. And then she worked for someone else in town but I can't remember who it was. I will ask Mildred.

**Jan Blodgett:** Now, when did you grandfather work for the cotton mill? Would it have been before 1930, because Ada Jenkins opened in, I think, 1934?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes, before.

**Jan Blodgett:** Do you know how many years?

**Evelyn Carr:** How many years before Ada Jenkins opened up?

**Jan Blodgett:** Yeah. Did he serve in WWI and then work in the cotton mill?

**Evelyn Carr:** I don't think Grandpa went to the war, because he had one leg. I was a real little girl when he did work up at the mill, but I really can't tell you the years that he worked up there. He worked up there for a long time before he went to Ada Jenkins.

**Jan Blodgett:** How about your other uncles? What were they doing in Davidson?

**Evelyn Carr:** My other uncles, they did sawmill work.

**Jan Blodgett:** Where was the sawmill? Did they have to travel to it?

**Evelyn Carr:** You know I can't remember. I think Mr. Withers had a sawmill and a farm. Most all of them really did mill work because that was the only thing around here for Black folks: farming, millwork or the Asbestos plant.

**Jan Blodgett:** What did your dad do?

**Evelyn Carr:** My dad worked at the old mill.

**Jan Blodgett:** Down on South Main Street?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah. He worked there, as I can remember, for many, many years.

**Jan Blodgett:** What did he do there? Was it integrated or were there jobs for Blacks and jobs for Whites?

**Evelyn Carr:** Back then, it was back in as my dad tells us the 'Hoover days.' They weren't bad. But he told me he worked for 5 cents an hour, or maybe 5 cents a day, I don't remember. After that, my daddy came to the Carolina Asbestos Mill; he worked there for 32 years. No, he worked at the cotton mill first; he was a night watchman and a boiler, kept the boiler going. And he worked up there for many, many years. And then he went to the Asbestos plant.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did the cotton mill close [then]? Is that why he changed jobs? Or did he switch before they started shutting down?

**Evelyn Carr:** The cotton mill closed and he switched. Because when he did work at the cotton mill, we were staying on Dr. Green's place. There were houses in the back and we lived in one of

those. And when he sold out to the College we had to move down on Depot Street and we stayed in Ms. Louise Sloan's house. Right there where that restaurant right around the corner was. On the corner where there was the jailhouse and then the cafe and Dr. Anderson and then the hotel. So, we used to stay right on the corner; there was a road there and the Mayhew market was there. That was one of Louise Sloan's houses.

**Jan Blodgett:** Ok, you were renting from her.

**Evelyn Carr:** We were renting from her. All down on Brady Alley, that's where all Black people stayed. It felt really like home, because that's where I was raised, over there. We stayed there for years and years.

**Jan Blodgett:** What did your mom do?

**Evelyn Carr:** My mom worked for Ms. Daisy Willis. She worked for her for many, many years because she raised all her children. After she left there, she cooked at a fraternity house for about 20 years, probably.

**Jan Blodgett:** That would be hard work.

**Evelyn Carr:** That was hard work because she worked 7 days a week. I don't think she was making more than about \$8.75 a week. I remember because I was working with her then and they raised it up so that when I left we were making \$14.50.

**Jan Blodgett:** How old were you then?

**Evelyn Carr:** I was married, then. I got married real young. I worked with her until she quit. After I left, I started working for Will Tear from the Asbestos plant. Will had too much cooking for me so I gave that job to my mother. She worked for Will, she worked for Ms. Flag, and she worked for Tom Cowell and Ann Holland.

**Jan Blodgett:** Where were you born? At home in Davidson or at a hospital in Statesville?

**Evelyn Carr:** I was born at home. We had midwives. All of us were born by midwives.

**Jan Blodgett:** Ok, name me all of your brothers and sisters. Start with the oldest and go down.

**Evelyn Carr:** Ok. Annie Mildred Lowrey, me, Evelyn Carr, John May, he's deceased, Johnsie May, Jezebel Lord, James Everett, and Daisy Raeford. That's all.

**Jan Blodgett:** Now, how many of you are still in Davidson?

**Evelyn Carr:** I have five of us still living: four sisters and one brother.

**Jan Blodgett:** And are all of you still in Davidson?

**Evelyn Carr:** All of us are in Davidson. I have a son who's in Mount Mourne, but I still say he's in Davidson.

**Jan Blodgett:** In the area, close at hand. So, where did you go to school?

**Evelyn Carr:** I went to school at, it wasn't Ada Jenkins, I think it was the Davidson Elementary over here. That's what they used to call it.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was it sort of at the bottom of the hill from Ada Jenkins?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes. You know where they've got the playground in the back of Ada Jenkins? That's where the school used to be.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was it one building or two? Did it start with one building and then go to two?

**Evelyn Carr:** I think it was one wooden building but they had it broken up into classrooms. Did that school bum down? I can't remember what happened to it. That's where Ms. Jenkins was our principle and we all helped to build Ada Jenkins. I think that's when I started at Ada Jenkins and I went through the last grade.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was that 8th or 11th? Because the state didn't require 12th until real late.

**Evelyn Carr:** I think it was 10th.

**Jan Blodgett:** I think at one point Ada Jenkins might have gone up to 9th and then students went to Huntersville.

**Evelyn Carr:** That's right, it was the 9 and then they started going to Torrence-Lytle.

**Jan Blodgett:** And then I think it went to 8th eventually. And you didn't go to Torrence-Lytle?

**Evelyn Carr:** I didn't go to Torrence Lytle. Because then we couldn't go there, it wasn't integrated.

**Jan Blodgett:** But Torrence-Lytle was all Black, wasn't it?

**Evelyn Carr:** That's right, it was all Black. I was thinking about when they had to go to North Meck. I finished up at Ada Jenkins.

**Jan Blodgett:** Do know if there was a school before the Davidson Elementary School? If there was one in the churches? Like, where your dad would have gone to school?

**Evelyn Carr:** Let me think. I heard my daddy and mama talk about it but I've forgotten where they went to school. I don't know why they went to school because they could've just learned how to read and write on their own, really. Because I didn't hear my mother and father talk that much about a school. You know, I guess it was just back in those days you had to pick up your knowledge in the best way you could.

