

Interview
with
LEWIS "L.C." COLEMAN AND SARAH COLEMAN

May 26, 2008

By Dwana Waugh

Transcribed by Deborah Mitchum

The Southern Oral History Program
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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TRANSCRIPT: SARAH AND LEWIS "L.C." COLEMAN

Interviewees: Sarah and Lewis "L.C." Coleman
Interviewer: Dwana Waugh
Interview Date: May 26, 2008
Location: Colemans' home, Charlotte, NC
Length: One CD, approximately 92 minutes

START OF CD

Dwana Waugh: This is Dwana Waugh and I am interviewing Mrs. Sarah Coleman. Today is May 26, 2008 at 10:30 a.m. And I'll say good morning to you.

Sarah Coleman: Good morning.

DW: I think I just wanted to start--. I know we had talked a little bit about your work in New York on the phone. Could you talk a little bit about how you got the job working with Jewish immigrants and your experiences with the job?

SC: Well when I moved to New York, and that was in 1945, I worked at several places but the way I got that particular job was that I had to be interviewed. And this is like outside agency interviews. And so with my interview--. You always have to take a test too. And since my major was business education they gave me a test--. I had to be tested with shorthand, typing, interviewing skills.

DW: Okay. You grew up in Charlotte?

SC: I grew up in Charlotte.

DW: Okay. And did you--? Where did you go to school?

SC: I went to Fairview Elementary School and then West Charlotte High School.

DW: That was a pretty new school?

SC: At that particular time. The Northwest School of the Arts, that was West Charlotte High School. Okay, and it was built in 1938.

DW: So what made you decide that you wanted to go to New York from Charlotte?

SC: Because of discrimination. At that particular time there were only two high schools in Charlotte.

DW: Wow. It's different now. [Laughter]

SC: Yeah, very different now. And so therefore job possibilities were very limited.

DW: Yeah. What kind of jobs were blacks able to get?

SC: Well there were very few jobs in white corporations and what not, and of course no blacks in schools, you understand, no teaching positions, what have you, or in corporations. So when I finished high school at West Charlotte I went on to Barber-Scotia College in Concord, North Carolina. At that particular time it was an all-girl school.

DW: How did you like that? [Laughter]

SC: [Smiles] Well, I went to Barber-Scotia--. Let's put it this way. I went to Barber-Scotia because it was family. My grandmother was one of the first students at Barber-Scotia, my grandmother, so therefore my mother went there and I had two aunts who went there. So it was almost like I had to go. I had no choice. At that particular time it was very small and of course it was an all-girl school, very strict, very strict. And

of course most of the courses that were taught were regular education courses, you know, no majors. And it was a two-year school.

DW: Now was that unusual for women to be able, or to plan, to go to college when you went, or was it a given most women went to school after high school?

SC: Well I can tell you at West Charlotte, and this is information I was able to get from the principal a long time ago, with my class there were ninety percent of the students went to college.

DW: Wow, that's impressive.

SC: Mm hmm, in that particular class.

DW: Why do you think it was so high, the percentage?

SC: Well I think one thing because of the--. We had excellent teachers. That was one thing. And I guess it was the desire, for the class as a whole and individually, because we recognized that there were no real job possibilities in the city except for domestic [work]. And there were a few doctors, lawyers, what have you, but in general. [Shakes head]

DW: So when you went to New York--oh.

SC: Excuse me. When I finished Barber-Scotia 1943 then I went on to A&T State University and that's where I majored in business education.

DW: Now was that common to go from Barber-Scotia to another college?

SC: Oh yeah, if you wanted to go to a four-year--. If you wanted to finish college, yes. But you see at the time that my mother and her sisters, grandmother and sisters, went there you could teach with two years, which she did. She taught at Newell Elementary School and became the principal.

DW: Your mother did?

SC: My mother, mm hmm. And she also started the school in Goshen, North Carolina. That was in the eastern part: G-O-S-H-E-N, North Carolina, which became one of the Rosenwald schools.

DW: So your family sounds like it was really active with education, pushing education.

SC: Yeah, my father--. My father really only had a seventh grade education. But he was a Pullman porter on the railroad, and that was unusual at that particular time, because you would have men who worked on the railroads, but he was a Pullman porter. And he also had his own limousine service.

DW: Was it like a one-man limousine service? Did he have other--?

SC: Oh yeah. And his biggest riders were professors from Johnson C. Smith. He used to take them to different cities for conventions.

DW: That's keeping black businesses kind of together.

SC: Yeah, yeah, because it wasn't like a regular taxicab service. It was a limousine service.

DW: Yeah. That's great, kind of an insular kind of community.

SC: Mm hmm.

DW: Okay. So then once you finished A&T--. [Phone rings]

SC: Excuse me.

DW: Okay. So after you went to--.

SC: A&T. I graduated in 1945.

DW: And then you went straight to New York?

SC: Uh huh. I was offered a job in St. Louis, Missouri. And I guess because of everything being segregated, you know, segregation, I did not accept the job.

DW: What would you have been doing with that job?

SC: Teaching business ed.

DW: Oh, okay. And then you went to [New York]?

SC: Mm hmm.

DW: And applied for the position?

SC: Well that wasn't the first position, but that was the most important one.

DW: Okay. So you had--.

SC: And I went on to New York because of my roommates, classmates, what have you. Some of them went to New York. And I moved there and lived with my cousin.

DW: Was it culture shock when you went?

SC: Hmm?

DW: Was it culture shock when you went to New York?

SC: Yeah. Well we'll get into that also. Of course, it was completely different in so many ways, but it wasn't until I really lived there that I realized that there was a lot of segregation in New York.

DW: How did you come--?

SC: To realize that?

DW: Yes ma'am.

SC: Because I noticed that there were a lot of jobs but most black people worked in factories and what have you. You see, that's the difference. Yeah, that's the difference. Now that was integrated, but it was factory, most of them.

DW: When you say integrated--. But blacks worked the lower positions?

SC: Well yeah, when you work in factories those are not professional positions. That's where most people worked, black people. And we didn't realize that until the Martin Luther King. And then some black ministers in New York, and I was a member of a Presbyterian church, and it was the black Presbyterian ministers who started the fight in New York. And I was working at that particular agency, and that agency was called at that particular time United Services for New Americans. You know the Jewish agency? And it settled Jews in America from concentration camps under the Hitler regime.

DW: So what did you--?