**Jan Blodgett:** What do you remember about your school?

**Evelyn Carr:** Oh, I loved my school. It was fun. I remember we didn't have good heat; it was cold. You would have to leave your coat on until the school got warm. And we had to walk to school. Didn't have lunch, so back then food was hard to get. And you were really just glad that you had something to eat. My mother would make us sweet potatoes and sometimes you just had a sweet potato to take to school with you for lunch. And you wouldn't have maybe but one dress and one pair of shoes. You washed that dress out that night and would wear it the next day. Or in the wintertime, you maybe didn't have decent shoes to wear. If a hole came in your shoe, you would put a piece of paper in it and go on. And in the summertime, you were so desperate for a job and you'd come home and you knew you were happy because you'd been pent up all day. And Mother would make biscuits; sometimes she'd have lard to put in them. I have known the time that we wouldn't have enough eat, the lady that was keeping us Ms. [inaudible], we didn't have enough food but she would fry bad, bad meat and make gravy and we would eat that.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, she would keep you and your mom working?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yep. She would keep us while my mother was working.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did people have gardens and farms around here still? In what we would consider the town now?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, they had farms. My daddy would plant a garden and you could have chickens and pigs. My mother did a lot of canning, and she did a lot of sewing for us. And Ms. Vendeal, she used to make our clothes. My daddy had hogs and what my mother would do, the feed would come in sacks of different colored cloth, and she would save the material until she would get enough to make a dress or two. Whatever she could pick up. But the White people that she worked for were real, real good to her. They would give us clothes. We really say we didn't go hungry but we didn't get the food that we really needed. It wasn't easy. It really wasn't easy, but we were happy. And we appreciated what we had.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you get out of school early to pick cotton or work? It sort of surprised me, it shouldn't have, how short the school year was sometimes.

**Evelyn Carr:** Well you see what it was; they would close the schools down for the Black children to go to the fields. The white children didn't have to pick cotton.

**Jan Blodgett:** I've talked to some people from the cotton mills that went to Davidson Elementary, the white school, and they said school would let out at noon [so they could pick cotton].

**Evelyn Carr:** Right. We would go pick cotton because we wanted to because we didn't have to. But that's the reason they let school out like they did. When it was cotton-picking time, which was about this time, school would be out for them to pick cotton.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, you would go back in October.

**Evelyn Carr:** Go back, yeah.

**Jan Blodgett:** And were the students all just from Davidson or were they from the surrounding area? I know when Ada Jenkins opened, students were coming in from Cornelius and some of the other places. But before it opened, your school ...?

**Evelyn Carr:** I think it was mostly [Davidson] students.

**Jan Blodgett:** Your brothers and sisters.

**Evelyn Carr:** Some of the children did come from Cornelius then. Cornelius had a school but I don't think it went as far as Ada Jenkins did. And I think when they finished a grade down there they had to come to Davidson. But you know, I love Davidson. This is my roots.

**Jan Blodgett:** What did you do as a child? When did you start working? You said you helped your mom at the fraternity house.

**Evelyn Carr:** I was married then. To make money, we used to have a big old walnut tree almost in our backyard, and I used to sit up on the tree and hurl walnuts and I made money, just my little nickels and dimes. In Blackberry season, we would pick Blackberries and sell them. And then later on, when I got older, I got a babysitting job, and she paid me \$8 a week. I can't remember who the lady was. But back in the days, you really had to come out of school. Your parents weren't really able to send you. And really, they couldn't afford us to be gone. You couldn't get all your education because you had to come out and work.

**Jan Blodgett:** How did you meet your husband?

**Evelyn Carr:** I met my husband through a cousin.

**Jan Blodgett:** At a church dinner? Walking down the street?

**Evelyn Carr:** My cousin, my mother's cousin, I met [my husband] through him.

**Jan Blodgett:** He wasn't from Davidson?

**Evelyn Carr:** No, he was from Huntersville and lived in Charlotte. And I didn't want to talk to him because I thought he was the ugliest man that I had ever seen. Then after he kept coming, I started talking to him and we fell in love and got married. Had nine children.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, you lived in Davidson, not in Huntersville? He moved up here?

**Evelyn Carr:** We lived at my mother's.

**Jan Blodgett:** Must not have been much housing then?

**Evelyn Carr:** There wasn't any housing and it was about 15 people lived in one house.

**Jan Blodgett:** What year did you get married?



**Evelyn Carr:** '46.

**Jan Blodgett:** So you were almost a war bride.

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah. I got married in '46 and my first child was born in '47.

**Jan Blodgett:** And you had nine children?

**Evelyn Carr:** I had nine children: 6 boys and 3 girls. And I raised a foster son. But that was the best time of my life and I have enjoyed all of them. And now I have 42 grandchildren and 32 great-grandchildren.

**Jan Blodgett:** And how many of them are in Davidson? Who are your children?

**Evelyn Carr:** Orlando Jr., he lives in Charlotte, Patricia Stimson, Garfield, Mary Tub, Gerald, Nelson, Andre, Gary, and Elizabeth Wilson. My foster son is Robert Black. Pat, Garfield, Elizabeth and Mary are in Davidson. Orlando, Nelson and Robert live in Charlotte. Gerald is in Lexington, Kentucky. Gary's in the Navy in Knoxville, Virginia. Andre's in Mooresville.

**Jan Blodgett:** One thing I'm curious about it how many people grew up in Davidson and then left. It seems to me there's a generation missing. People your children's age went off to college and moved away. But you've got a lot of yours still here.

**Evelyn Carr:** A lot of them moved out. Yeah, my [situation] is unique. Gerald, he left. Well, he was here, you know, he coached over here for 30 years. And Gary, he joined the Navy. Andre, he left and went to Mooresville. And Robert, he's in Charlotte. Because there weren't any jobs. Orlando retired from the service department, he stayed there for 22 years. And so he met a girl in Charlotte and moved there. And Nelson, he met a girl in Charlotte and moved there.

**Jan Blodgett:** This seems to be a pattern, men moving to their wives' homes, in your family.

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah.

**Jan Blodgett:** What was it like raising children in Davidson? You had the Ada Jenkins School for a while but what else?

**Evelyn Carr:** Well, I lived in Charlotte for a while.

**Jan Blodgett:** Ok, when did you live in Charlotte?

**Evelyn Carr:** I lived in Charlotte after I got married, I stayed there for a while, he had moved to Charlotte. And then we moved up here. I think Garfield was my baby when I moved up here. And I didn't want to live in Charlotte.

**Jan Blodgett:** Why not?

**Evelyn Carr:** Because I didn't want to raise my children in Charlotte and I didn't like the school system. And only one of my children went to school there, my oldest. He went to for about one year. So, we moved up here. It was just something about Charlotte that I wouldn't want to raise children there. So, we found a house up here and we moved back.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was that up where the Habitat houses are now?

**Evelyn Carr:** No. The first house we moved in was the Davidson Presbyterian Church parsonage out here on Catawba. We lived there until we found us a lot. Ms. Dee Jackson sold me a lot for \$150. I was working at the fraternity house. And she let me pay \$5 or \$10 a week and not the whole \$150.

**Jan Blodgett:** Now, was she related to F.L. Jackson?

**Evelyn Carr:** No, she was a Black lady. And after I got the lot paid for, I called Jim Walker, you know, he would build you a house for a dollar and a deed. I think it was about 2 years before he called me back, and he did the contract and everything. The sad thing about it was that I didn't have a dollar. And two of my brothers-in-law came to see me and one of them gave me a dollar and that's how we got this house. And they built it, the frame outside, and me and my husband finished it in the inside. And we were staying right across, the house had to move, across the lake. And then Duke Power came and they gave it back to us and we had to move.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, literally, when you say he did it on a dollar and a deed, you gave him a dollar and he held the deed to your house until you could buy it back?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah. So your lot and a dollar and I didn't have a dollar. Back then we really didn't have any money because my husband, he wasn't making but \$1 an hour up here at the asbestos plant.