SC: And I became the--. I worked there, and I wasn't the only black who worked there, but as I told you everybody had to be tested. It was a social agency. And in settling the Jews, of course you had doctors in the organization, you had psychiatrists, you had social workers, had psychologists. And the social workers used to travel to various ports of embarkation, like down to Florida, New York, different places where the immigrants were brought over. And then they would bring them to New York to the agency where I worked. When I first went there I was an Ediphone operator. You know typist, Ediphone?

DW: Oh, okay.

SC: Mm hmm, operator. And then because I was a college graduate, and they of course liked the work that I did, they interviewed me for the job as interviewer for foster

homes and also for parents who wanted foster home care for their children. And this was all Jewish. And it was under the Jewish philanthropies of New York.

DW: That funded the agency?

SC: Mm hmm, it was under it, mm hmm.

DW: How long were working as an Ediphone--?

SC: That was a short period of time.

DW: Oh, okay. And then they interviewed you for the position as interviewer?

Okay. And how did you like the job?

SC: Beautiful.

DW: Yeah?

SC: You see because I had the--. And it was a very strict interview for the job because they had to know how I would feel if I got a telephone call and a prospective client would realize that I was African-American by the tone of voice, what would I do? I mean those kind of questions I was asked in the interview. Would I get upset if they would tell me that they didn't want to talk with me? They wanted to talk with someone else? And of course I told them I would not become upset, I would just ask them to hold on and I would get someone else to speak with them. It would not upset me.

DW: Did that ever happen?

SC: Never happened.

DW: So clients were very welcoming of you?

SC: Yeah. And sometimes, you know, they would come in off the street and then when they would come to my office, you see, they would see a different color sitting there. What would I do?

DW: So what kind of work did you do? You had to ask them questions? What kind of questions?

SC: I can't discuss that with you.

DW: Okay. And so--.

SC: Because they would talk about their problems; and what they were really interested in was help. They wanted foster homes for their children.

DW: So you helped them get acclimated to society?

SC: Yeah, I helped them to set up appointments with the social workers in the agency.

DW: Oh, okay, okay. So you worked to connect them to social workers?

SC: Yeah, I was liaison. I was liaison.

DW: Okay. And you said on the phone you had stayed with that position until--?

SC: Until--. It was 1957. Then that agency closed because it had met the quota of immigrants coming over, because they had gotten them all out of the concentration camps at that time.

DW: Do you remember--?

SC: Then they--

DW: Oh, I'm sorry.

SC: --offered me a job. The whole agency moved over to--. At that particular time it was a regular foster home agency: Jewish Child Care Association of New York. And there I worked in personnel.

DW: Okay. Did you feel like the job was keeping in line with your business education?

SC: Oh, yes, oh yes. Oh yes. And you see by working in personnel, because I typed and telephoned; everything. And the hardest part about that job was the head of personnel was deaf. She was deaf; very, very strict, very strict. And there were two of us in the office with her, and of course there were two or three in the outer office. This is all in personnel. And she was the most knowledgeable personnel director of social workers in New York at that particular time. So people would call her on the telephone, and I don't know whether they would realize it, or didn't realize it, or what, but they would just talk, talk, talk, talk, talk. So the other secretary and I would have to write, and she was on the telephone, and she would have to read what we were saying and she could answer. So she taught us a kind of shorthand--.

DW: Which I guess--.

SC: --that she could read, you know. There would be regular words but there would be not maybe all of the word, but in certain ways, like lean, for example, lean, L-E-A-N, we would write like L-E-N. It would be short. If it was a long word, we would have to shorten it, but she taught us how. And she was very strict and she would only let the two of us--. And the other worker was a Jewish person.

DW: And you said it was an inner office and an outer office?

SC: Yes, she was head of personnel, but there were some who also received. They worked on the outer office, you know, received someone who might want to come in?

DW: Okay.

SC: Because it was a large corporation, but she was just head of personnel which had a lot of different departments in there. Yeah. And that was a great experience.

DW: You said she was strict. How was she strict?

SC: Well, her strictness was you just had to be very exact about everything, because in the first place, she couldn't hear. She could talk, she could see, but she couldn't hear, and so she depended on us. And it taught me a lot.

DW: I guess and then your shorthand you had learned at Barber-Scotia came in handy.

SC: Mm hmm. That was at A&T.

DW: Oh, at A&T. Okay. So did you like this job more than--?

SC: Both of them, because I learned a lot, I learned a lot. And see they had different [Pause] we'll call it schools, especially in the other agency. We had an Edenwald school for immigrants that they brought over. You can put that back up at the other if you want to.

DW: Okay.

SC: There was an Edenwald school for high school children. There was another one up in Poughkeepsie, New York for older settlers. You see they were settling them all over and the Jewish Childcare Association picked up settling them. After the immigration office closed, see everybody moved over to the Jewish Childcare Association.

DW: Oh okay. So it was like a funneling from that job to--?

SC: Mm hmm.

DW: Okay. And did a lot of the same people stay?

SC: Oh yeah, yeah. But it was a tremendous office. At first we were on 2nd Avenue then we moved to Madison Avenue.

DW: Oh! [Laughter]

SC: That's right, Madison Avenue.

DW: Now did you enjoy New York City living? [Laughter]

SC: Well, I learned a lot, I learned a lot. Yeah. And just when I--. Okay, when I first went to New York I also worked in the office of dependency benefits. That was in Newark, New Jersey, and that's where they processed the soldiers' money. You know that went to the dependents and the families?

DW: And this was before the--?

SC: Yeah, that was before.

DW: That just seems so amazing, how--. I mean, I've heard a lot of stories and I've seen documentaries about World War II and Holocaust camps, and just to see these soldiers coming back, and Holocaust survivors. It must have been intense.

SC: Yes. Yes. Then in 1964 my mother became ill and I came home. And the reason I came home--. While I was there though, in New York, I went on and got my master's at Teacher's College Columbia University. And I also went to the Baruch School of Business. See everything was just, you know, at least the education part was open, so I took advantage of those things. And the whole time I was there--because I was in New York about twenty years. I married while I was there and had two children. And as a matter of fact my daughter, when she was I think five years old, they realized that New York was really not integrated fully. Yeah. Even the schools were not. It's very interesting because that Jewish agency had asked us if we could use our baby, our little daughter, as a guinea pig. They were going to enroll her in one of their schools. In one

of the Jewish private schools. And that was in 1964, and it didn't happen because I came home.

Let me go back a little bit. My first husband died, okay? And so by my mother being ill; and he had passed, and I was offered a job by the president of Barber-Scotia, and at that particular time it was a four-year school. And he had heard about me, because it's a Presbyterian school. I'm Presbyterian. I went to Presbyterian churches in New York, you understand? So he [the president of Barber-Scotia College] heard about it and he called and offered me a position teaching business education. So that brought me back home.

DW: Did you stay at that job for awhile?

SC: Mm hmm. That was in 1964, mm hmm. I left Barber-Scotia and came to West Charlotte High School. That was in 1968. I was asked to come at West Charlotte. And at that particular time, that year, the teachers had been integrated, you know, in the schools? The next year, 1969, 1970, is when integration for students started in Charlotte and they asked me to go to, and I was not aware of this, but they asked me to go to Myers Park. And Myers Park was--. It was the elite high school in Charlotte for Caucasians. And so they asked me to go there to teach and I didn't want to. And in the meantime Barber-Scotia asked me to come back as director of admissions. So I went back as director of admissions.

DW: I know we're getting a little close on time and I wanted to--.

SC: Okay, go ahead.

DW: I wanted to, I guess to kind of--.

SC: Let me--. Can I give you some of this stuff? [hands me a biography]

DW: Oh, yes ma'am. If I could just ask two more questions, and then--. I wanted to ask what--. When you came back--. You said when you left Charlotte you left because of the segregation, when you came back were things different than what you saw in terms of race relations?

SC: The race relations were getting better, mm hmm. But I said the *reason* I came because my mother was ill and my first husband had died.

DW: And then the other thing I just wanted to ask, and this is kind of a quick interview, but if there was anything that you might want to add that I didn't ask or we didn't talk about?

SC: Well I can give you the material on it, and that's on the present things that I'm doing now, even at my age. [Laughter]

DW: No, that's great. [Laughter]

SC: Yeah, I'll give it to you.

DW: Okay, I appreciate it, and I will stop this. Actually I'll pause this and then I'll turn to Mr. Coleman and do an interview.

SC: Okay.

DW: [Recorder is paused and restarted.] Okay. So now I am interviewing Mr. Lewis "L.C." Coleman on May 26, 2008. And I'll say good morning to you, Mr. Coleman. [Laughter]

Lewis Coleman: Good morning.

DW: Great. We had talked just a little bit before. You were saying where you grew up in Charlotte and the things you did.

LC: I grew up right here in Charlotte right there on Booker Avenue and Beatties Ford Road.

DW: Okay.

LC: That section. I went to Sycamore High School.

DW: Okay.

LC: I finished in 1939.

DW: Okay. And so then after high school what did you end up doing?

LC: Well what I did--. See my daddy does this kind of work.[Points to woodwork] He'd been doing this since 1922.

DW: Oh wow.

LC: So his children learned to do that. So as soon as the war broke I went straight to New York. And I went up there in 1941, stayed till 19--. I went in service in 1944. Then I came back in--. Let's see, '46 I think it was, I got out. Then I came back home. I worked in New York. I had one job in New York: started 1941 to 1967. But you see during the time I--. See when I went into service, I came back and got the same job. That's how come I worked for that job. See when you got out of the service they'd give you your job right back and you work for them again. And I still remained in New York. Then I came back home in 1967 and I've been back since. In 1968, I opened a business and kept it till 2004 or '05 I think.

DW: From 1968 until 2005?

LC: Down on Beatties Ford Road.

DW: Okay.

LC: Coleman's Westside Sundries. You know in the community I did a lot of things. I did a lot of things for senior citizens then.

DW: Okay.

LC: And I used to work for them when they'd do things like that health--. When they'd go to the hospital, I got a reduced rate for that, and in the hospital, got it reduced for that. It was a lot of these kinds of things. And I got park equality started. I got a park named for me down on Beatties Ford Road, L.C. Coleman Park. I did a lot of work in the community for senior citizens, handicapped, and the blind. I got things done. All those things I did working for the people in my community. You know, we used to didn't have no sidewalks down here and no streets paved. I had a group called Westside Improvement and we got that done for the section down there. Because I know how you'd go out to Myers Park and they had all these sidewalks. Anyway I told them, "We don't have them on my side of town. We just want to have the same amount our side of town." Because the mayor then was Mayor Belk. He said, "L.C., y'all don't spend much money." I said, "All you have to do--. Whatever amount of money we spend, that's how our streets and sidewalks should be on our side of the town. Sidewalks. [Laughter] But I used to be the guy in town who caused people trouble, I guess you'd call it. Because I'd always go out to people's houses and have a bunch of people out there in front of your house speaking about things that I thought should be done on my side of town. And they didn't like that because my group was the kind of people that we'd make sure if they didn't do something, we'd go out and campaign and have a picket line in front of their house, and they didn't like that, and that's what I did.

DW: Now were you--?

LC: I was a community activist.

DW: Okay. Now were you--? I guess, well two questions: how did you become such an activist, and then was it just--?

LC: In New York, that's where I first started. I saw it. I saw the people doing it in New York. In New York I did a lot of things. I became chairman of the hardware local in New York. See I belonged to District 65. That's a union. And it had different companies there like it had-- a purchasing department, union, and they had a clothing, different clothing. Because you know the clothing thing in New York, that's when New York made most of the clothes. Each one had a different kind of group.

DW: Now were you--? Was this union part of the AFLCIO?

LC: Mm hmm.

DW: Okay.

LC: And that's when it combined. That's when the--. I was in the CIO but then the AFL joined. The CIO had the largest group and that's when I joined. But we had, we did different things like that, go down and organize different people in different businesses. And I was in there for all these years. Because I never heard of such a thing because I was a young guy. We organized a lot of--. Everything was organized but one store, Hearns in the Bronx. Every other business in New York we organized them. But Hearns, we didn't get them, but we got everybody else.

DW: Why do you think they didn't want to organize?

LC: I think because Hearns was a big store. Had a lot of money. We couldn't get them. That's the only reason, I think, it happened, because I was a member of District 65. That's a little union in New York. They used to do a lot of things to help out all

people, black or white. And it was a union that had a lot of--. The secretary/treasurer of that union was black, and at that time you didn't have that kind of thing, in the '40s you know. This guy's name was Cleveland Robinson. And when you worked in the city of New York, you had your job. I had one job from 1941 to 1967. One job I had. The only job I did--. You know how you make band saw blades to cut stuff with? I had that kind of job. I was in charge of different things in the store. I did a lot of things. That was my last thing I had.

DW: Oh, so the store, you--?

LC: It was hardware.

DW: Oh, it was a hard--? Oh, okay.

LC: Morris Abrams Hardware. It was a big hardware [store], one of the largest in the state. And they did a lot of things and they had all kinds of departments and things.

DW: [Whispering] Oh! [Chair leg breaks]

LC: See, a lot of times it breaks a leg. [Laughter]

DW: [Laughter] Oh, I know that can hurt.