**Jan Blodgett:** What did he do at the asbestos plant?

**Evelyn Carr:** They bagged asbestos and stuff. Asbestos used to be so bad in this community that sometimes you would go out and you couldn't see.

**Jan Blodgett:** I've heard that. People didn't know what was going on and kids were getting [sick].

**Evelyn Carr:** Right, we didn't know what was going on. But we raised all our children in this house. See, I had a bedroom and all the boys slept together and all the girls slept together. I had more room then than I do now. My oldest daughter got married and she and her husband stayed here. All of them stayed here after they were married, all except Garfield, him and his wife. When Orlando was in the service, his wife stayed here for a while. My husband and I, we kept them up until they got on their feet, to get their houses. We let them save their money; we bought the groceries and fed them until they could afford their own houses. That's all we had to give them because we didn't have any money to give them. We just gave them love and attention; we were really a happy family. I love Davidson, and if it hadn't been for some of the white people in Davidson, I wouldn't have survived and raised my children. Because they helped me and gave me clothes for them. My children wore hand me downs. But the white people have been really, really good to my family. In fact, they are good period. I can't say anything bad about them. They have been really good. And my children don't see color. The reason they don't see color is they used to play together [with white children] and spend the night at their houses.

**Jan Blodgett:** When they did that, when your children would spend Sunday afternoons with kids across town, did they reach an age or a point where that didn't work anymore? When they were teens did they start separating or when they went off to college?

**Evelyn Carr:** When they went off to college. Because when they were all in grammar school or high school you would really think they were sisters and brothers. Like, when I worked in town, if [the parents] went out of town I would bring the children home and they would spend the night. But all of them divided after they went to college.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did it make a difference after 1966 when the schools integrated? Was there less playing together after that? Was there more tension?

**Evelyn Carr:** No, not to my children. It might have been different when Garfield went. Pat and Orlando finished at Torrence Lytle but when Garfield went it might have been different. When Elizabeth went I think it was a problem at Alexander and all. When Gerald and Andre went I think everything was different. But my children, I could tell because all my group of children, they don't meet strangers. When they meet you they act like they've been knowing you. But it's hard for me to say for the other families, how their parents took it. But for me, I raised them that way. Everybody is somebody. Everybody's God's children. I raised them to be that way.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you ever see any differences between the mill children and the White children, that there wasn't much mixing there? I have heard from several people about Black children and White faculty children playing together but I've heard the mill people say that they never spent time with faculty children.

**Evelyn Carr:** Well, the faculty children mostly stayed over on this side; they played with the Black children over here. I don't think they associated with the [mill] children as much. I guess they felt that they were in the same thing that we were, they were poor and we were poor. I guess they felt like they weren't wanted over there. It was a difference. They stayed across the railroad tracks. They called the Black people and the mill people 'low-grade' people. We all have suffered, across the tracks.

**Jan Blodgett:** Where did you shop?

**Evelyn Carr:** We'd go to Mooresville; the train was running and we could catch the train and ride it to Mooresville. The train would go to Charlotte. Or we could ride the Greyhound Bus and shop. But we mostly shopped around here. They had clothes and shoe stores; Archie Brown had a shoe store.

**Jan Blodgett:** Which was your favorite grocery store? Did you go to one for meat and one for vegetables?

**Evelyn Carr:** Whichever one was cheaper. Whatever the sale was and what money you had saved. Back then, you had no money; you really had to stretch your money. When I was coming up, you could go to the grocery and get sugar and beans for a nickel; you could buy stuff like that, then. And if you had chickens, you could take the eggs and trade them in for food. You look

back, that was a good life. You thought it wasn't at the time but it was. I've had a good life here; I can't say nothing about that. I've always had a good life and my children had a good life.

**Jan Blodgett:** What were you active in? I know you were involved in the church off and on, were you involved in some of the women's groups? And there was a community center at one time, Howell, is that right?

**Evelyn Carr:** The Davidson Community Center. I've served on that board. And we had a club, that's how we got the first houses built. We were going around helping people get houses.

**Jan Blodgett:** Like the Human Relations Task Force? And there was a Piedmont Area Development Association, were you ever on that? James Raeford was the president at one time.

**Evelyn Carr:** Something like that. Yes, James Raeford took over after me and Mildred Lowery left. It was the Piedmont Club, right.

**Jan Blodgett:** Ok, so tell me, how did the Piedmont Club get started?

**Evelyn Carr:** Mr. David Wymer, he's dead. He was killed. And the money, the grant, was the money the government had and he brought it up here and that's how it got started.

**Jan Blodgett:** Where did the people come from? How did he get the money and get people on the committee?

**Evelyn Carr:** The people came up from Charlotte. You know, back in them days, we wanted houses so bad so we joined in with him after he had a meeting. Mildred, myself and a lot of us that started in it. He came in and showed us about saving money, what the program was like. And he got the land to build the houses. It used to Mr. Joe Wally's farm over there.

**Jan Blodgett:** Over where Lakeside Terrace is?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah. And the College stepped in and said they would help to buy the land but we would have to lease so many lots to the employees. And then Mr. Wymer? started building the houses. They had a contractor who came out of Charlotte who built some of them. That's how we got started. And then we had recreation; I worked with that.

**Jan Blodgett:** Tell me about that.

**Evelyn Carr:** The recreation used to be at the center right here, not the Ada Jenkins center, the white building. So, Mildred was our director and I helped and Danny Torrence, a lot of us helped.

**Jan Blodgett:** Were you there when it was built?

**Evelyn Carr:** That center was moved there.

**Jan Blodgett:** That's right, it was on the Ada Jenkins property and they made them move it to Griffith Street, where the pond is now?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes and that's where the recreation started. We had the community center and we started having recreation for the children. I helped with that. The county helped us with the recreation. We took the children on field trips like to the mountains around here. And they furnished their lunches, so I would go to Charlotte to pick up their lunches every day.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you ride the bus down?

**Evelyn Carr:** No, I drove down and brought up so many lunches. I had so much lunch because sometimes I would bring Cornelius' and Davidson's. They had a community center down where the old school was in Cornelius. And we had jobs for the kids in the summer.

**Jan Blodgett:** What kinds of jobs, yard work?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, they would go around the community and work and the county would pay them, no age limit. So, the children really earned their money at a young age and that really helped the parents. That way they could buy their own clothes. [But one day,] the county said, 'Let's stop the program.'

**Jan Blodgett:** Nobody else picked up the funding?

**Evelyn Carr:** No.

**Jan Blodgett:** What happened to that building? When did the community center close?

**Evelyn Carr:** The community center closed right after we moved over here, they kept it for a while. Then the Masons bought it.