LC: The store had everything in it. Different kind of like light systems, like this kind of thing here; all kinds of things in that one store; sold all these kind of things, so you learned a lot of things. And I worked in all those departments. That last one was where I worked making band saw blades. That's what happened when I came back out of service I went back to that same job and started doing the same thing. Then I came home in 1967.

DW: Well what made you decide to join the union there, because I imagine when you were in Charlotte--?

LC: The job. The job was unionized. Most jobs in New York are unionized, most of them. The ones that wasn't organized, we helped organize them. Because I said that's what we went around to do. We started in Brooklyn, organizing. You know used to be in Brooklyn you didn't have black women, black people, taking the tickets, like when you went to a movie? They were all white. So we went up and down the road to all these demonstrations wherever a movie was, and we'd have picket lines, and they'd go put one in there. We did this all the time. They were talking about killing us, but we did that. But we did that, because Brooklyn in New York, they had all these places where all white women were taking up tickets and we said, "We don't need no white women taking up tickets in our neighborhood. You ought to get a black lady or we'll be here all day." We did that all over New York.

DW: Now you said you were in the service--?

LC: I was in the Navy from 1944 till 19--let's see, '46 the war was over, I think it was--anyway about two years. In '46 I think the war ended and I came back home, I think it was.

DW: Were you excited to join the war?

LC: No, I didn't want to because--. [Laughter] I said I had nothing to fight for. I said, "Why am I going to fight?" They talking about "your country", I said, "It ain't none of my country because I can't do nothing here. I don't like what they're doing to me. They make you do everything else." And I said, "I don't like this country because they're not doing anything I like." You didn't have no freedom. You could do--. They had things for you could do. You still don't have that much. Every building you see downtown, you know who own them. You know all these places like that, every one, this

section, these boys up here [points outside] who owned it? So that's how I feel about it. I don't they're really integrated yet. People do think so but I don't think so because we don't have the things that we should have, because being a race that's been here all these years, we should have more. But you know you see you don't have it. If you don't think so, you look around in this town and anywhere in this country. Who owns everything? Who has the largest amount of everything? These are the things I see that I don't think we have today and aren't really getting. [Pause the recorder]

DW: Marching for justice. [Laughter] Okay. And so what brought you back to Charlotte from New York?

LC: Well I decided to come home because I always wanted to come back to Charlotte to live. I didn't want to get old in New York because I found out how bad they treated old people there so I said I will never get old in New York. That's the reason I came home. I didn't ever intend to stay in New York to get old because when I first went there, I've seen old ladies standing there with big bags in there arms like that, and the men wouldn't get up and let them have a seat. I came back home and told my daddy, I said, "Daddy you should never go to New York because you can't do nothing." And I bought a house in New York. I had a business in New York. I was in the same business there. But I said when I get old I'm going to leave here because I can't--. New York is not a place for old folks. You should have seen them. They'd have their arms full, and the lady she starts to sit down and a guy sit right in front get the newspaper like this and starts to read it. I've seen that happen plenty of times, so I think that's the worst thing in the city. But if you don't know about New York and you go you'll see how they act. They don't treat senior citizens with no respect. And I didn't think I wanted to get old in

the city. But I went there when I was in my twenties, but I said I'll never live there. I've seen it happen many times.

DW: Yeah. That's too bad.

LC: If you ever go there you'll see it. I saw that a few years ago. I had that happen. I saw somebody die on the job. I was coming from New York City to Brooklyn. A lady came in with a bag and she was an old lady and I got up and gave her my seat. Everyone on the bus looked around. "What happened?" "This man got up and gave a lady his seat." I hadn't thought about it was because I felt that way about it anyway. She had a bunch of stuff and no one tried to get up. I got up and gave her my seat. And she said, "Chivalry is not dead yet." [Laughter] I kind of laughed when she said that. Everybody on the bus turned around because see, you don't do that in New York. People don't respect older people. They respect themselves. They get the paper and soon as they start reading the paper. Anybody moves, they got their seat. I hate that though, but that's the way they are there.

DW: Yeah. So then you came back to Charlotte and it was a better [life]--.

LC: I opened a business.

DW: Yeah.

LC: I had a business and I did a lot of community work there down that side of town and all over Charlotte. And I had two baseball teams and two basketball teams and I had a ladies' basketball team and a ladies' softball team. In this side of town, I had some all kinds of things helping people, and children, especially and senior citizens. I organized different things for senior citizens, the handicapped, and the blind. And you might go down the street and you'll see the park named "L.C. Coleman" down on

Beatties Ford Road. I started park equality. And since I owned a business, each day I used to give children ice cream for three hours, free, every year. And I used to give senior citizens food free. And this is the thing people didn't realize, I thought that's the thing you should do when you have a business, give something to the community. And whenever you live in a city like this and you see, like, you know, you should have a sanitation department--. Senior citizens have to carry the thing out to the street. I went downtown and got that stopped so they didn't have to carry their garbage out. Because they're too old to be carrying garbage out. They passed it. And now they passed one, at least from what I told them, now we got that little red box out there now. But I got the other thing started, because I watched these people--. And then too, the sanitation worker wasn't making as much money as the other people, you know because they sweep the streets. And I went down to the city to get them to have equal pay and I told them, "These people need the same amount of money for the little bit you do why shouldn't they have more pay?" They gave them a raise.

DW: When was that?

LC: Seven years or more. Let me see. It must have been nineteen sixty-something. I don't remember the year. I didn't write it down, but I was the one that got it passed. I tell you what, Mayor Belk was the mayor then. You can find out when he was the mayor of Charlotte. And let's see. I got several things while he was in office. I'm trying to think what they were. And I told you about the ambulance service. Well, this lady, she was chairman of the board then, Liz Hair. She was in charge of the board when that happened. We had to fight her about stuff like that all the time. Had something about senior citizens, handicapped, and the blind. They got a reduced rate

when they'd go on--. That's one of the things I got for senior citizens, handicapped, and the blind.

DW: What gave you such a passion the handicapped and the blind and senior citizens? Was it like a family tradition?

LC: No. Just that I could see, because I told you I had a business. I'd see how they treat the old people. I've seen in the community how they treat the older people, and I knew that in New York, and I found out when I got back because here it's worse too. So I started working so they would have privileges, have the same thing they should have. And that's what I worked on. As long as I live I want to do things in the community. I quit working now since I got ninety. I said, I've got to quit going to work. I said no, I don't have to work anymore. I think some of the young people should work. [Laughter] These are some of the things I worked on. Any improvement in Charlotte in my side of town, I tried to get it. There are things there--. You can ask some questions you want to ask me. I might could have some--.