**Jan Blodgett:** What did they do with it?

**Evelyn Carr:** I don't know if they moved it or tore it down. They used to have their meetings in there. They used to have the Mason meetings behind the Methodist Church [inaudible]. And they had a hall there behind the church and it got so bad they tore it down. And that's when they bought the community center. I think they sold it and somebody moved it. I don't know where they moved it to.

**Jan Blodgett:** Would that have been late '50s early '60s? When did you move here; you said they closed it around the time you moved here?

**Evelyn Carr:** We've been here about 40 years because Gerald was my baby then. So, it might have been in the '60s.

**Jan Blodgett:** Ok, because I have references in it in the papers up through the '50s and then it just sort of disappears.

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, it should be the '60s. When they put that water in there, that's when it closed.

**Jan Blodgett:** About '63 was when they started working on the lake.

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, what did you think about the lake?

**Evelyn Carr:** I love the lake. I never go in it but I love the lake. The lake really helped a lot of us out in some ways. It helped some people to get better houses, [like] Ms. Annie Brown.

**Jan Blodgett:** Because they actually had houses where the lake is now, right? They had to be torn down or moved?

**Evelyn Carr:** Right.

**Jan Blodgett:** Were they moved or did they just tear them down and build people new ones?

**Evelyn Carr:** They tore two of them down because they couldn't move them. But mine was new so they could move it. So, they built the duplex beside me for Ms. Brown.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, was this house built here or was it built down the street and moved here?

**Evelyn Carr:** It was moved here.

**Jan Blodgett:** What was that like? Did they just put it on a truck and move it? Was that nerve-racking? Could you watch?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yep. No. Yep. It didn't bother me. They moved everything in it. Didn't have to take anything out of it, no dishes, nothing. The only thing that turned over was the ironing board; I had it up and it fell over. I was worried; I said, 'What am I going to do? I have to move all this stuff out of here.' And he said, 'No, we can move it, just leave it in there.' And I said, 'Well, you all are going to tear it up and I was so happy to have it.' And he said, 'No, ma'am, we're not going to tear it up at all.' And they didn't, they didn't tear up anything. It was amazing. Because I had dishes and some fine glass and they moved it. It took a while for them to get the bathrooms and everything running. But the people I worked for then, Elliot Small, they helped me out to get my bathroom.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did you have a week when you didn't live in the house? From when they picked it up and moved it?

**Evelyn Carr:** We lived in it; we could get in and out of it. When they started building it over there, we would come up to my mother's house and bring the children up there. And my mother and dad would sit up at night and keep the fire going so that when we left this place we could come over and get warm and have something hot to eat and drink. But it was fun, and that's why I love my home. All our hard labors in this house! You just don't know how many hours we've put into this house!

**Jan Blodgett:** You have a lot of memories in this house!

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes, I have, I really have. When all of them come home for Thanksgiving, it just makes me feel so good; they're getting their food and they're bumping into each other. 'Get out of my way.' It's fun. I really enjoy it. I wouldn't want it any other way. And when the grandchildren come they have a good time. I let them have a good time. And they enjoy coming over. They play in my bed. 'Mama, those children are in your bed!' And I say, 'They can't hurt



it. A little soap and water is all it needs.' I've had a good life in Davidson. I enjoyed it when I was a child.

**Jan Blodgett:** When was the first time you ate in a restaurant on Main Street?

**Evelyn Carr:** When I was little; when I was coming up I ate uptown.

**Jan Blodgett:** Which one did you eat at?

**Evelyn Carr:** I used to it at Mr. Gerrarli. He was the police here and he had a restaurant. As children, we could go there and he would let us eat and have fun.

**Jan Blodgett:** Now, where was this? Was this on Main Street or on one of the side streets?

**Evelyn Carr:** It was on Main Street. It didn't bother me about restaurants because we could just go in the back and have a good time.

**Jan Blodgett:** You've seen Main Street change quite a bit, haven't you?

**Evelyn Carr:** Main Street has changed a lot. It really has because when I was a child you could go to the drugstore and look at the funny books; Mr. Goodman, he would let us come in and read and get our ice cream or whatever. But, you know, back in those days it wasn't that bad, really. I think really about the only worst one we had that ran the restaurant, Seed they called it; she used to run up there by the jail house. That's right, it was the D . But the other ones, you could go in the front and order what you wanted.

**Jan Blodgett:** What about the coffee shop that had two sections? Had sort of a coat rack down the middle.

**Evelyn Carr:** It might have. But the children used to have a good time in the Soda Shop. When we used to live down by the railroad tracks, the children would go up there and Mary used to feed them. They stayed at the coffee shop all the time. So, I'm saying, Davidson really wasn't that bad. The first time Davidson got in this integration stuff was when they got the Black basketball players. And that was when Mary wouldn't feed them and Ralph wouldn't cut their hair. That's when it really exploded. But other than that, things were fine.

**Jan Blodgett:** I guess there really was the ongoing problem of employment, that for Blacks and even mill families trying to find jobs in the area that paid well and allowed them to send their kids to school was really difficult.

**Evelyn Carr:** That was the only time we had problems, during integration. Other than that, people lived together real well. We didn't have that problem until right up when it started; I think if Ralph and Mary hadn't gone and started it we wouldn't have had any trouble. We wouldn't have had that. If he had just cut the Black boys' hair and she had just fed them or whatever, I don't think we would have had any problems.

**Jan Blodgett:** Although, it was a town of the time and it might have encountered something just because everybody was undergoing change and having to think differently. And some people make that change easier than others.

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, well Ralph, Mr. Johnson, he didn't really consider himself Black. He was giving us a hard time; he didn't associate with us. He brought on some of the problems of integration. I can't figure why he stayed over here and didn't want to come in.

**Jan Blodgett:** It's hard to figure some people out.

**Evelyn Carr:** It is, it really is. It is hard to figure them out.

**Jan Blodgett:** I'm curious. You said you were all together. How well has the community worked together? I know about the Piedmont Development Association and there have been times when there were community centers but it seems now there is not a lot of leadership. That the Black community doesn't know itself very well, in the same sense that with all the new people moving in, you don't know your neighborhood very well; knowing the kids on the block. People say, 'I see kids going by and I don't know who they are.' Have you seen that change? What is the reason for that—is it that new people are moving in to town?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes. New people are moving in. Davidson College calls it 'the problem'; it needs to be solved, [inaudible] When I was raising my children, Coach Wagner up there used to have basketball camps and football camps and they would get the Black children on scholarship over there. And that would help the children to communicate with each other. And we don't have that anymore. And Mr. Wayne Roberts, he was the principal; they helped our children a lot. Now,

they don't know where to go. We're not allowed; you have to have an ID before you go there. But the coaches over there worked to make it better in the Black community. They would come and get the children to join the others. That's why they communicated so well together. But now, it's not like that at all. Like when they had the Little League football and baseball; it's all different. Our parents don't get the children involved.

**Jan Blodgett:** Why not? What happened to the parents?

**Evelyn Carr:** I don't know but they don't get their children involved. We don't have anybody to come over here to help the children get involved. The next thing is they charge so much for the programs, Black parents cannot afford to pay what they charge. Because, really, they don't have the money to hardly support their children because Davidson doesn't pay so much. And most of the parents work at Davidson College and some of them work out of Davidson. So, really there is nothing over here for them to do. But what it is, you know, we don't have anybody to offer the programs. They send out the message but they charge and a parent would say, 'I can't afford this.' They charge too much because I get the little paper that says [the price]. It's different in the recreation because they have two- part recreation. One up here and one at Ada Jenkins where it's free. Davidson, in that area, is not the same. Most of the people that really helped us are dead or are not able. Archie played a part in the children, Coach Beg, Couch Houch, Ron Hagle and a lot of them, the president, he was a good president, Cunningham. And Harper Doll, he was a good president. It's changed. They still have the camps but they charge, people can't afford them, and they don't give out the scholarships. The coaches knew that we weren't able to pay so they would pay and take them on. And that is where Gerald and Daisy's son, that's where they got some of that education in sports from. James Jr., he's a football coach. A lot of these boys learned to play football. We really had some good Black football players but some of them didn't go on to finish, which I wish they had. Most all of them in Gerald's age group, they learned from Davidson College how to play football in the summer.

**Jan Blodgett:** And they went on to go to college to play football?

**Evelyn Carr:** No. Gerald Peter did.

**Jan Blodgett:** Where did they go?

**Evelyn Carr:** The rest of them, they realized their parents couldn't afford it. Gerald, he had a good scholarship.

**Jan Blodgett:** Where did he go?

**Evelyn Carr:** He graduated from Southern Illinois. That's where he went. But we had to pay in the summer. With him playing sports he had to take classes in the summer. So, we had to pay and he worked. His girlfriend, she finished college with Gerald and graduated with him and worked. And all the rest of them didn't go to college but they got very good jobs because they're all very smart. I thank the good Lord; he blessed me in that way. I did it, but I have to put Him first. And he knew I wasn't able to send them. My oldest son, he could have gone to Davidson but he didn't want to go. He didn't think that his Daddy and me were able [to send him]. So, he decided that maybe he would go to [inaudible] so we filled out everything and sent it in. And it took them so long to send him an answer back that one day I came home and he had joined the Air Force. The day before he left to go to the Air Force his papers came and he was accepted. He was upset and I cried. I asked the Lord, 'What did I do wrong that my child decided to go into the service?' But [my son] said we weren't able. I wish we had been but we didn't have any money. And I had eight more children. So, he went off to the service and got his education there. Then I had another one, he stayed in the service for ten years. My baby, he's got 4 more years and then he's retiring.

**Jan Blodgett:** Tell me a little bit about Davidson Presbyterian Colored Church because when you started here wasn't it Davidson United Presbyterian Church? When did it change its name?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah. I think they changed the name when the church burned and they rebuilt it. I think they changed it then.

**Jan Blodgett:** I didn't know that. Do you remember when they rebuilt it?

**Evelyn Carr:** No, but you can look at the church cornerstone, [the date is] on that.

**Jan Blodgett:** Wasn't that the strongest of the three Black churches?

**Evelyn Carr:** It was.

**Jan Blodgett:** Just more organized and more focused?

**Evelyn Carr:** It was, it really was.

**Jan Blodgett:** And it's the oldest of the churches, right?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yep. My grandfather helped to build it. Yeah, that church used to be you couldn't get in on Sundays it was so packed. I used to go to Sunday school there and Ms. Judy was our Sunday school teacher. And we had another one, Ms. Eel, and she used to come out and teach us but she used to go to the people's houses on Sunday and teach them.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did she live in Davidson?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes, she lived in Davidson. That's when I was coming up and she would teach short county kids. That was my motto when I was going to church. And my children went to Ms. Copeland. They would go up to her house and she would have Sunday school with them. The children loved her; she was so sweet. I've still got my daughter's Bible from when she was going up to Ms. Copeland. I think my son's still got his.

**Jan Blodgett:** Why didn't they have Sunday school at the church? Or did you have another Sunday school?

**Evelyn Carr:** That was just in the afternoon. She would pick them up for Sunday school and teach them the Bible. They could go to church in the morning but this was just something for the children to do in the afternoon.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, did you ever teach Sunday school?

**Evelyn Carr:** I did.

**Jan Blodgett:** What class did you have?

**Evelyn Carr:** I had the small class. I didn't want the big ones. We used to have a lot going on at the church when I was coming up and when my children were coming up. But now they don't.

**Jan Blodgett:** What sorts of things did you have?

**Evelyn Carr:** We would go down and have readings and picnics, whatever. We would have children's days and programs in the afternoons. But now they just have it all at once in the service. That was the fun part, when used to have to go back in the afternoon. That's when you

put on the dress your mama made you and you put some curls in your hair. It's not like it used to be. They used to have the Teen Canteen down there when my children were coming up. And it was real nice because we knew where our children were on Friday nights. I'm wondering if we brought it back, would it help our children? Give them something.

**Jan Blodgett:** It's much harder now. When your children were coming up and I was coming up, it was easy for a place to just have a few records and some games to play; that was all we needed. But now kids are so used to TVs, movies, getting in the car and going places, to make it entertaining enough to keep them or to make it safe enough that they could actually talk to each other [is difficult]. Because I don't think kids really talk to each other anymore; there's too much else going on.

**Evelyn Carr:** And all that rap music and stuff. Yeah. This rap music is one thing ruining children. I was here one day and I was thinking if we could have a 'goodie and an oldie,' not a dance, but a place to listen to music. And maybe it would get in their heads that rap music is not everything by listening to the old music. 'Cause the old music sounds real good. I love it. I just sit and wonder, Lord, what can we do?

**Jan Blodgett:** If you love music, did you used to go to some of the Black clubs in Charlotte to dance?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes, I used to go. I love to dance.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, where do you dance now?

**Evelyn Carr:** I'll be dancing in my house with the music going!

**Jan Blodgett:** That's what I do! Laughing.

**Evelyn Carr:** I always did love to dance.

**Jan Blodgett:** Did there used to be groups or a couple of couples that would go down to Charlotte and dance? How did that work?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes. We would just get in the car and go to the club and have a good time, then come back home. There were three of us really, three ladies. One stayed next door and one was from down there. And I couldn't drive at the time the others could so both of the ladies would

drive and we would get our husbands' cars and go down and leave them to baby sit. We would have a good time. We had nice clubs in Charlotte; they did back in those days. It was real nice.

**Jan Blodgett:** I saw an article once; I think it was in the student newspaper. And I don't think it was Louis Armstrong, but another entertainer was down at a Black club and some of the students wanted to go down and listen.

**Evelyn Carr:** Oh, really?

**Jan Blodgett:** I thought that was really interesting. It might have been a show at the Armory, so this time it was the Whites up in the back.