DW: Okay. Well let me pause it for just a second. [Recorder is turned off and then back on] Okay. I think that's working. The mike might pick up a little bit better there. What did you do with your Westside Sundries? What kind of work did you do there?

LC: I sold sandwiches, all kinds of sandwiches, beer.

DW: Oh, like a restaurant.

LC: It was a restaurant. That's what I did.

DW: Okay. So a little different than the hardware work that you did.

LC: Well it was different from hardware because I owned this so I had--. Then I had a different kind of work. In the hardware I had several things I learned how to do. I worked for a Jewish firm from 19--. Let's see. From 1941 to '67 at one job. The name was Morris Abrams, the company. This company had everything in it for hardware. I first drove a truck for them for years then I started working inside. Then I was chairman of the local for awhile, the hardware local.

DW: Now--.

LC: It was District 65, the name of the union, District 65.

DW: Okay. You said that was part of the CIO?

LC: Mm hmm.

DW: And then when they merged?

LC: They merged.

DW: Sometime in the '50s, right?

LC: It might have been in the '50s. I know it was early, because I remember when the AFL joined the CIO and they became one group. It must have been, because I was living in New York when it happened. I went to New York then I stayed there 'til 1967, so I was there for a long time. Thirty-four years I think.

DW: Do you remember how you felt about the merger, or did it make a difference at all?

LC: No, it didn't make any difference because it was a union--. I think what happened, the CIO was larger than the AFL and they merged, I thought, as one because we had had to be fighting separately. One union that usually helped out District 65 was the Teamster's Union. When we had problems the Teamster's Union would help us out

because we had a small union, and the Teamster's had the best union and the most fierce union in New York City. And whenever we had anything happen they would help us with problems, if other people attacked our union. But that other union, the Teamster's, had the best union, and I think they still have because there are some tough people in the Teamster's, if you know anything about it. Do you know anything about unions?

DW: A little bit, yes sir.

LC: Well the Teamster's got a more organized, stronger union. And in New York City, that's a tough union. Now what other questions do you want to ask me about?

DW: Okay. So when you came back to Charlotte and you opened your business, what made you decide to open a business instead of working?

LC: Well, one of the guys I was raised with had a business over on Booker Avenue. His name was Potts. And he told me, he said, "L.C., you should open a business," and pointed out where I used to play right across the street there where we grew up. He said, "Now you get your business over there, man, you'll do all right." I said, "Well all right. I'll think about it." So the next few weeks I went over and opened the business. I really cleaned the place out and painted it and fixed it up. When I was in New York I took up upholstery, you know, doing this kind of work [points to furniture]? So I went out there to one guy who I was buying groceries from. I told him I wanted to get some furniture and he said, "I got some old stuff I'll let you have." I said, "Okay." I went and got it. And when he came back he said, "Where's that stuff I sold you?" I had fixed it and padded it and did all kind of stuff to it. He said, "Where is that stuff?" I said, "You're sitting on it." He said, "What?!" [Laughter] He was so shocked. I got some booths, you know. I cleaned all the paint and things off, because as I told you I went to

school for upholstery when I was in New York. I went to school for two years for upholstery and to do the woodwork and everything. That man was so shocked he didn't know what to do. He said, "My God!" because it was so bad. He had it out in his garage. It was all old and I cleaned it all up, took all the paint off of it, and repainted it and finished it. And when he came out--. He was a grocery salesman, he sold me food and stuff. He said, "Mr. Coleman, what did you do with that?" I said, "You're sitting on it." [Laughter] He'd like to die. Yeah when I got that stuff and this place and fixed it up, I did the whole thing, because you see now as I said, my dad did all this kind of work. He had to learn. He had a little carpentry--. So I took the thing and fixed it. My dad helped me some. So this is what happens when you have to learn something because all his children had to learn how to do that work. If you didn't, you'd get a whipping. Didn't need that.

DW: [Laughter] Yeah I know about that.

LC: See them cabinets there? I got my son-in-law with me. We bought that cabinet and put it up there. I bought all those little knobs, you know, and put them on there. I made it look good because it wasn't in there when I got this place but I got--. I did that, my son-in-law and myself. I was riding out in the east side of town one day and I saw that thing. I said, "I'm going to get that and put it in our kitchen." So I went back and got the truck and went and got it and put it in here.

DW: Well it's good that you know how to make things, fix things back up.

LC: Yeah, and I used to do wallpaper. A guy taught me how to do wallpaper in New York and I used could do it. And I did all that painting and stuff. I knew how to do that because a guy taught me how to do that. And it's something good to learn. See all this shellac and stuff here? That's what I did, because we bought this house new. And I

did all that painting and fixed it up. But this wallpaper, my wife got somebody else to do it because she thought I couldn't do it good enough. But I did some of it downstairs. But I learned how to do that because I owned a house, as I said, in New York. And I learned how to do it because a man taught me how to do that. He had one arm, one arm. Man, he could do some wallpaper. But he taught me how so I learned how to do it. I got so I could do all my own wallpaper.

DW: Well when you had your business did you have to deal with the city council or anything in terms of how--?

LC: Uh-uh. All you had to do was get your license. The only thing I did with them was make them do things I needed to be done in this community. I dealt with them, because they never wanted to do anything in our community. I had a group of people go in Myers Park to do the demonstration, parking, right in the Hardees. It was a nice place. I got 125 children over there and they took the park. My little kids took--. They were playing basketball. My little boys took the basketball and started kicking it, you know. Remember years ago when--? You wasn't--. I don't guess you were--. There was a guy in South American was playing on a soccer team, and he's a famous--.

DW: Oh, Pele. [Laughter]

LC: Yeah, Pele, and the kids was sort of kicking it, you know? So I had a lady with me who was working for the city. She was organizing something and she was with me. She said, "Look Mr. Coleman, what your boys are doing." The boys took the ball and was kicking the ball like the boy in South America. We got a good laugh. She said, "Watch them boys." They took the ball--the white boys was playing with it, they took the ball from them and was kicking it like whatever-that-guy's-name was doing.