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, it could have been at the Armory because that's where people used to go for the concerts. Well, they used to have concerts over there [at the College]; they had Armstrong there.

**Jan Blodgett:** Yeah, he was there three times.

**Evelyn Carr:** Well, I only went once. The students invited us. That's when the theatre burned down, that night. They think somebody set it on fire. Someone was mad because they had mixed people over there, [inaudible] But we cooked over there; that's the only way we got over there because the boys invited us.

**Jan Blodgett:** They invited you because you cooked over there [at the fraternity]?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes. But the Black people here have lost a lot of history here in Davidson.

**Jan Blodgett:** I think it's important to recover that at one point there was more mixed housing in Davidson. That there were Blacks living off of Lorimer and down Concord.

**Evelyn Carr:** No. They have more Blacks there than they ever did. Blacks didn't live down there.

**Jan Blodgett:** Well, Ken Norton grew up where Francis Beaver's house is now.

**Evelyn Carr:** Well, the Nortons didn't consider themselves Black, you know? Because Kenneth didn't come over here with the children over here. Also, Mr. Hood was better than Grant was; he

was a fine man. But Kenneth never did come over here much. But he was very friendly. He went to school over here.

**Jan Blodgett:** And I would assume that most of the White people in town considered him Black, whether he wanted to be or not.

**Evelyn Carr:** Right. I think it was Ralph who went to the Davidson College Presbyterian Church and they sent him out. And then we had Calvin Houston, he was going to go to college over there [at Davidson College] and they burned a cross out in their yard. They didn't want no Black people on that campus. It was terrible. But we overcame that, we did. Things got better and integration started.

**Jan Blodgett:** How did people react when the cross was burned? Did you have white people who were more supportive and saw that there was an issue? Was there a division between the whites in town or did you feel that most whites probably wanted to burn the cross?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah. I think it really hurt some of them; we had a lot of support. But I think some of them really did want to burn it. We still don't know who burned it. Whether it was a College student or the KKK, we don't know. We have had clan marches through Davidson, so you really don't know who burned it.

**Jan Blodgett:** Yeah, it could have been someone from outside or from here.

**Evelyn Carr:** Right, you never know.

**Jan Blodgett:** Were you here then? Did you see it? What'd you think? Did it make you mad or did it make you sad?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, I went out and saw it. Didn't bother me. I was just hoping that they wouldn't go in there and burn them up, you know what I'm saying?

**Jan Blodgett:** You were more concerned about the people.

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, and who would be next. 'Could be a family go up in flames, that was what I was worried about. I was just thanking the Lord that they hadn't set the house on fire and burned them up, 'cause they could have. At least he broke the ice.



**Jan Blodgett:** It's a tough position to be in.

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes, it is. He broke the ice and I guess they came to their senses. If they had to do it, you know? But after that, everything was fine.

**Jan Blodgett:** I probably should ask your sister this, but what do you remember about Town Day? Didn't your sister have something to do with creating town day?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, we started Town Day.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, you're part of it too?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, we started Town Day from the community center.

**Jan Blodgett:** How did it start? What made you want to do this?

**Evelyn Carr:** We just wanted to have a celebration and the town was good, too. I think the town was starting to pay some of the workers so it was just appreciation for the town, so we said Town Day. And they took it from us.

**Jan Blodgett:** Where was the first Town Day? Was it down at the community center or was it on the town green?

**Evelyn Carr:** The first Town Day was over at Ada Jenkins I think, when the community center was over there.

**Jan Blodgett:** So this was way early, before 1960 that there was a Town Day?

**Evelyn Carr:** That's what I'm saying. I think that's when the building was over there, that's when the town day started.

**Jan Blodgett:** What did you do? Was there a parade or booths?

**Evelyn Carr:** We had a little picnic and different stuff.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was it mixed? Did people from all over town come?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, they finally came.

**Jan Blodgett:** You said finally, so do you mean that the first years maybe they didn't and then it grew?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, it grew. People came, like the mayor and stuff, they did come. I don't know how the town took it.

**Jan Blodgett:** What I have seen is not until the 1980s but Davidson students were involved. There were two accounts. One was when there was a Klan march coming through town and the students set up a solidarity march to draw the attention over there; to make everyone ignore the Klan march and [Town Day] grew out of that. And then I've heard that the town merchants had something to do with bringing it downtown in the '80s.

**Evelyn Carr:** I think after the county pulled out, the town wouldn't support us with money so that's the way we took it. You'll have to ask Mildred about that. But yeah, we started Town Day in April, I think.

**Jan Blodgett:** Do you have any pictures from the first Town Day?

**Evelyn Carr:** No, and I bet Mildred doesn't have either. Maybe in Town Hall. They've got a lot of stuff up there that they won't pull out.

**Jan Blodgett:** Where do they have it?

**Evelyn Carr:** I don't know.

**Jan Blodgett:** Because I've tried to get some information about Parks and Recreation. They have the town minutes and something in the minutes references to schools from the 1910s. They were talking about salaries and I want to see if they were paying Black teachers or just White teachers and when the county started paying people. They've moved the town hall so much that in the vault, there aren't that many boxes of files. All that stuff got lost and no one seems to know where anything is. I'm hoping people still have stuff in their homes. And there really was no Parks and Recreation Department until the late or mid '80s. Dora, she was hired out of the county for a while. Actually, she was hired by the town and then the county. And then they closed the Ada Jenkins Center down.

**Evelyn Carr:** [inaudible] It was earlier than that. That's some of that; we started with Parks and Recreation.

**Jan Blodgett:** The people who helped you at the center were county people, right?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, and then Davidson helped those out some in the parks and recreation.

**Jan Blodgett:** But did you have Davidson College students rather than the town itself?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah.

**Jan Blodgett:** So you had some YMCA students and then the county money, SEDA workers.

**Evelyn Carr:** I think the children worked all over town picking up papers and stuff and the county paid them. I think the town had something too and paid the salary. The town should have something on that.

**Jan Blodgett:** That might still be in the minutes and I haven't gotten that far, yet.

**Evelyn Carr:** When you get in the minutes, you'll see all that. Because Dora took over after Mildred. Dora wasn't in that when we first started.

**Jan Blodgett:** She said there were Davidson College students and she took over from them and she was the first local to be hired. I think she was being paid by the town.

**Evelyn Carr:** Mm hm. She probably was. Mr. Winman, I think. If you go back and look in the minutes and if you get a chance to talk to Mildred, she'll help. But you really have to sit down and get your thoughts together because it's been a long time.

**Jan Blodgett:** You've seen a lot. Other than your family—obviously you've raised a great family in Davidson—what are you proudest of doing in Davidson? Was it working with the community center? Is there something you've been involved with in Davidson that you're most proud of, that you changed something or kept something going?