[Laughter] And all the white people left the park, and that's right in Myers Park. They left the park. Oh boy. But those kids were having a good time. I just got a kick out of it. I said, "What you boys doing?" Whatever that guy's name is, "That's what we're doing, Mr. Coleman." I said, "Oh!" Because I used to take children--. I always would take them somewhere. I'd get a bus, I'd pay for the bus, my company did. And I'd take the children different places. And they'd never seen a hockey game. I took them to see the hockey game. Oh, they were so proud, about 120 some children. So one day two little girls came by and said, "Mr. Coleman, you don't like girls, do you?" I said, "What you mean?" She said, "You don't never do nothing for them." I said, "What you mean? I just took some girls last week over to the park. About 125 of you went up here." She said, "What?" That's right. And my dad was living then. I said, "Well, what you do, come on in," and I fixed them a milkshake and some ice cream and gave them a hamburger. And you know how the juke box? I gave them the money to play the juke box. And they went out and they told the rest of the girls. Then you know they would come up there and so I had to fix everybody then. Children told me, "You don't like girls." I said, "I like everybody." Children are children to me. But they knew my daddy. They called him "Daddy Coleman." And dad was waiting on the door letting them in so they could get the ice cream and stuff. But those children would come say, "I ain't had nothing Daddy Coleman," you know, ice cream all over his mouth. He said, "What's all over your mouth?" [Motions wiping off his mouth] I said, "Daddy, wipe it off." Every year I gave out ice cream free for a day for three hours. They would make sure to get everyone to come.

DW: [Laughter] Yeah, I bet.

LC: All you can eat, every year, three hours. We had a lot of fun out of those kids. But I like that because I think they should do something for children. Most people they won't do nothing for children. I get my haircut down --. They said, "Mr. Coleman, we ain't got nobody down on the corner doing nothing for us now." I said, "Won't nobody down here do nothing." But children grow up, they remember that. They remember how you do. And I just thought that was the best thing to do for children, because, see children you know--. Most of the people that have children, the parents don't have the money to get things for them so they don't get things some other children get. Because some of those people that live in those houses, they drink their money up and they don't take care of their children. I knew that, because you see every day the children would come by place. There was two schools, West Charlotte Senior High School and Junior High School. And I would see people come in the store and some wouldn't have any money and see they'd wouldn't need something, so my dad and I would give them something anyway, because we didn't need children come to our place and leave there without something. I always gave them something. So the children that grew up around there knew what you do for them and then they get to respect you because they know you're trying to help them out. And any time anybody decided to do anything, boy, they wouldn't let nobody mess with my place. And they grew up around there, because I got some children that are young men now. They knew how I used to be about things and I got no problems, because I didn't allow nobody to bother children. And I didn't want people jumping on ladies in there either. A man come in and jump on a lady, he had to go or he'd either get shot or either--. I tell you, "Either go one way out. Either take you out or you go, either way you want to go." Had one bad guy there named

Hiawatha beat up everybody there, went up there and closed up two restaurants up the street, went across the street and closed--. Man had a shoe shop over there and was selling something--. He said, "Now, Mr. Coleman I'm going to close you." I said, "No you ain't, boy." His name was Hiawatha. "No, you're not going to close this place." He said, "Yes I am too." And he said, "I'm going to take this little girl and go right down--. And he said, "And I'll take this boy's food." I said, "Don't bother that boy." He said, "Yes I am." And I said, "Don't bother him." And he said, "Yes I am." So he started, and I just let him have it. He went up in the air and he stayed in the hospital over a year. They said, "You know you don't bother that Coleman guy. He might shoot you." And one time I told some--. These three boys were standing in my door like this, and I had this lady working and I would take her to her car so they wouldn't bother her. I said, "Boys, I told you all about standing in front of my place." "OK Mr. Coleman we'll leave." It made me mad, so I called my daddy. I said, "Daddy, you come out here and shoot the boys out there in the street, 'cuz I can get the two in the door." Crazy man come start shooting everybody before I get out there. Man, we shot the whole corner up. And we couldn't calm the place for over an hour, because we went out, looked and see--. I said, "Daddy we can't shoot nobody can't nobody pay for it." [Unintelligible] And said, everybody shooting. [Unintelligible] "Mr. Coleman was shooting at you." We sure did. We had to pay \$1,000 though. My daddy tickled me. The judge asked him, "Now you're not going to do that anymore, Mr. Coleman? Shooting people?" He says, he looked at the judge and said, "Them boys come back down to my boy's place. I'm shooting them right away. I'll be right back down here judge." The judge had to laugh himself. Oh that crazy man. He said, "I'll be right back down here judge." He tickled me. I said, "Daddy-

-.” He sure tickled me. He said, “You can’t tell me boy. I’m your daddy.” I laughed when he said that, the judge laughed. “Yeah, I’ll be right back down here them boys come back down here them boys be in front of that place again.” That’s the way he was boy. Before I knew it, he was at the door out there shooting everybody--. I had to run to the door. I thought they were shooting him.

DW: I guess people would learn their lesson not to [Laughter] mess with you.

LC: No, that’s the wrong thing to do. You don’t bother people’s place.

DW: Yeah. Now did you--? I don’t know if--. I’ll check the time. So you stayed at Westside Sundries for almost forty years. What kind of changes did you see--?

LC: I think I went there in ’67, ’68 I opened the place and it was two thousand-something when I left from down there.

DW: And what kind of changes did you see as a store? Because Charlotte, every time I come here it’s something different every time. [Laughter]

LC: Well you see Charlotte’s changing a lot. There’s a lot of improvement done. And improvement, that’s something I had to do. I wanted to get sidewalks, paved streets, and things like that on our side of town, and that’s what we did. But I had some ladies work with me, school teachers, who helped me with different projects. And we went to--. Every time we’d go before the city council they would help me; and with the county commission, they would help me, as I said, get something for the handicapped and blind and stuff like that. I had some ladies groups; they became secretary of this group, one lady, she was one of the teachers in First Ward. Then I had some other ladies that was teachers and had a guy who was a businessman who helped me in the community. And any improvement, we wanted it on our side of town just like the rest of it, see. When I

first went down there we didn't have any sidewalks and stuff and didn't have any paved streets. [Phone ringing] We wanted the same thing they had over in Myers Park over here. We wanted [unintelligible] get done. And the swimming pool. We wanted to have some of that too. And we wanted a playground and we got that too, a park. They didn't have any park over there for us. And we got that and you go down there now, you'll see it. When you go down Beatties Ford Road, you'll see the L.C. Coleman named park. You'll see a nice park. You should go look at it. It's a very nice park, and it's got a baseball field, and got a tennis court, and it's got where you can sit down and cook. I think it's nice. "Cuz the first time they told me--. You know up on Beatties Ford Road where they got that park way up the street there?"

DW: Mm hmm.