**Evelyn Carr:** You know, getting people somewhere to live and stay; I think I did a good job with the housing. And after we got done with that we started on the Lakeside Apartments. We had good helpers: Reverend Polk, the mayors and Dr. Ratcliff, all the professors. They worked with us so well to help us to get housing. I feel like I've done real good. And helping with the

children in Davidson. I'm proud of the children in Davidson. They give me all the respect. From the time I was raising my kids up till now, they all give me their respect. And I feel good because I feel like they're all mine. I've enjoyed all the work I've done in Davidson. I've enjoyed working for people, helping raise their children: the Kelsons and the Williams. I enjoyed their children when they all would come in and sit down and eat and have fun. They would play with my children. I've enjoyed Davidson all my life.

**Jan Blodgett:** Is there anything you wish you could change? If you had a magic wand to change something in Davidson, what would you do?

**Evelyn Carr:** I would change a lot of these new people here, if I could. I really would. We have some very snotty white people here now. I hate to say it, but these new people coming in are very snotty. I would change it [so that people had] the attitude that it don't hurt nobody to say good morning and good afternoon, smile. Some people are mad at the world and I would change that if I could. But I know I can't, so I won't worry about it. But it's a lot of change, good to be done, but it takes time. One thing I can say, the best town councils that we've had is the one we've had for the last 2 or 3 terms.

**Jan Blodgett:** And you're not just saying that because your son is on it.

**Evelyn Carr:** I'm not just saying it because my son is on it but he was on there with some of those [inaudible]. But after they left, this is the best we've had. We've got more from this town council over in the Black area than we've ever had and I've been in Davidson my whole life.

**Jan Blodgett:** You mean sidewalks and cleaning up the pond?

**Evelyn Carr:** The sidewalks, the lights, fixing Ada Jenkins up. Ada Jenkins stood a long time before they did anything with it. One thing I'm worried about, if the Black people lose this town council we've got, I don't know what's going to happen to us over here. I really do worry about that. Because we probably won't get anything more over here. I can understand one reason we didn't have sidewalks over here because they built all those condos over there and they get easily somewhere to walk. But it took them forever to get them. But we probably wouldn't have got them if we didn't have the town council we do now. And I appreciated the housing commission because we hadn't had any [new] houses in 35 years.

**Jan Blodgett:** Right, because after Lakeside was built there weren't any more.

**Evelyn Carr:** Not until the Housing Commission came in and I do appreciate them because they give our people somewhere to live. And maybe someday we'll have enough [housing] that some people will come back because if they don't, there won't be any people in Davidson. We don't have that many Blacks, anyways, just right in here. We lost a lot of Black people moving out of town because there was no place to live. And we've got land where they could put up nice houses. I don't know what they're going to do with this land over here, I guess they're just going to leave it laying out and not going to build anything on it.

**Jan Blodgett:** Several months ago they were talking about Griffith Street and they said they wanted to put single-family houses in. They also wanted to put a median in Griffith Street to help slow it down a little bit. There's a chance that they could actually be putting houses back, which is ironic.

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah. I wish they would.

**Jan Blodgett:** From all that you've seen, what has caused the biggest changes in Davidson? Did WWII make a difference? Did the lake make a difference? Obviously, Main Street has changed; we don't have groceries or clothing stores. We've had E-locks and General Time come in but I don't know if they've really changed the community. What things in history do you look back and say before that Davidson was really different?

**Evelyn Carr:** What really made a difference was the water and when General Time came in.

**Jan Blodgett:** How did that make a difference?

**Evelyn Carr:** Because we could get a better job. It really did. The first one that made a difference was Reeves Brothers.

**Jan Blodgett:** Tell me about them.

**Evelyn Carr:** Reeves Brothers really made a difference. They were the first ones to come in and they hired Black women.

**Jan Blodgett:** Where was this?

**Evelyn Carr:** They were in Cornelius.

**Jan Blodgett:** Were they a mill?

**Evelyn Carr:** A mill. Foam rubber. They were the ones that came in and really helped the Blacks because they would hire us.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, they would hire women?

**Evelyn Carr:** Now, they did hire women at the cotton mill and the asbestos plant. My mother and Mildred worked there, but it was WWII and they didn't have a choice. But Reeves Brothers came in and they hired Black women. And then all those places up there started hiring women. And when General Time came in that made a difference. I used to work at Reeves Brothers but after I got pregnant I didn't go back to work because I was disappointed. Then I worked at General Time for 22 years.

**Jan Blodgett:** Really? What was it like working at General Time?

**Evelyn Carr:** It was good. General Time was really good when we first started working there. The man that ran it then was a very fine man. But after he left it started going down.

**Jan Blodgett:** I just talked to Aileen Vincent who worked over there and she would come in on Saturdays and sew the clocks but she worked on payroll.

**Evelyn Carr:** Is she still living?

**Jan Blodgett:** Yeah. She and her husband, he just retired from the white Baptist church down here, and they built a house down on Torrence Chapel Road.

**Evelyn Carr:** General Time was a good place to work. I enjoyed working there. I worked there for 22 years and it was all production. We had our good days and our bad days.

**Jan Blodgett:** I've seen articles that they were concerned when they came in that there wasn't enough housing. So, did they hire a lot of Davidson people or were there more people from Mooresville or elsewhere?

**Evelyn Carr:** There were people from Mooresville, more Mooresville people and out of town people than people from Davidson.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, Davidson people had a shot but it wasn't really all Davidson people.

**Evelyn Carr:** No. There were a lot of Davidson people but most people were from Mooresville or Charlotte.

**Jan Blodgett:** Why didn't more people leave the College and go work for General Time? You would make more money.

**Evelyn Carr:** I don't know. Well, I'll tell you why. I hate to say it but white people really think that what really gets us is money and food. And a lot of people stayed with Davidson College because they owed Davidson College a lot of money; they could go and borrow money. They owed Davidson College their life or they bought their house through Davidson College and if they left [the College] probably would've taken their house and they knew that and wanted to stay. That had a lot to do with why some of the old people stayed. Davidson College owned people back in the day. And some of the young people owed Davidson and they had to stay. It was sad. Mr. Robert, he worked over there, and he was buying his home and when he died they found out that he wasn't buying his home and they put his wife out and put her in a nursing home. That's when I fell out with them [the College]. I don't have any respect for that, [inaudible] We don't want them to give us nothing but I felt like they did us wrong. I felt like they did us wrong on Griffith Street. First, on Brady Alley they came in and condemned the houses.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was that after the fire?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes, the fire burned down my daughter's house. And they came in there and condemned the houses. And anything would frighten those old Black people. So, they sold out to Davidson College and they built over here. And they did that so they could move them out from over here. They weren't worried about where the Black people stayed. The man in that funeral home on 115, Mr. Raymond, he started selling his house. The College did have some houses; the employees stayed there. Mr. Raymond had three houses on Eden Street. Mr. Dan Frank bought one, Mr. L.E. Johnson bought one and Davidson College bought one. If it hadn't been for him, they wouldn't have had anywhere to go. Because [the College] had scared Ms. Louis, Ms. Addie Torrence, all those old folks. After the people moved off the mill hill the College didn't want us over here sitting on our porches and all. So the man, Mr. Howard Covington, he's dead or he was

dying. Mr. William had a meeting and asked us not to sell our property because our property was valuable and I said no I'm not going to sell mine. And then they wanted to fix them up. They had Mr. Curry, the business manager, and Mr. Potts to do the inspections. And they determined the houses didn't pass inspection. They would do that so the College could get them. Back in those days, when people weren't educated, they would listen to what the White man said; they were scared. After they sold to the College, all of them really sold to the College. They had one house sitting there, Ms. Brown's. They were going to condemn her house, and then we found out it was the College that was doing it. And I raised Cain at that meeting; I told them off. [inaudible] So, they finally told us they wouldn't do it. And then they had Mr. Kates come in and buy the houses and sell them to the College. He bought Ms. Margaret's and the duplex and sold them to the College. That's what they did and I still hold the College responsible. And I guess I will continue to hold them responsible. I felt like they really did us bad. Some of it was our fault; after they scared us up saying [the houses] weren't fit to live in and they were going to tear them down anyways so some said why not sell them and at least get something out of it? Some these people over here are still making house payments because they didn't give them enough for their property. It's sad, real sad. The article in the paper, Ken did this, I read it. He talked about my house because I did have my house painted purple and my chimney was yellow. I thought that was the prettiest color. That was when the Charlotte Hornets first came in.

**Jan Blodgett:** The train houses used to be that color.

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah. And he was talking about my house and it doesn't bother me what they say. I feel like this is my house and I can do what I want with it. But I still hold it against them that they took a lot of ours. We really don't have any [area, history] anymore. In Brady Alley, we were all a happy family. And then we were over here and thought we were a happy family here and then they uprooted us from Griffith Street. Now, there's nowhere to put us. I'm sure nobody looked at it like I do, but I do. If they look back, they would say, 'She's right.' We really don't have nothing. Not a thing.

**Jan Blodgett:** Now, you still do have the lakeside area, the Lakeside Terrace; the community built there and it's been there 30 years.



**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah, but that's not like our old houses, you know what I'm saying? Like in Brady Alley, Aunt Janey and all of the old people someday could have done their houses over and it was something you could come back and look at. And the same with some of the houses over here. You know, it really bothers me. I enjoy staying here by myself, but it really bothers me that people [have to] work so long. People are still working and not getting that much pay for what they're doing. But you have to take what you can get I guess, if you can't better yourself. I worked [at Davidson College] for ten years, but I wasn't allowed to go back.

**Jan Blodgett:** Was this before General Time? And you haven't been back?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah. I hope I don't ever have to go back.

**Jan Blodgett:** Yeah, at your age you shouldn't have to work unless it's for the fun of it.

**Evelyn Carr:** Well, I have to work because we only have one paycheck coming in.

**Jan Blodgett:** Oh, that's right. Well, where do you work?

**Evelyn Carr:** I work for Margo. That's where I've been working, for her, about 4 days a week. I've raised her boys, since they were little.

**Jan Blodgett:** I don't think they were ever little. [Laughing]

**Evelyn Carr:** Those are my babies. But I have to work; those social security checks don't go very far.

**Jan Blodgett:** I know. I got my report the other day. I'll have to work until I'm 89 and then the money I get back won't be worth anything. You look at the money you make now and in 20 years, what will you be able to buy?

**Evelyn Carr:** Nothing. I get \$630 a month, and that keeps me scrapping. But I love scrapping. I've been doing it all my life, so there's no use getting above my races.

**Jan Blodgett:** Well, I'm impressed that one of the things you want to do now is save Davidson history. You're really interested in making sure future generations know the history. I'm so glad you have the energy for that. Are there stories you want told on this tape that I haven't asked you about, bits of Davidson history? African Americans have contributed important things to the

businesses on Main Street, they've kept the fraternities going, they've worked at the boarding houses ...

**Evelyn Carr:** Well, Blacks couldn't get a business on Main Street now. There aren't any more Blacks up there.

**Jan Blodgett:** Raeford's the only one.

**Evelyn Carr:** No Blacks in the banks anymore. Blacks don't work uptown. And there's only one Black policeman in Davidson. They used to have two, one left. At one time we had 3. There could be a lot of improvement in that. That's why young people are leaving; we're not giving them the opportunities and the jobs. I know there's not much here but they could do something to hire more from our community. But I don't think they even waste the time to put their applications in. They think why bother, they're not going to hire us, no way. And that's kind of sad.

**Jan Blodgett:** You want to have people who are willing to push to live and work here and not give up before they've given it a shot.

**Evelyn Carr:** It's bad to get that attitude. Why go up there and put your application, they won't hire you, no way. My granddaughter works at the day care now. She didn't finish high school and she's having a baby; she's getting ready to fill that Habitat house. So, I said, 'Maybe you could find a job around here.' But she says, 'Grandma, I ain't even going to waste my time. They're not going to hire us.' And it's so bad to hear them say that. Then we wonder why they're leaving? That's why they're leaving; they think there's nothing here for them. And that's not only Blacks; it's Whites and Blacks, really.

**Jan Blodgett:** And you expect that to a certain extent. People who grow up in a small town want to live in Atlanta or New York, or somewhere far out. And some of them do come back.

**Evelyn Carr:** But they're not coming back here. They don't have anything to come back to. There's a lot we could do about that. We need to build a little bit more.

**Jan Blodgett:** So, you're for building more houses and businesses in Davidson?

**Evelyn Carr:** Yeah. We're not going to stay here for a long time.

**Jan Blodgett:** Yeah, Charlotte's going to take us over.

**Evelyn Carr:** Yes they are. And they could put something out on the interstate. I don't mean like Cornelius, all this stuff. But they could bring some more back in. I know for sure some of them want to come back. It's cheaper living here and I bet some of the young people who are married are having a hard time trying to survive [in the cities]. They could come back and the house payment would be cheaper, food would be cheaper. I bet a lot would come back but we're not getting our people back, we're getting surrounded by new people. They're just building and building and building. Man, somebody must have some money.

**Jan Blodgett:** I'm always surprised when I go back towards Gethsemane Baptist, it used to be out there by itself in the forest and now it's part of the neighborhood.

**Evelyn Carr:** You know, I went to Kentucky when Gerald was in college. And I was thinking Kentucky was just the horse's neck, a beautiful place. And you see houses and everything going up but it's really pretty. And it's pretty down here; they could build a lot of nice stuff. I mean, you don't want it like Cornelius but you could put up a lot more. I'm hoping that my children will come back to Davidson to live because they love Davidson. I wish they'd bring their children back and raise them in Davidson where they were raised. If I were raising children, I'd love to raise them in Davidson. You feel very safe for your children. You feel like you can let them go play outside. Maybe one of these days. I hope I live to see some of it.

**Jan Blodgett:** I hope so too.

*End of Recording.*