LC: One of the councilmen called me and said, "L.C., we got your park." I said "Where is it?" He told me and I said, "Man, you know the children don't have buses running up here." I said, "My children can't afford to be paying no money to go up there. I don't want that park. I'm going to start doing the same thing again, going around to all your parks till you do something for me." So they finally called me and said, "We got you one." And right next to where my daddy's house was, right there half a block from my daddy's house. That's where I lived. They said, "We got you one." I said, "Where is it?" "Right where you lived. Right down there where your daddy's place was." I said, "Now you're talking." And I went down and looked at it. It was nice. I said, "Well, this is a big one. I can deal with this one." Every now and then I go down and look at it, but they've been keeping it clean. It's--. I got one of the guys on the county commission, they're the ones in charge of the parks, and I got a guy on there that knows me. He said,

“L.C., I’m going to fix your park up all the time.” Every time I go out there he’s really got it looking good. I give him a hard time about it, Norman Mitchell. He really fixed it up.

But it is something though, the way they did our people a long time. When I was out here I would give them a hard time for any little thing you can think about. That’s the reason my wife told you I did a lot of talk. [Unintelligible] I didn’t care nothing about them. I said, “When you got your own business you can say anything you want. I didn’t have to work for nobody else. I’m working for me and I can say whatever I want.” And I guess that’s the reason I got so many things done.

DW: Yeah. Were you--? Did you--? Who--? Okay, I’m sorry. [Laughter] I’m loss for words. You said you formed the Westside Community group?

LC: Yes.

DW: Who ended up joining the group with you?

LC: A lot of people in the community joined. Everybody in there joined it because they lived there, and they knew me, and they knew I was going to be helping out other folks. And the senior citizens, they liked me because I got a lot of things done for them because they wasn’t getting the things they needed. When you get senior citizens to help you, especially one that’s smart and got a lot of knowledge, they do all the--. They really go downtown and talk for you. Because when they were talking about the park they said, “He don’t need no park.” And those ladies got on those people down on the county commission, told them, “You mean if you get a park you won’t name it for L.C.?” They didn’t want it named for me. No. And I had a white man who lived in North Charlotte. He got up there and spoke for me, “L.C. Coleman is doing a lot for his people

and his community. If the park can't be named for him it can't be named for nobody.” This man's a minister out there in North Charlotte. He got up and talked for me. I was surprised. How do you like that? Then another guy who lived out there talked for me too, a white guy. They really got that park for me, boy. And when we had the opening a lot of them came. Charlie Dannelly was in charge. He came too. He was a councilman then. I guess you know him, Charlie Dannelly?

DW: No.

LC: He's in the House of Representatives now. He's a senator now. I should have had that job, senator. Yeah, I should have had it. I did a lot of work here. But my wife didn't want me--. She didn't want me to do it because three of them came here and told me not to run for it. Yeah, three. Let's see, Charlie Dannelly, and--. What is the guy's name, the one who just died?

DW: Reginald Hawkins?

LC: Huh?

DW: Reginald Hawkins?

LC: No. The other guy, he was a senator before he died. Three guys came here and told me not to do it, and my wife told me, “Don't do it,” but I was going to do it because I wanted to be it myself. Because you know used to we didn't have district representation and we got that started, another white guy and myself got it started on this side of town and got that passed. That was something. We got together and got that passed, district representation. See when we first organized we're the ones that worked so hard for it, and we got that passed, district representation. I'm glad we got that. See they formed those districts and we wanted to have that passed and worked on it to get it

passed. And that's when Charlotte became districts. It was about forty years ago, I guess.

DW: So you decided not to run for office?

LC: At the time, yeah, because some other guys wanted it so they didn't want me to do it. My wife told me not to get into it and let that other guy, Dannelly, win, but I started not to do it.

DW: Yeah. Do you regret not doing it?

LC: Well, I don't guess so because I've been able to do anything I want anyway so it didn't bother me. But I was going to run. I was going to go take that job because I figured I should have it. It's a good thing though, to be an official.

DW: Yeah. Well I guess--. I've gone way beyond--. It's 11:15 here, but--.

LC: Oh yeah.

DW: Yeah, I apologize.

LC: What time is it?

DW: Almost ten till.

LC: Twelve?

DW: Yes sir.

LC: Well, you got all you needed, so--.

DW: I guess--.

LC: This is all right? Is it all right there? [Moves the microphone to avoid the rustling sound]

DW: Yes sir.

LC: That's all right there?

DW: Yes sir, that's good. And I guess--. If you can hold it right there. [Arranges the microphone on Mr. Coleman] And I'll just ask one last question of you. Just if you had anything that you wanted to add about anything [Laughter] that maybe wasn't talked about or mentioned or how you've seen Charlotte change?

LC: Well I've seen Charlotte change of course, in more ways than one. I think the people got more incorporated to being together, and our people has made strides in Charlotte since the early years, of course. I think that's--. Because we have people in different positions here in Charlotte we used to didn't have. And I'm proud of that, seeing all these people working. And I think that the people will be better, race thing like that. I was surprised when I went out--. I used to go in Myers Park and they didn't want to treat you fair. I've seen that happen. I know that happens everywhere though. It happened in New York, I was surprised by that. In the city one time I went there to ask somebody something in the Bronx. This white guy didn't want to tell me anything, and wouldn't tell me the street I wanted to find, and the way he acted. Charlotte had the same thing, but now I think it's much better, more integrated.

DW: Yeah. Are you hopeful that things will keep getting better and better?

LC: Yeah, and I hope Obama wins the election too. [Laughter]

DW: [Laughter] We have that on tape.

LC: We need him. I think we need him. And the people seem to like him too. I've noticed that. And that would be good to have a black president. Because it's been all these years they haven't had a black president. Wouldn't that be great? The world would say that would be different. [Laughter] Do you think about that kind of thing?

DW: Yes sir, yes sir.

LC: Yeah, I would like to see Obama because he's a smart guy. They can't say they've got a dumb one because he's a smart man. And he'd be good for all people, black or white, Spanish and anything else, Jewish or anything. He'd be the greatest president and I hope he will win. And I think he will win, because he's got a lot of big people supporting him.

DW: Yeah, he does.

LC: And last night my wife told me about Kennedy. About--. What's the guy's name?

DW: Oh, Ted Kennedy?

LC: Ted Kennedy. He represented him. I wasn't in there, I was doing something else. She said, "He spoke last night for Ted Kennedy." I said, "What do you know about that?" Because Ted Kennedy had already endorsed him, and since he's ill--. She was telling me, but I was doing something else and I didn't get to see it. But I guess they'll show it again. Did you see it when he remarked about him representing Kennedy in there in Massachusetts?

DW: I didn't. I didn't catch that. I saw when Ted Kennedy endorsed him.

LC: But last night he said wherever Obama spoke in Massachusetts on behalf of Kennedy. And that was wonderful, wasn't it?

DW: Yeah.

LC: Yeah. I saw that. And Kennedy's sisters endorsed him. I think that guy's wife in California. I think she endorsed him. Because I've been listening to it and I was happy because that's really important to have those kind of people endorse him. I've been keeping up with the Kennedy family ever since Jack Kennedy was president. I

thought he did a good job. And I'm really happy for the things happening. And Robert Kennedy. I was down there one time, because as I said District 65 was a union, and they had a meeting and we went down there. Martin Luther King spoke, and we went down there. And Martin Luther King used to come to our union every year in District 65 while he lived. And we used to pay for all his phone calls and stuff like that. And I'm sitting here like we're sitting together so I went to him one day and I asked him--. I think--. Now, what did I ask him about? I asked Martin Luther King why--. He made a statement and I went to sit and ask him, because as I said he came out to the union hall all the time. I went in there and asked him, I forgot what I asked him about. And he told me about Mahatma Gandhi, how he got his people free. And Martin Luther King said, that's about the one--. I said to him why did he talk about--. He said, "Do you remember Mahatma Gandhi, how he got his people free?" He said, "That's from high school." I said, "Oh." I had forgotten about that, because in school that's all you knew about Mahatma Gandhi. When I asked about Martin Luther King when he asked about his people, I mean when he spoke, because I was there that day he spoke in Washington. Anyway when he got through he came back to our union hall. And we asked him to talk about that and he reminded me. And I said, "Oh, I forgot about that." I said, "I remember how that man fought for India." And we sat there and talked and like I said--. He would come to my union all the time. Every time he was in union because the Teamsters used to organize that union and they kept--, they always had somebody like to come to our union every time we had a meeting. They always had somebody like that come to our union. And that other guy, Jackson, he used to come to our union meetings all the time. So I went and talked to Martin Luther King and he told me about it, because

he had just spoke, and I asked him and he said, “Oh, you remember--?” and I said, “I forgot about that.” I said, “Yeah, I remember,” because I was in high school when that happened. That was a long time ago in the ‘30s when that happened.

That is a great thing though, to have a big speaker like that come to your union hall and he did it all the time. Every year he would come. We’d always have a big affair every year, he’d come. One time he was late. Most of the people in our union was white you know, and he spoke an hour, you could hear a pin. Everybody said, turned to each other, “Did you see that?” I said, “I heard him.” All the things he said was something so dynamic. And all of us turned to each other and we were so thrilled that he spoke a whole hour and nobody moved. And everybody got up and applauded, a whole one hour after he was late, because the plane he came on was late. And at that time we had New York’s governor and the senators of New York and New Jersey [were] at this meeting. All those spoke, but nobody touched Martin Luther King. They couldn’t touch him, boy. He was something else. He spoke about things that happened while he was on the plane. But everybody there was so elated, because you couldn’t beat that guy speaking. And that time he spoke in Washington, boy that was something. Because you know in New York the clothing union had the largest amount of people to go. I think ten thousand people went at one time. The clothing union had ten thousand people going down on that train. That’s a lot of people.

DW: To the march on Washington?

LC: Mm hmm. The clothing union had the largest. District 65 had a big group but it wasn’t nothing like the clothing union. That was the biggest thing in New York then, because they made most of the clothes downtown. That’s where most of the people

worked. I worked down there for a couple of months after I got out of service but I didn't like that job so I quit. One of my friends, he was one of the guys who worked down there and he asked me to come down and work. I didn't like that kind of work so I went back to my job because I had one. After I got out of service I went down there and worked a few weeks and I quit that. I didn't like that. You know boxing coats and things for people and sending them out? I said, "I'm going to go back and get my own job." Because the job I had in the hardware store I stayed there--. I first went there in '42 or '43. I worked 'til '67 at one job. I enjoyed it. But in New York you had so many things. I had a car I had to pay for. They gave me a car on the job. You had all kinds of benefits, everything, hospitalization. It's just something you don't get for nothing. And I was enjoying it but I decided I'd come home. And as soon as I came home I opened a business. After that one year I opened a business, because it's the best thing a man can have, his own business. You don't have to listen to, nobody tell you what to do.

DW: Well that's a nice way to be able to retire from your own [Laughter] your own place, your own business.

LC: Yeah, you can quit and do whatever you want to do. You know there's nothing like owning your own place because you're the boss. And I think that's the best thing a man can have. If you're living anywhere, Charlotte or anywhere else, you got your own business, be your own boss. You can't beat that. I had a nice real estate business in New York for awhile, and I enjoyed that. You know I used to do--. At that time I used to get people to come and do income tax. I never charged senior citizens any money for doing their income tax. One day a lady came in to get her tax done and she said, she was a senior citizen, and she told me--. She ain't have to tell me, I looked at

her. I told the guy--. I had a white guy who sold insurance, and I had a lawyer who was white, and then I had a black man doing income tax. And I told him, "Any time a senior citizen comes in, you don't charge them." And they didn't charge them. And this is something I think you should do, because they've been here a long time. They should have something for nothing. I didn't charge them for that, any services they came for. If you want to get something done I would never charge them. I don't believe in that. I still think that's what you should do, because when people get sixty-five and seventy years old, and working on jobs all these years, and working for white people where they didn't get the right pay, somebody should do something for them for nothing. And I still believe that people should do it, but a lot of people don't do it. They should give those people something for all the years they put in this country. Second-rate pay and all that kind of stuff. I don't believe they should. These kinds of things I believe in. Our people should be mindful of that but they're not. They charge as much as they can.

DW: Yeah, that's unfortunate. It sure is.

LC: What all do you do?

DW: Oh, I'm a student.

LC: A student. At UNC?

DW: Yes sir.

LC: When do you finish?

DW: Oh. [Laughter] That's the million dollar question. I'm hoping no more than two more years.

LC: Two years?

DW: Yes sir.

LC: You going to graduate school?

DW: Yes. Well I'm in graduate school.

LC: You're in graduate school?

DW: Yes sir.

LC: What you majoring in?

DW: History.

LC: History?

DW: Yes.

LC: Why'd you decide to take history?

DW: Oh, I love it. [Laughter] Love learning about the past.

LC: Oh yeah. The past. It's a good thing.

SC: Do you know Bertha Roddy?

DW: Yes ma'am, yes ma'am.

SC: Have you visited her place?

DW: I haven't but Willie Griffin has. I guess I'll turn this off. [Laughter] Thank you for doing this interview with me, both of y'all.

SC: Oh, have you finished?

DW: Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW

Transcriber: Deborah Mitchum

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